

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING STEERING COMMITTEE  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 28, 2021**

The Glastonbury Affordable Housing Steering Committee held a Meeting at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 28, 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  
Christopher Griffin - Town Plan & Zoning Commission {excused}  
Neil Griffin - Executive Director, Housing Authority {excused}  
Carl Stenman - Housing Authority Board of Commissioners  
Nick Paindiris - Community Member  
Patty Parent - Community Member  
Richard Johnson - Town Manager  
Rebecca Augur - Director of Planning & Land Use Services  
Jonathan E. Mullen, AICP - Planner {excused}

**Others present:**

Glenn Chalder - Consultant - Planimetrics

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**1. Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Augur at 6:03 p.m.

**a. Pledge of Allegiance.**

Led by Ms. Augur

**2. Minutes from the July 7, 2021 Meeting**

Ms. Purtill noted a correction to be made on page 3, the third paragraph under Zoning Overview: “single family existing” shall read as “single family existing **homes**”. In the same paragraph, “existing single families” shall read as “existing single **family homes**.”

There were no further comments on the minutes.

**3. Public Communication and Petitions pertaining to the Call**

*Denise Weeks of 334 Hollister Way*, expressed support for the committee’s efforts in expanding affordable housing, but pointed out that there is a shortage of affordable housing for young people and older adults. Fairfield formed a task force which took inventory of suitable sites and funding sources, eventually setting up an Affordable Housing Trust Fund. She recommends that

Glastonbury takes a similar approach. She listed Center Village and the former State Mental Hospital site in Northampton, Mass. as examples of projects that are providing attractive affordable housing, which is walkable, compatible with the community, and pleasant to all. She noted that while Glastonbury has made great use of the Land Acquisition and Preservation Fund, it has mostly been used for open space. She encouraged more use of that fund for this kind of purpose: to survey and identify locations for expanding affordable housing opportunities in town. This would help prevent developers from snatching up parcels. She also stated that the POCD speaks to the use of property in the Adaptive Redevelopment Zone for this purpose. She asked that the committee consider these suggestions.

#### **4. Special Business**

##### **a. Goal Setting for Affordable Housing Steering Committee - Facilitated Discussion**

Ms. Augur explained that the last few meetings were more data-driven, but tonight's conversation will focus on the question of goals. While a concrete goal will not yet be developed, she wants to gauge what the committee views as their goal(s) at this present time. She asked both committee members and the public to jot down their initial thoughts to the question, "What should Glastonbury's goal around affordable housing for the next five years be?" Participants shared their thoughts with a partner, then in groups of four. Then, each group presented their thoughts to the collective crowd:

The first group was comprised of Mr. Stenman and Mr. Johnson from the Committee, plus members of the public. Mr. Stenman presented for the group. He explained that they discussed increasing both ownership units and rental units. For the former, the Town might be able to develop an Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Regarding the latter, the Housing Authority, which is aligned in mission with the Town, could be a great resource. As a qualified developer and key manager of properties, the Housing Authority can conceivably accommodate hundreds of units, as opposed to a handful, while accommodating different income bands. Mr. Stenman noted that they would also look to diversify locations of sites.

The second group was comprised of Ms. Tanski, Ms. Purtill, Ms. Parent and Mr. Paindiris. Ms. Tanski explained that their discussion centered on how best to protect naturally occurring affordable housing, so that they do not go into disrepair. They also discussed increasing housing diversity to encompass different sizes, income points, locations, and include all age groups, not just the elderly. Ms. Purtill noted that there are a lot of existing older units, including apartment buildings, which could be suitable for rehabbing. They agreed with the idea of the Town overseeing this process. They also talked about funding mechanisms. Mr. Paindiris stated that deed restrictions do not work in the long term. The housing trust fund idea appeals to him, but he does not want it to compete with the existing open space trust fund. He also agrees that the Housing Authority has the expertise on this process and should take a lead role in creating more affordable housing. Ms. Tanski added that they should consider streamlining processes for developers to expand options for public housing in the private market. In summary, there was more of a focus on using existing stock and dispersing affordable units across larger geographic areas.

The third group was comprised of members of the audience. Jennifer Wang, who is part of the Racial Justice and Equity Commission (RJEC), spoke on behalf of the group. Their focus was on possible marketing tactics to get residents on board with the idea of expanding affordable housing. For example, tweaking language such as “fair share,” to state instead that Glastonbury could become a leader in the region for having housing that is affordable to others. They also asked what it would take to get residents to support a fund for affordable housing as wholeheartedly as the existing support for the open space fund. They suggested developers be required to make 10% of their units affordable housing going forward. This would be one way of funding the trust fund for affordable housing. In summary, they also looked at expanding diverse housing options and spreading it out in the community while balancing the objectives within the community, such as open space.

Ms. Augur stated that this was a good exercise to get a feel for where everyone is coming from, which would help the following discussion with Mr. Chalder on potential strategies.

