



**Town of New Fairfield
4 Brush Hill Road
New Fairfield, Connecticut**



**HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, September 6, 2022**

Members present: Anita Brown, Chairwoman
Kathleen DiTullio, Vice Chairwoman
Rich Kalinka
Jim Mandella
Liz Yoho
Kathy Hull

Members absent: Roberta Anderson

Ex-Officio: Selectwoman Khris Hall
Tom Kavaliauskas, Zoning
Cory Neumann, Planning

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 pm by Chairwoman Brown. The pledge of allegiance immediately followed.

Correspondence and Announcements

There were none.

Minutes – August 2022 meeting

*Mr. Mandella moved to approve the August 2, 2022 meeting minutes, seconded by Ms. Hall and passed 3-0-1.
Aye: Mandella, Hall, Yoho
Abstain: Brown*

New Business

Address HOC mandate: Review the health of the current NF housing stock in relation to the needs of NF residents: Guest speaker: Kristin Floberg, WestCoG Resource.

Ms. Floberg said WestCOG is mandated by the State as a regional planning agency for transportation and conservation and development. There are 18 communities in the WestCOG. In 2021 WestCOG put together a regional housing plan for communities needing help to put a plan together. New Fairfield is part of that group.

Ms. Floberg said the affordable housing regulations fall under 8.30g of the Connecticut General Statutes. WestCOG has put together a toolbox of strategies to increase affordable housing.

Ms.Floberg discussed the various parts of the report and toolbox - why there is an affordable housing plan, market influences such as the New York metro area, a needs assessment, zoning incentives, and financing options.

The housing needs asks who is in the community and in surrounding communities now and who do you want in your community in the future. New Fairfield in 2020 had 13,579 residents and the greatest increase has been in the 55 year olds and up. The poverty rate is 3.9%. One third of the population of renters is made up of one person households. The number of people in households has been dropping since 1990 so perhaps building smaller housing units should be considered. One out of five residents lives alone.

Ninety six percent of New Fairfield houses are single family detached homes. The median monthly housing cost without a mortgage is under \$1,000; with a mortgage it's just under \$2,500. Housing costs include mortgage or rent, fees and utilities. In New Fairfield the housing and transportation index is at 54% because there is no mass transit in Town. Danbury is at 45%.

Some of the tools and strategies are inclusionary housing, work force housing, and incentive housing. New Fairfield only offers two incentives. In 2021 the legislation changed on accessory apartments though communities can opt out of the change.

New Fairfield only has 5% of the population who live and work in Town. There is funding available for rental assistance but only one person is using that assistance in New Fairfield. There are only five new affordable housing units in New Fairfield in 2020 from 2002. New Fairfield would need 474 more to reach the 10% threshold per the 8.30g statute.

Accessory apartments could be used for more affordable housing – New Fairfield allows them under Zoning but there is a required review after two years. Zoning sees at least one application per meeting for an accessory apartment. Ms. Brown asked if there was a way to inventory the number of accessory apartments in Town. Ms. Floberg said it would be difficult to find out if the Town has not documented them all along. Mr. Mandella said he had spoken to Evan White in Zoning and he did not see any way to document them all.

2022-23 Budget: Discussion related to potential needs for surveys, secretarial, and practical consultation costs

Ms. Brown asked what items might need to be in a budget for the committee including surveys, secretarial, consultants, etc. Ms. Hall said secretarial is straight forward as there are many commissions in Town and that number can be gleaned from that. She suggested the committee should discuss what they want from a survey and how they would conduct it as well as what they would want a consultant to do for the committee. Mr. Kalinka said they would want to have some understanding of how to market what they will be doing for the Town in terms of affordable housing.

Ms. Brown asked if the Committee could breakdown the toolbox and make a presentation to Zoning and Planning. Mr. Kavaliauskas said Zoning will have a public session during which the committee could present information.

Mr. Mandella asked how the Zoning Commission would work to rewrite the regulation – would they look at State statutes, for instance. Mr. Kavaliauskas said they would probably start off with what changes have been made at the State level and possible look at what other commissions in other Towns have done. Mr. Mandella felt the Housing Opportunities Committee should be a part of that process. Ms. Yoho agreed as the Committee has been asked to look at ways to increase affordable housing but with no power to do anything.

Ms. Brown said she would generate a letter to send to Zoning to generate a collaboration between this committee and Zoning, and eventually Planning as they work towards the new Plan of Conservation and Development.

Ms. Hall asked the Committee what it would want a consultant to do and Mr. Mandella said they should possibly have someone help with the survey to find out what people would want in housing such as one or two bedroom rental units.

Ms. Hall suggested the Committee could hold a brainstorming session to help determine what information would be useful for a survey. Ms. Brown said she liked the idea of brainstorming session and said the next meeting could be used for that purpose. Mr. Mandella suggested all send ideas by email to Ms. Brown ahead of time as a starting point.

Old Business

Reports from Working Subcommittees

i. Communication: Myths/Facts page review

Ms. Hull encouraged all to look at the page and give feedback, Ms. Brown said she thought the page looked good.

ii. ADU's: Exploring options for assessing current ADU's

Mr. Mandella said there is nothing new at this point to discuss.

iii. Photos: Potential uses

Mr. Kalinka said he is starting to take photos of things the Town is not looking to do and is also looking for houses with apartment for rent signs.

iv. Liaisons: Zoning and Planning: Feedback on coordinating Ad hoc HOC findings/work with upcoming Planning and Zoning revisions

Mr. Kavaliauskas said Mr. White said the illegal accessory apartments would not be in the files. Ms. Hall said the Zoning Commission might need to find a way to incentivize the owners to legalize them and perhaps encourage others to create new ones in their homes.

Board Comments

There were none.

Public Comments

There were none.

Adjournment

Ms. Hull moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:33 pm, seconded by Ms. Yoho and passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephen R. Babbie".

Recording Secretary

Received by email on 09/08/2022 @ 12:16 p.m.
by Chrystie M. Bontempo, Asst. Town Clerk, New Fairfield