

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING STEERING COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JULY 7, 2021**

The Glastonbury Affordable Housing Steering Committee held a Meeting at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 7, 2021 in the Council Chambers of Town Hall at 2155 Main Street.

Committee Members:

Deborah Carroll - Town Council {excused}
Lillian Tanski - Town Council
Sharon Purtill - Town Plan & Zoning Commission {excused}
Christopher Griffin - Town Plan & Zoning Commission
Neil Griffin - Executive Director, Housing Authority
Carl Stenman - Housing Authority
Nick Paindiris - Community Member
Patty Parent - Community Member {participated via video conferencing}
Richard Johnson - Town Manager
Rebecca Augur - Director of Planning & Land Use Services
Jonathan E. Mullen, AICP - Planner

Others present:

Glenn Chalder - Consultant - Planimetrics

1. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Augur at 6:10 p.m. Committee members Carroll and Purtill were excused, and Ms. Parent participated via video conferencing.

a. Pledge of Allegiance *Led by Ms. Augur*

2. Public Communication and Petitions pertaining to the Call – None

3. Minutes from the May 26, 2021 Meeting

Mr. Stenman noted a few items to correct. On page 3, the first paragraph, the sentence that reads, “The survey is online” should be changed to read, “The survey will be online.” In the third paragraph of that same section, “Ms. Paindiris” should read “Mr. Paindiris”. On page 4, the third paragraph, the sentence that reads, “Mr. Stenman suggested an item denoting character.” He actually suggested deletion of any reference to the word character, since there are implications and undertones of racism.

There were no further comments on the minutes.

4. Special Business as contained in the Call

a. Plan of Conservation and Development Overview

Glenn Chalder presented an overview of the key policy and program areas in the POCD booklet. He noted that while his observations of the POCD were new, a few things caught his eye. Namely, the way some of the language is structured. He suggested that this subcommittee make midterm adjustments to the POCD language to modify some of the text related to housing issues.

Mr. Chalder explained that the western area of Glastonbury has the highest housing density in town. With overburdened street networks, it could pose challenges in the future. He suggested this as a potential area in the POCD which could be reevaluated. He also explained the topical elements of the POCD related to housing. The first housing strategy in the POCD is about preserving open space and natural resources. He explained that making it the number one strategy in housing leaves a different impression. There is also text regarding the need for housing diversity. He then noted some phrases or words to consider modestly tweaking. He also reviewed the overall framework for Glastonbury, which the POCD groups into different areas which have their own recommendations and limitations.

Mr. Paindiris asked if it is the intent of this committee to make recommendations to other bodies. Ms. Augur stated that this committee can choose whether or not they recommend these sorts of changes. Ms. Tanski remarked that much of the housing language as listed in the POCD is at odds with absolute conservation goals. This is something that the TPZ and the Council will have to weigh. However, as a member of a subcommittee on affordable housing, she will largely focus her thoughts on the question of housing.

Mr. Chalder reiterated that this body might suggest a midterm reevaluation of the POCD, not to change chapters wholesale, but to look at them with a different lens, especially in lieu of the recent housing and statutory changes that have been proposed and enacted. He explained that this booklet with some of the observations could be used generally or as a footnote but waiting until 2028 to reevaluate some of these policies might be a cause for criticism. Ms. Augur added that the POCD is used in Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) 8-24 referrals, so any capital expenditures associated with housing are referred to the TPZ for comment, who base their comments on the POCD. Therefore, it is important that the policies in the POCD are in line with what the town has adopted in their affordable housing plan.

Ms. Tanski thanked Mr. Chalder and Ms. Augur for bringing their attention to the notion of redevelopment. She noted that it is true that many of the most attractive parcels in town have, at one point in time, been redeveloped, but maybe not to the best use. She finds the notion of form-based design guidelines to be interesting. Mr. Chalder added that the advantage to a form-based type of approach is that, while the design review process is typically seen as cumbersome and

discretionary, a form-based code is fairly specific and clear. It is another alternative which might be worthy of consideration. He then explained that because of the locations of the water and sewer service areas, the delineation of the areas in the 2018-28 POCD might also be revisited. Transit and utility availability may be a consideration for the next POCD.

b. Zoning Overview

Mr. Chalder then provided an overview of the zoning regulations, with regard to the permitted uses, some of the dimensional standards, the configuration of the zoning map, and some specific observations and possible considerations. He explained that the town has more discretion as part of a zone change, a text change or a map change, as opposed to a site plan or zoning permit. He put together a chart that elucidates what is permitted in the different districts. He then highlighted different provisions in the regulations for the committee to consider, moving forward.

