



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



**HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, July 11, 2023**

Members present: Anita Brown, Chairwoman
Kathleen DiTullio, Vice Chairwoman
Liz Yoho (arrived at
Kathy Hull
Rich Kalinka
Jim Mandella
Roberta Anderson

Ex-Officio: Tom Kavaliauskas, Zoning
Selectwoman Khris Hall

Ex-Officio absent: Cory Neumann, Planning

Also Present: Jocelyn Ayer, Consultant

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

Correspondence and Announcements

Ms. Brown said the Planning Commission secretary had reached out to her about the survey results and could they get a copy of them. Ms. Brown said yes but that she would like to be able to present the information and planning process to them as part of the annual report that the committee is obligated to provide. She felt speaking in person and with Ms. Ayers and other committee members would be the best way to inform the Planning Commission as well as other stakeholders.

Ms. Brown asked if the report should be presented to the Board of Selectmen first and Ms. Hall said that was not necessary because any pushback would probably come from Planning and Zoning.

Approval of Minutes from June meeting

Ms. Brown said in paragraph 3, page 2 it should read Ms. Hull not Hill and paragraph 9, page 2 should read march not match.

Mr. Kalinka moved to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Mr. Mandella and passed unanimously.

New Business

In depth review of DRAFT Table of Contents, Goals and Strategies

Ms. Brown said she was hoping the committee could approve the table of contents by the August meeting and then have a booth at New Fairfield Days with handouts and information for residents.

Ms. Ayer walked through the Table of Contents draft for discussion. The intro would have the why, definition of affordable housing, how the plan was developed and the five main goals.

The assessment of housing needs and current housing stock which includes what New Fairfield residents say, demographics and regional housing needs.

The Land Use section will discuss what uses Zoning currently allows and protected areas that can't be built on or developed.

Goals and Strategies will go into more detail on the general and more specific goals of the committee.

The final section will be the appendix of resources used and available for review.

Ms. Hall asked about the regional housing needs and Ms. Ayer said the housing market is more than just the local market. She said the State has asked in some cases that the Town plan include information on the regional housing market. Ms. Hall said there is some sensitivity to this because of the transportation oriented bill that was introduced in the legislature this session which would sweep New Fairfield into the Danbury transportation network.

Ms. Hall asked about the areas of land protected from housing development and Ms. Ayer said some towns have a zoning map which highlights areas that have easements or land trust property that can not be developed.

Ms. Hall noted that New Fairfield is primarily one and two acre single family zoning though the health department says there are land sites that can smaller because the soil is good. Mr. Kalinka asked if that was his opinion or done through perk tests. Ms. Hall said it is based on his 35 years experience and perk tests from other sites.

Ms. Brown asked if the No's on table 11 should be opportunities for more housing and Ms. Ayer said some of the suggestions do not make sense for smaller towns.

Ms. Ayer discussed the goals and strategies including the overarching goal of developing 20 units of affordable housing over 5 years. Ms. Hull noted that there have only been 5 units built since 2002.

Ms. Ayer said a non profit could be gifted a piece of land or be offered a land at a lower than market price and possibly build a 12 unit development then other single family houses could be renovated.

Ms. Hall said one year ago she would have believed that 20 units could be built but given the housing market and current interest rates she felt it would be more difficult to build. Ms. Ayer said there is more money in the current State budget for housing than there has been in the past.

Ms. DiTullio said the New Fairfield Housing Trust could play a part in some development.

Ms. Yoho asked if there would be a disadvantage to state 20 as a goal if the Committee can only build 10 or 20 units. Ms. Ayer said this is just a planning document.

The first main goal is to support the New Fairfield Housing Trust which Ms. Ayer said could use volunteers and Board members and help getting word out about donations. Ms. DiTullio said there are currently only 5 members of the Board and they could use some help to understand how they can fit into the Housing Opportunities Committee plans.

The next goal is to support first time homebuyer options through the Trust, Habitat for Humanity and downpayment assistance programs. Ms. Brown said the Committee could do outreach to realtors. Ms. DiTullio said outreach to local real estate Boards and the State Board with affordable loan options and programs would help also. She also suggested lenders offices.

The third goal is to allow the development of smaller sized homes that could offer downsizing options. Ms. Ayer said this is zoning based as they would need to allow multi family options with septic and well requirements perhaps through an incentive overlay zone.

Ms. Hall said this would require Zoning, Planning and Health to talk to each other.

The next goal would be to increase awareness about housing opportunities that accessory apartments can create. Ms. Ayer said 70% of survey respondents did not know this was an option.

Ms. Ayer suggested that there be some definitions of affordable housing versus housing opportunities. She also noted that the State's definition of affordable housing does not count accessory apartments.

Another goal is to continue to raise awareness of housing needs and solutions including continuing community outreach. Ms. Ayer said if New Fairfield were to participate in Sustainable CT this would build points towards that goal.

Ms. DiTullio asked if there were still a program such as money in lieu of open space so the Town could start building a housing fund and Ms. Ayer said that could be a strategy to create a housing fund. She said sometimes the conveyance fee paid to the Town when land sells could be used to set aside a percentage to add to the fund.

The final goal would be to make sure the strategies in the Town's housing plan are adopted and implemented over the next 5 years. She said it would be ideal to have this as part of the POCD.

Ms. Brown said the goals and strategies look complete and asked what the next step is and Ms. Ayer said if anyone has any other thoughts later to reach out to her.

Ms. Hall asked Mr. Kavaliauskas how Zoning might look at this housing plan in the rewrite of their regulations and he said the process is going to take at least one year and they have not really started yet.

Draft of annual report to BOS/ZC/PC as required in Annex

Ms. Brown said she wrote a one page, two sided report to present to the Board of Selectmen, Zoning and Planning Commissions. Mr. Mandella suggested that the number of units that currently meet the affordable housing criteria should be included in the report.

Ms. Hull left the meeting at 9 pm.

Town Tribune Thank you Letter

Ms. Brown sent a letter to the editor to thank those who participated in the survey and placed flyers about the survey. She said she asked the webmaster how many hits the HOC website page got and was told 40.

New Fairfield Day Booth (9/9/2023)/Banner

Ms. Brown said New Fairfield Day is September 9th and wanted to make sure the HOC had a booth at the event. She felt the booth should have some sort of game to attract families with children. Mr. Kalinka and Ms. DiTullio will look into getting some sort of banner or table covering with the committee's name on it.

Old Business

Close out Survey

Ms. Brown said the survey has closed and Ms. Ayer said the final count of participants was 447.

Board Comments

Ms. DiTullio reminder all that Habitat for Humanity was holding a fundraiser at Nod Hill Brewery in Ridgefield on Wednesday..

Public Comments

There were none

Adjournment

Ms. DiTullio moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 pm, seconded by Mr. Kalinka and passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded by:



Recording Secretary