



Keith Chapman
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 Cedar Street Newington, Connecticut 06111

Newington Housing Needs Study Committee

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John O. Higgins
Town Clerk

SPECIAL MEETING

7:00 p.m. Monday, July 13, 2020

Zoom Webinar/Meeting

MINUTES

Present: Carol Anest; Stephen Woods; Michael Camillo and William Hall.

Also Present: Glenn Chalder, AICP; Town Planner Craig Minor.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm.

II. ROLE CALL

The presence of the above-listed members was noted.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

IV. REVIEW/DISCUSSION OF BRIEFING BOOKLETS #1 AND #2

Glenn Chalder, AICP went through the two Briefing Booklets that he had prepared for this meeting.

Briefing Booklet #1: "Planning for Housing Needs". The booklet contains: An explanation of the overall goal of the Affordable Housing Plan. Reasons for Studying Housing. Recent Housing Studies conducted by Newington. Parameters of Planimetrics' contract with Newington.

Briefing Booklet #2: "Baseline Information for the Affordable Housing Plan". Contains: An explanation of what "affordable housing" is (there are many different definitions). Why Newington needs affordable housing. Why it takes so long to produce an affordable unit. How affordable housing supports economic development in Newington. The amount of affordable housing in Newington – 1,155 as defined by Sec. 8-30g of the Connecticut General Statutes.

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Carol Anest asked if the State-run group home on Maple Hill Avenue is counted. Stephen Woods said he believed it was. Glenn Chalder asked the Town Planner to give him a copy of the list of affordable housing per Section 8-30g. Stephen Woods said that Griswold Hills is probably all rented, so we probably need more. Carol Anest asked about the status of Victory Gardens Phase II – the Town Planner replied that we have not heard from the Women’s Institute in many months.

Glenn Chalder resumed going through Briefing Booklet #2: How much affordable housing does Newington have. Why Newington needs more - a commissioner asked, “if Newington has so much NOAH (“naturally-occurring affordable housing”), why do we need more?” Glenn replied because there are still people like the elderly who need appropriate housing (two-year wait for a Newington Housing Authority senior unit), and because there are many families that are “cost burdened” which is the next section in Booklet #2: Who is cost Burdened? – this is a household where both spouses work full time but can still barely afford to pay rent and still afford all the other essentials. These people are referred to as “ALICE”: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed.

The next section is What does the POCD (Plan of Conservation and Development) recommend? Glenn reported that the new POCD (to be adopted next month) contains several strategies to increase the supply of affordable housing, and asked the HNSC members if they think these recommendations are appropriate for Newington: (a) Produce more elderly housing: Carol Anest said yes, especially “transitional rental” units for recent empty-nesters who aren’t quite ready to leave the house they’ve been in for decades. Glenn replied that indicates there are two types of elderly: those who can afford age-appropriate housing but there just isn’t enough of it in Newington, and those who can’t afford what is here. Carol Anest said that people don’t understand the difference between market rate affordable housing and deed-restricted affordable housing. Stephen Woods said that part of the problem is “density” is a dirty word in Newington. Glenn said the Town Center is a good place for higher density housing. (b) More family housing is needed: a long discussion about the “Section 8” program ensued, and about the Newington Housing Authority possibly trying to get more certificates for Newington. (c) Support “aging in place”: the HNSC members agreed. (d) Flexibility with first floor additions: this would make it easier for older homeowners to expand first floor master bedrooms to contain a bathroom; the HNSC members supported this. (e) Accessory Apartments: change the zoning regulations to make them allowed by right, but possibly make them income-restricted so that they count toward Newington’s Sec. 8-30g “affordable housing”: the Committee agreed. (f) Bulk Requirements: change the regulations to allow higher density residential development. Carol Anest said it depends on the location. Glenn said the TPZ could do a “visual preference survey”, which is an exercise where people are shown lots of photos of different styles of multifamily housing, and “vote” on which styles are acceptable for Newington: the Committee supported this. (g) Allow residential in zones where it is currently not allowed as a development incentive: Stephen Woods said TPZ might be receptive to this; Carol Anest was concerned it might frighten residents. (h) Permanent exemption to any more Sec. 8-30g developments: once 10% of Newington’s housing stock is “affordable” as defined by Section 8-30g, we will be exempt from any more “unfriendly” (i.e. not in compliance with the zoning regulations but allowed by the Sec. 8-30g law) affordable housing applications: the Committee supports this as a goal. (i) Obtain more Section 8 certificates and USDA/CHFA mortgages (which count toward the 10%): the Committee was not very receptive to this. (j) Apply for an Affordable Housing “Moratorium”: the Sec. 8-30g law allows towns that are very close to 10% to obtain a temporary prohibition on any new “unfriendly” (i.e. in violation of the zoning regulations but allowed by the Sec. 8-30g law) affordable housing applications: the Town has completed an application for a Moratorium, which is on hold pending the outcome of the Affordable Housing Plan that this committee is working on. (k) Inclusionary Zoning: every market rate unit created in Newington sets us further back from the goal of 10%. TPZ could adopt a rule that says all new market rate housing must include some (e.g. 12%) lower rent units so we don’t keep falling further behind. Stephen Woods was in favor; Carol Anest noted that some people have left Newington because they couldn’t find the higher-end housing that they were looking for. (l) Affordable Housing fee: residential

developers who do not include any affordable housing in their development pay a fee which goes into a fund to be used to create affordable housing. (m) Work with local non-profits: the Committee agreed. (n) Town or State parcels: the Town could look for government-owned parcels that are appropriate for affordable housing development. (n) Find ways to designate existing units as “affordable”: Glenn said the Town could acquire existing dwelling units and re-sell them with deed restrictions to keep them affordable for at least 30 years.

Glenn asked the Committee if they had any other ideas that could go into the new POCD. There were none. Glenn said that he would take this information and prepare a third Briefing Booklet for the next meeting, to contain “Preliminary Strategies”.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Stephen Woods made a motion to approve the minutes of June 15, 2020 seconded by Carol Anest. All were in favor.

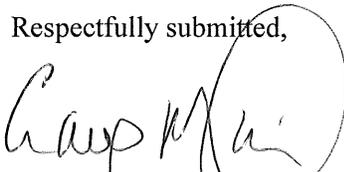
VI. SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be Monday, August 17, 2020 at 6 pm via Zoom.

VII. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Craig Minor, AICP
Town Planner