

RIDGEFIELD AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

September 28, 2022 – 7:00 PM

Town Hall – 400 Main Street, Ridgefield

Small Conference Room, Lower Level

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

ABSENT: Kent Rohrer (Vice Chair)

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM.

1. **Public Comment:** none from the public, but Dave addressed concerns posed by members of the public via social media regarding public comment at the beginning of meetings being limited to 1 minute. Another Committee member had made this motion, and it had been approved unanimously by all Committee members present.
2. **New Business:**
 - a) **Email correspondence:** Debra indicated that the town's IT person, Andrew Neblett, advised all Committee members to obtain town email accounts to be used for Committee-related correspondence. Dave indicated that training is required. Those who are interested can contact Andrew at itsupport@ridgefieldct.org
 - b) **Press Interview Policy:** Debra expressed concerns about RAHC members speaking to the press on behalf of the Committee, referencing a recent interview conducted by Dave with *The Ridgefield Press*. Dave indicated that speaking to the press is part of his job and only speaks on behalf of the RAHC on issues that have been voted upon; Whit shared that he found this to be the case with the article referenced. Dave said he would be especially cognizant of this in the future.
 - c) **RHA:** The contract for the management company for RHA, Konaver Management, is expiring – and there is a rumor that it may not be renewed. Debra shared concerns regarding possibly disgruntled employees.
 - d) **Other new business:** none.
3. **Current Business:**
 - a) **Letter to Commissioner:** Dave read the letter he had drafted regarding the state funding request. Kevin proposed edits to the letter which he will make directly. Debra expressed concerns about proceeding prior to hearing back from the Commissioner. Dave indicated that we are proceeding with the terms of the grant; Dave will distribute to the Committee. Debra made a motion that we wait for confirmation from the state that we are able to

proceed under the new parameters regarding potentially not partnering with RHA and proceeding with fewer units; Krista seconded. Kevin moved that we table the motion until the Committee has had the opportunity to review the letter and gather the information; Sharon seconded. To minimize the delay, the Committee discussed voting via Zoom at a Special Meeting prior to the next regularly scheduled meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

- b) **Web Presence:** Sharon provided an overview of the content she had compiled for the webpage to be developed by the Committee, as a clearinghouse for information pertaining to Affordable Housing. Committee members provided input on the content, including adding additional deeded income restricted privately available apartments and how to apply for housing vouchers. Sheryl to send photos of each property. Information has been disseminated to realtors via a regional newsletter, although no responses have been received to date. Dave will also put this information on the Committee's Facebook page. Sharon will also add more general information pertaining to affordable housing available in nearby towns.
- c) **Affordable Housing Plan.** The BOS did not vote on the plan at their 9/7 or 9/14 meetings. Instead they voted to hold a meeting at which public comment can be made on 10/19, and will decide then whether to vote. Dave proposed beginning to work on action items on the plan – specifically the Housing Trust Fund and an inclusionary zoning provision. Dave to reach out to Rob Hendricks to ask that we be added to the agenda of an upcoming PNZ meeting to consider. Sheryl asked if there is a way for residents to submit comments anonymously, either because they have a personal issue they want to keep private or are afraid of the repercussions of making a public statement. Dave to check with Rudy to see if
- d) **Housing for Adults with Disabilities:** John Loehr put pro-forma together to see if there is some way a joint project with Habitat could work financially. Kent is working on it with him, and will report back to the Committee.

4. Public Comment:

- a) **Christine Moore:** Thanked the Committee for their hard work. She thinks it is unfortunate that opposition to the plan has been equated with opposition to affordable housing, making her feel vilified. She also continues to be concerned and perplexed that the Prospect Ridge plan is still being discussed by the Committee. Dave explained the distinction between what was listed in the plan and the feasibility study in effect.
- b) **Michael Schmer:** Concerned that the Vision statement in the plan has not been put up for a vote given that it's a vision for the town. Dave indicated that it is under the jurisdiction of the BOS to decide whether public referendums will be held. Members of the public and the Committee discussed the benefits of continuing with the current process of having those elected to represent residents edit the document, allowing public input to be incorporated more extensively and collaboratively than if it were settled through a series of votes.
- c) **Andrea Beebe:** Concerned that members of the public who are not able to attend meetings are not informed. Dave indicated that the Committee did not have the resources for a hybrid or broadcast meeting, and there are protocols that needed to be followed. Debra to investigate options for broadcasting at least audio during or after the meeting.

5. **Review Previous Minutes:** Dave noted that names of two members of the public were misspelled. Debra moved to accept the minutes as amended; Whit seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.
6. **Next meeting:** The next Regular meeting is scheduled for 10/26/22. However, three Committee members present would likely not be able to attend, so Dave will follow up with Committee members to check for a quorum.
7. **Adjourn:** Debra moved to adjourn; Sheryl seconded, and the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:50.

Prepared by Sheryl Knapp, Secretary