

RIDGEFIELD AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting Minutes

August 24, 2022 – 7:00 PM

Town Hall – 400 Main Street, Ridgefield
Small Conference Room, Lower Level

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.

The Committee agreed by consensus to move Public Comment to the beginning of the meeting, at Debra's request.

1. **Public Comment:**

- a) Kirk Carr: proposed that in the subsequent discussion regarding officer elections the Committee consider choosing a new Chairperson. He also feels that the RHA is unable to handle additional housing units, and this should be considered as part of the feasibility study regarding the Prospect Ridge project.
- b) Andrea Beebe: asked if a subcommittee would be formed to revise the AHP, as indicated at the 8/17 BOS meeting. Dave stated that during subsequent communication with Rudy it was agreed that the BOS would provide formal written feedback instead. She also thinks that the Committee needs to do a better job explaining the different types of housing and share other important information in a clear and concise manner.
- c) John Tartaglia: Asked if there is a new draft of the Affordable Housing Plan to be reviewed, and requested that the discussion regarding the plan be the first discussion item. Urged Committee members to stick with mandates with simplicity, clarity, conciseness, and restraint.

- 2. Kevin moved that the AHP discussion be moved to the first item; Sharon seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.
- 3. Debra moved that public comment permanently be moved to the beginning at the meeting, that there be an opportunity for additional public comments at the end, that all public comments be limited to 3 minutes, and that we add a New Business item to the agenda. Kent proposed that it be amended into two motions, with the New Business addressed in the second motion. Debra agreed, moving that two opportunities be provided for public comment, once at the beginning and a second at the end of the meeting, and that all comments be limited to 3 minutes. During subsequent discussion, Kent proposed further amending the motion so that public comment be limited to 1 minute at the beginning and 3 minutes at the end, and that comments at the end of the meeting be limited to a total of 30 minutes. Kevin proposed that the public instead be given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. Debra

amended her motion to state that public comments be limited to 1 minute at the beginning and last no more than 10 minutes, and 3 minutes at the end for a maximum of 30 minutes. Motion approved unanimously by Committee members present; Kevin was not present to vote. The Committee agreed by consensus to add a New Business agenda item to this and all subsequent meeting agendas.

4. **Current Business:**

- a) **Affordable Housing Plan:** Dave provided report from the 8/17 Board of Selectmen meeting, as the only RAHC member present. Rudy proposed that a subcommittee be created to meet in order to present feedback on the AHP, but it was subsequently decided that the BOS would instead provide written feedback. Committee members agreed it is critical that the feedback received be consolidated to show consensus across BOS members, and to wait for that feedback prior to making any further revisions to the plan. Lori highlighted a few items from the feedback reviewed previously from PNZ that do not appear to be reflected in the revised plan, including that projects be prioritized – although it was agreed that this prioritization would not dictate a sequential order in which projects would be completed.

5. **New Business:**

- a) **Officer elections:** Dave reviewed the three officer positions requiring reelection. Debra made a motion that a new position be added of Treasurer to manage financial reporting and provide monthly updates; Lori seconded. Debra stated that this officer would track grant spending, citing the \$1,500 remaining from the \$11,000 state grant recently received. Whit proposed that the motion be amended to state that this financial management tracking be managed by the Vice Chair. Debra amended her motion to reflect this suggestion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Kent nominated Dave for Chair; Krista seconded. There were no other nominations for this position. Whit, Sharon, Sheryl, Kent, and Krista voted in favor; Lori and Debra abstained.

Sheryl nominated Kent to continue in his role as Vice Chair; Whit seconded. There were no other nominations for this position. The motion was unanimously approved.

Debra nominated Sheryl to continue in her role as Secretary; Lori seconded. There were no other nominations for this position. The motion was unanimously approved.

- b) **State funding request:** Debra asked if it was unethical for the Committee to accept the grant money for the Prospect Ridge project given that the RHA may not be managing the project. Kent indicated that the grant money was not conditional upon RHA involvement, but Dave proposed that we contact the state to confirm that this is the case, given that the issue has arisen multiple times. Dave will send a letter to the Commissioner of Housing.
- c) **Communication:** Debra proposed that the Committee refrain from commenting on social media. Dave indicated that he posts comment infrequently, and only to correct factually incorrect statements. Debra also emphasized that every effort should be made to ensure that facts are correct when quoted in media.

6. **Current Business (cont'd):**

- a) **Web presence:** Sheryl shared the proposed content of the RAHC web site to be created, and that she had a conversation with the Northern Fairfield County Association of Realtors, which will be disseminating information to local realtors in an upcoming newsletter. These realtors can be involved in referring individuals seeking affordable housing to the website, with those interested also serving as agents for these individuals. Dave proposed that we meet with realtors directly to educate them on affordable housing, which the Committee agreed could help support affordable housing efforts in neighboring towns as well.
- b) **Home for adults with disabilities:** Kent reported on a call with John Loehr, Dave, and Sheryl regarding creating a second home for adults with disabilities similar to Sunrise Cottage. John agreed to create one or more broad models outlining how the property could be utilized and financed, and what Ability Beyond's requirements would be. This information would then be presented to Habitat for Humanity and Ability Beyond. It is expected to be completed within the next two weeks, then Kent, Dave, Sheryl and John will meet a second time and report back at the next meeting.

7. **Public Comment:**

- a) Andrea Beebee: likes that we are collaborating with a real estate organization that encompasses a few Northern Fairfield towns.
- b) Eugene Staudt: recently retired from the property management business, and is interested in learning about changes to the town.

8. **Minutes:** The Committee reviewed the 7/27 minutes. Kent moved to accept the minutes amended as written; Lori seconded. The minutes were approved by Dave, Kent, Whit, Sheryl, Sharon, Krista, and Lori; Debra abstained.

9. **Next meeting:** The next regular meeting is scheduled for 9/28.

10. **Adjourn:** Lori moved to adjourn; Krista seconded, and the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:48.

Prepared by Sheryl Knapp, Secretary