The definition of single-family dwelling includes an accessory building, which can create quite a bit of confusion, so he suggested reviewing the language and possibly adjusting the definition. There is a limitation on the number of people who can live in a 'family' unit, which he suggests removing. There is a maximum floor area requirement for new residential dwellings, which is no longer permitted by a 1988 Supreme Court decision. The coverage requirements in the large lot (country residence) zone are about 12,000 square feet, but it does not allow for more coverage for smaller or multi-family units. This is an area that could be subject to criticism.

In every residential zoning district, single-family existing are permitted uses and new single families are permitted by a zoning permit. In the mixed-use zones and some of the business zones, existing single families are generally permitted but new single families are predominantly not. Two-family dwellings are only permitted by a special exception granted by the ZBA in the village residential district, and family dwellings are permitted in most districts except the village residential.

Housing is not allowed in some of the non-residential zones. Multi-family is only allowed in the Town Center mixed-use and PADs, but it could be allowed in other areas, as well. The PAD requires 10-25 acres, which is a challenge for a community that is developing. Revisiting this minimum parcel size might make sense. The density limits have a lot of variability. He also raised the issue of 'missing middle housing,' which is a statewide issue. Many residential units have either been small single family or large multi-residential units, with very little in the middle. This would be an area of opportunity. He also noted that the text in the zoning regulations and the use table do not always match up correctly.

Mr. Paindiris asked if there is a process whereby the TPZ reconsiders zoning regulations. Ms. Augur replied no, there has not been a built-in process for TPZ to contemplate zoning changes;

however, given recent legislation, the TPZ is likely to look at changing zoning in the next 1-1.5 years. This would be a two-step process, with a recommendation from the TPZ to the Town Council. She added that this steering committee could be a part of that amendment process, if it so chooses. Mr. Chalder pointed out that the level of specificity that this subcommittee would like to get into is still up in the area. The two booklets he just reviewed are meant to be references for the committee members going forward.

c. Synopsis of 2021 Legislative Session

Mr. Chalder explained that one of the bills in the legislative session became Public Act 21-29, which was adopted by the legislature, signed by the Governor, and will take into effect January 1, 2023. It significantly strengthens the language in the statutes related to the purposes of zoning, specifically housing. He walked through some of the changes it proposes:

The zoning enabling act has removed some of its considerations in the CGS, replacing reasonable consideration as to the character of the district with reasonable consideration as to the site characteristics of the district. Public Act 21-29 removes the minimum floor area requirement which is greater than that required by the building housing or other codes. Accessory apartment regulations will go to zoning permits, unless the town opts out of this provision. There will also be a ban on the consideration of more than one parking space for a dwelling unit—unless the town opts out of that provision, too. The Public Act has also created a commission on Connecticut's housing development and future, whose first report is due by January 2022. Ms. Augur added that changes to zoning enabling take effect on October 1.

Mr. Chalder pointed out that other legislative proposals and ideas ended up in different bills, which could potentially come up next year in a new bill. Ms. Tanski stated that, as a subcommittee, they need to make substantive recommendations, rather than simply referrals, to other bodies because that is their mandated goal from the town. She also noted that section 1e of the public act is an express sign from the legislature that they should be considering in-migration opportunities, as well.

d. Other topics and discussion

Ms. Augur stated that they provided committee members with the Zoning and Equity report from the Open Communities Alliance (OCA), which contains Glastonbury-specific information. The OCA also critiqued many of the same items that were discussed tonight, through the specific lens of equity. Mr. Chalder also stressed the importance of meeting with legislators on a regular basis. Because the provisions of Public Act 21-29 changed right up until the final week.

Mr. Paindiris asked if the next subcommittee meeting will discuss the community survey. Mr. Chalder noted that their next meeting will review information from what other communities have

done, which will help them further hone the survey. The plan is to review the survey questions during the August meeting, before deploying the survey in September. Ms. Tanski asked for more guidance into exactly how directive and substantive their recommendations will be. Ms. Augur stated that looking at the strategies of other communities will help this group determine what is feasible and appropriate for a five-year plan. This is the start of a long-term process and reviewing examples and success stories will help define that.

Mr. Paindiris asked about the Council's recent inquiry into the creation of village districts and about a possible joint effort with the Commission on Racial Justice and Equity (RJEC) and what their findings have been. Ms. Tanski explained that the RJEC is awaiting the results of their own survey before making any observable notes on housing. Public outreach has been limited because of COVID-19, but public meetings will start this summer. They will also be making a report to the Town Council. Ms. Augur noted that the village district regulations topic is an ongoing discussion. A committee has not yet formed, but they will ensure that there is coordination with this body. Mr. Johnson added that the Council discussed a potential broader approach to developing design guidelines in the Town Center, perhaps in lieu of building village districts.

5. Adjournment

With no further business to come before the Steering Committee, the meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m. The next meeting will be held July 28, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

Lilly Torosyan
Recording Clerk