



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



**HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, April 2, 2024**

Members present: Anita Brown, Chairwoman
Kathleen DiTullio, Vice Chairwoman
Liz Yoho
Kathy Hull
Roberta Anderson

Also present: Tom Kavaliaukas, Zoning Member

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 pm by Ms. Brown followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Correspondence & Announcements

Ms. Brown said the members of the Committee have been invited to a special Board of Selectmen meeting on Thursday to meet with Planning and Zoning members to discuss the Housing Affordability Plan.

Approval of Minutes from March meeting

Ms. Anderson moved to approve the minutes of the March 5th 2024 meeting as presented, seconded by Ms. DiTullio and passed 3-0-2.

Aye: Yoho, Brown, DiTullio

Abstain: Hull, Anderson

NEW BUSINESS

Review and discuss BOS concerns re draft Housing Affordability Plan

Ms. Brown said they made the presentation to the Board of Selectmen on March 14th and the special meeting for Thursday is to discuss concerns any of the groups might have. She said Melissa Lindsey, the First Selectwoman, wants to do a deeper dive into the plan. Ms. Brown said she is planning on listening at the meeting.

Ms. Hull said the draft plan has been available for some time in many different ways so hopefully people will be familiar with it. She said Ms. Lindsey questioned the word “allow” in the plan and might be thinking there will be a tax burden placed on the community.

Ms. DiTullio said with the budget constraints the Town is under they might think the HOC is looking for money but she felt like the BOS liked the plan overall. Ms. DiTullio said she would like to get more feedback from Planning and Zoning commissioners. She also felt the

responsibility chart is fluid and not carved in stone. It could be changed or responsibilities could be shared to accomplish the tasks.

Ms. Brown said she hoped there would be a good discussion and if there were any changes made then the 35 day public comment timeline begins again.

OLD BUSINESS

Continued Discussion of Building Community Support for Housing Playbook/Toolkit

Ms. Brown noted Sip & Stroll will be held May 4th and she said the theme was the Derby. She asked if the HOC members thought they should participate and there was consensus to do so. Ms. Hull said she had a horse racing game she could bring. Ms. Brown said this could be an opportunity to share the draft plan.

Ms. Brown moved to authorize a budget of up to \$100 for supplies for the Sip & Stroll event, seconded by Ms. DiTullio and passed unanimously.

Aye: Hull, Brown, Yoho, DiTullio, Anderson

Ms. Brown asked if the HOC members thought someone from the Housing Trust should be invited to speak at a meeting. She also noted that the Fairfield County Housing Talks have been discussing ALICE – asset limited, income constrained, employed people – and said the hourly rate to afford living in Fairfield County is \$40 per hour.

Ms. DiTullio also suggested someone from Housatonic Habitat for Humanity be invited to speak as while they build houses they also offer seniors small repairs on their houses so they can stay in house longer.

Ms. Hull asked if maybe realtors should be invited to attend a meeting and Ms. Anderson said she would reach out to the Board of Directors of the Realtors to see if there was interest.

Ms. Brown said the Commission on Aging will be holding a forum on April 13th from 10 am to 12 pm on “What Does Your Life Hold for the Next Chapter.” She said there is also a Fairfield County Center for Housing Opportunities that is offering a program for implementation of Housing Affordability Plans and the money could be used to hire a housing development consultant. Ms. DiTullio and Ms. Yoho suggested that the HOC express interest in perhaps being placed on a list for future funding when they are further along in this process.

Ms. Brown said the Partnership for Strong Communities said the Planning and Development Committee passed HB5474 which will create an annual housing application of approval which will create a report card, in effect, to measure what communities are doing with the HAPs.

Board Comments

There were none.

Public Comments

Ken Huwer, a New Fairfield resident and Zoning Commission member, said the language in the plan should be more specific so there is less opportunity for misinformation. He also felt bringing the Housing Trust into this process now would be good.

Steve Roe, a New Fairfield resident, said he does not support this initiative even though it is mandated by the State. He felt statistics could be used the wrong way and noted that in September of 2023 a study showed that 70% of Americans live paycheck to paycheck. He said part of the reason was inflation in terms of costs of goods going up monthly but also attributed it to lifestyle inflation – cars, etc. He said he does not see rundown houses in New Fairfield and so he is opposed to this plan.

Adjourn

Ms. Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 pm, seconded by Ms. Hull and passed unanimously.

Aye: Hull, Brown, DiTullio, Yoho, Anderson

Minutes recorded by:

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

Recording Secretary

Received by email on 04/03/2024 @ 8:30 a.m.
by Chrystie M. Bontempo, Asst. Town Clerk, New Fairfield