

RIDGEFIELD AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

SPECIAL MEETING

Meeting Minutes

September 29, 2021 – 7:00 PM (via Zoom Teleconference)

PRESENT: Dave Goldenberg (Chair), Kent Rohrer (Vice Chair), Debra Franceschini, Kevin Brown, Sharon Coleman, Krista Willett, Lori Mazzola, Whit Campbell, Sheryl Knapp

Guest: Glenn Chalder, President of Planometrics

Meeting called to order 7:02 PM; due to disruptive intrusions during the call, meeting was terminated at 7:12 and reconvened at 7:14 without the public in attendance.

1. Current Business:

- a) **Affordable Housing Plan & Grant:** Reviewed the process of developing the Affordable Housing Plan, including preliminary data, with Guest Glenn Chalder. Deadline for adoption of the plan is January 1, 2022. Glenn has been reviewing committee minutes and wants to help us move closer to goal lines set for Ridgefield – including disseminating key information to residents, reviewing other towns' affordable housing plans. He proposed also supporting our efforts to develop strategies to help with community adaption, as he does with other towns. He and Dave had also discussed convening a community meeting and using a survey learn more about residents' affordable housing needs, with Glen providing input on presentation proposals for the meeting.

Glenn then reviewed proposed data pertaining to factors impacting affordable housing need, utilizing estimates published by American Community Survey since full census data will not be released until at least the Spring; the information may be able to be updated when this data is available, although Glenn emphasized the importance of looking at trends over actual numbers. Approximately 28% of Ridgefield homeowners and 45% of renters are housing cost burdened (housing costs exceed 30% of income), and 22% of Ridgefield's households are considered "asset limited, income constrained, but employed" (ALICE). Ridgefield has experienced enormous population growth since 1950, which is currently slowing but still projected to grow. Age composition is also changing, with increased life expectancy and median age, impacting demand for different type of housing. An opportunity exists to meet the state's affordable housing threshold with naturally occurring affordable housing, with close to 10% of housing selling or renting below the affordable housing affordable to households earning 80% of the town's median income but not deed restricted as affordable housing.

Dave and Kent to meet with Glenn to finalize timeline. Glenn emphasized that a minimum of a 4-week period is required to get a survey back. The committee will meet more frequently than monthly while this plan is in process.

- b) **Prospect Ridge Expansion:** Rudy signed off on the first phase of the feasibility study, so Steve from CCA Engineering is doing his research. The committee should be receiving information regarding buildable area in approximately 3 weeks, and will then decide what to put in. The committee can then collectively decide whether to proceed with the rest of the feasibility study.
- c) **ADU survey:** Dave drafted a postcard and sent it to Sharon. Sharon to finalize the postcard.
- d) **Branchville TOD:** Kevin will be involved with the committee's investigation of alternative ways to process sewer water. Krista will talk to the town engineer and help Dave to oversee the process.
- e) **Housing Trust Fund:** Rudy supported the initiative. Dave to distribute the final HTF presentation for review by committee members.
- f) **Adults with Disabilities/Habitat:** Kent indicated that Habitat is open to the concept of a partnership involving 3 Halpin Lane. Dave, Kent, Sheryl, and Debra to meet with John Loehr, the Past President of Habitat and current President of Sunrise Cottage, to discuss a proposal to be presented for review by Habitat and Ability Beyond.
- g) **Communications and social media:** Fairfield County Talks Housing had a virtual event in which the First Selectmen three Fairfield County towns, including Ridgefield, talked about affordable housing in their towns. Discussed planning the next Ridgefield Talks Housing event, and agreed the objective should be to convey the fact-based processes underlying the RAHC's decisions, which are appropriately approved by other town committees. Dave and Sharon to review the data presented by Planometrics to derive a list of approximately 10 important facts about affordable housing in Ridgefield, to form the basis of the event, together with discussion regarding the decision process and what the town has planned. These facts would also lend themselves well to social media initiatives.
- h) **New Business:** none.
 - a. No public comment because none could be in attendance.

The 9/1 and special meeting minutes were accepted as provided.

The regularly schedule monthly meeting on 10/6 has been canceled.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:56

Prepared by Sheryl Knapp, Secretary