

**COMMISSION ON THE AGING  
4 Brush Hill Road  
New Fairfield, CT 06812**

**COMMUNITY FORUM  
“AFFORDABLE SENIOR HOUSING”**

**MINUTES**

**October 25, 2014**

The Commission on the Aging hosted a Community Forum on Saturday, October 25, 2014 at the Senior Center from 10:00am-12:00pm. The topic was “Affordable Senior Housing”. Secretary, Laurie Busse, took the minutes.

**PRESENT:** Maureen Salerno, Chair, Janet Loya, Jeannette Sweeney, Katy Johannssen, Kathy Hull, Stephanie Shaughnessy, and Roberta Ilardo

**TOWN OFFICIALS:** Kim Hansen, Selectman,

**SPEAKERS:** Evonne Klein, CT Dept. of Housing and Catherine Bachrach, Town of Kent

Maureen Salerno welcomed everyone and introduced Evonne Klein, from the Connecticut Department of Housing.

Ms. Klein discussed there has been a decline in the school aged population and an increase in the aging population. Connecticut has its oldest population with the average age of 39 years and older and the Town of New Fairfield has the oldest population in Connecticut with an average age of 41 years and older. The CT Dept. of Housing is dedicated to helping local communities support their aging citizens by providing funding for safe and affordable housing and dedicating units to veterans. Governor Malloy has streamlined this process by creating the CT Dept. of Housing which is solely focused and dedicated to putting in affordable housing and ending homelessness by 2015. This newly created department has been in operation for 17 months.

Ms. Klein discussed the different grants and funding available to developers and local agencies who want to construct or rehabilitate affordable housing. There are predevelopment loans, projects seeking to expand existing affordable housing, and projects that are just starting out. In the past much of the funding was spent on larger projects. Today money is available to smaller projects, as many smaller towns want to provide safe and affordable housing for their aging citizens who want to remain in their communities as they grow older. In the next 10 years they expect to award \$300 million

dollars to local housing trusts. In the last 3 years 2,000 units of affordable housing have been constructed. There are 4,000 units under construction today and they have provided funding for 7,100 units across the State.

There are many myths that affordable housing will diminish property values, when in fact affordable housing has a positive impact on communities when they are well designed and well maintained. Ms. Klein talked about her experience as the former 1<sup>st</sup> Selectman of Darien. Darien has affordable housing units called “The Heights”, which is a 106 unit rental apartment complex. Many realtors have told her The Heights look so nice that often people who are not in need of affordable housing have inquired about them when they are looking for a home in Darien. Gone are the days of the “Projects”. Today’s affordable housing units are well designed to keep the look and feel of their local community. Another myth is that many out of towners will come and live in the affordable units. The facts show that 80% of affordable housing units are awarded to local residents. The Connecticut Dept. of Housing wants to build affordable housing together and meet the needs of individual communities.

### **Questions and Answers:**

Ms. Klein addressed questions from the audience.

Q: What portion of funding goes to developers vs. municipalities?

A: There is a mix of profit and nonprofit developers. The CT. Dept. of Housing does not have a preference and the money is split according to CHAFA. They will work with predevelopment grants and loans all the way to development.

Q: How long will the funds be available for and is there a chance that funds may no longer be available?

A: This fiscal year has committed funding.

Q: What is the age limit for affordable elderly housing?

A: The age limit is 62 and older. The Fair Housing Act states 62 and older and at least one person must be aged 55 and older.

Q: How will funding affordable elderly housing in New Fairfield affect property taxes?

A: Property taxes are a local issue. Many towns have programs for the elderly, disabled, and veterans. Check with the Tax Assessor or Tax Collector to see what is available.

Q: How long does it take to get funding?

A: Prior to the creation of the CT Dept. of Housing 17 months ago, funding took approximately 5 years. Now with the streamlining of the various departments involved the time has been reduced to 3 years.

Q: How can we avoid the mistakes that were made in Sherman?

A: Perhaps creating an “Advisory Commission on Affordable Housing” that would report to the 1<sup>st</sup> Selectman with regular updates.

Maureen Salerno thanked Evonne Klein, Commissioner CT Dept. of Housing, for coming out on a Saturday and speaking with us.

After a short intermission, Maureen Salerno introduced the members of the COA and introduced our sponsors. Maureen Salerno thanked Ray Juskiewicz for all of his efforts to tape today's forum.

Maureen Salerno introduced Catherine Bachrach from the Town of Kent. Ms. Bachrach talked about "The Kent Experience". Mrs. Bachrach grew up in Kent and moved away as a young adult. As her parents aged, she came back home to help take care of them. Many people in Kent are struggling to stay there and if it wasn't for the affordable elderly housing units like "Templeton Farms" Kent would lose senior members of their community. Templeton Farms is a quaint 40 year old 24 unit housing development for the elderly located behind the firehouse. These units are one and two bedroom garden style apartments. The residents pay 1/3 of their income for rent and must reapply every year. Subsidies are received from the US Dept. of Agriculture and from the Dept. of Housing.

Regarding the myth that outsiders will come, the majority of the residents in Templeton Farms are Kent residents. There are a few residents from neighboring towns such as New Fairfield, Sherman, and New Milford. The residents from neighboring towns come to live in Kent because they want to be closer to their children who live in Kent or they want to remain close to their own towns which do not offer affordable elderly housing. The truth is people don't often recognize the people who live in Templeton Farms and other affordable elderly housing are the ones who often make the largest contribution to society.

With only 24 available units and only 1 or 2 vacancies a year, the waiting list is approximately 3-4 years long. The people moving in, are at an older age than when the units were first created in 1974. The demand for more affordable elderly housing was so great that in 2003 South Common was constructed which is another 24 unit complex and in 2012 Stuart Farm which is a 5 unit complex opened, noting that while income limits need to be met, they do not have the same subsidies as Templeton Farms.

The administrator does a reassessment of the residents every year and all residents have a very clear lease that states they must live there year round. The Superintendent inspects all apartments on a yearly basis to make sure they are safe.

Members from the audience inquired about taxes. The property is already off the tax roll and many of the services are not impacting the Town taxes. Elderly affordable housing is taxable. Templeton Farms has a 40 year tax abatement which expires in 2016. They are under the pilot program where the State will reimburse the Towns for tax abatement property.

Maureen Salerno thanked everyone for joining us today. The Forum was adjourned at 11:50a.m.