#### **b. Examination of Potential Affordable Housing Strategies for Glastonbury - Facilitated Discussion**

Glenn Chalder explained that Ms. Augur and Mr. Mullen put together some scenarios from other towns. They grouped the various strategies into four different categories:

The first category is increasing the number of affordable developments in the community. Earlier tonight, they discussed potential ways in which that can happen. He noted that Glastonbury has the chance to become a leader here because of the highly regarded expertise of the Housing Authority to draw from and collaborate with. The second category speaks to some of the phraseology in the POCD which could be interpreted as impediments. The statutes have changed this year, which provides them with a great opportunity to address and ameliorate those concerns. The third category is that the concept speaks to not just affordable housing developments, but also expanding housing choices and areas. Housing is not necessarily just elderly housing; it is for everybody. The fourth category is having a standard housing affordability document, which helps developers know what they need to abide by. This could be the Affordable Housing Trust Fund that was discussed earlier.

Ms. Tanski agreed with Mr. Paindiris’ earlier point that deed restrictions, while initially expanding affordability, end up being unfair to people who live in those homes and do not have the opportunity to build equity. In perpetuity, it almost creates a second class of ownership, which is worrying. Mr. Stenman added that it also creates an administrative nightmare, to manage and oversee that program. Mr. Chalder asked if they could rely entirely on the Housing Authority for funding. Ms. Tanski would like to see space in their regulations for housing opportunities with slightly higher densities in some areas. This way, private developers could redevelop some parcels with multi-unit housing, such as duplexes. Mr. Chalder asked if the deed restrictions would promote home ownership or rentals. Ms. Purtil noted that the Town had deed restrictions on units years ago, and it was not successful. They are trying to find a way to have affordable units that stay affordable units.

Mr. Johnson asked what affordable housing is. Mr. Chalder stated that lowercase “affordable” is when one spends less than 30% of their income on housing. The capital case “Affordable” is what housing counts to the State’s affordable housing appeals list. There are four different “flavors,” as officially designated by the State of Connecticut:

- Assisted housing, such as the Housing Authority
- Deed restrictions
- Tenant rental assistance, which could be either mobile or project based
- CHFA financed mortgages

Ms. Augur noted that more than 75% of Glastonbury’s affordable housing is governmentally assisted. Of the 604 affordable housing units in town, there are only 2 deed-restricting units, 44 tenant rentals, and 133 CHFA/USDA mortgages. Mr. Chalder noted that this does not get Glastonbury to the 10% threshold as called for in the statutes, but it is a good foundation to build on.

Ms. Tanski asked if the Town could encourage landlords to participate in the tenant rental assistance program more than they currently do. Mr. Chalder stated that it is challenging. There is a stronger demand for tenant rental certificates than a supply. There are waiting lists for certificates. He does not believe that Glastonbury has issued 44 certificates, but people received them and chose Glastonbury because it is such an attractive community.

Mr. Paindiris does not see how they could do anything to impact either tenant rental assistance or the CHFA mortgages. Mr. Chalder explained that, for the mortgage-assistance programs, towns are offered down payment assistance. Farmington, for example, has had a successful cooperative ownership program since 1980. Mr. Johnson pointed out that Farmington already owned the parcels, which were small, and as far as land use, tenants pay taxes only on the building, which also helps. Ms. Tanski stated that their zoning regulations will make it difficult to have smaller parcel developments in town. She thinks that they could get more value under a different model. Mr. Paindiris stated that they could ask developers to include open space. For example, in a 20-lot subdivision, the town would acquire two lots and sell it to the Housing Authority applicant, who could build the house, but the land would still be owned by the developer. Mr. Chalder stated that they should be careful. While the statutes allow for the expansion of affordable housing, subdivisions are a separate issue and case law.

*Ms. Tanski left the meeting at 7:16 p.m.*

Mr. Chalder clarified that Glastonbury is not restricted to the four strategies presented. They can get creative on which avenue(s) they decide to pursue. Mr. Paindiris noted that, regarding assisted housing, the Housing Authority is a function of federal and state money. The Town cannot control that. He asked if the Town could make it easier for the Housing Authority to utilize grants to increase the number of units, without waiting for a developer to come along. Mr. Stenman explained that the key is identifying available land. Mr. Chalder noted that New Canaan used their housing trust fund to reconfigure units. They were able to increase their units by 50%, so they jumped the line. He finds it a good strategy to support the Housing Authority’s efforts.

The committee agreed that, should deed restrictions be pursued, that they only promote rental units, not ownership. Mr. Chalder noted that the statutory minimum is 40 years, but Darien's deed restrictions extend to either 40 years or the life of the unit, whichever is longer. They received two moratoriums because they have had so many affordable housing units. Ms. Augur noted that there is an incentive for Darien's deed restrictions.

Mr. Paindiris likes the concept of the cottage court community. He finds the diversity of the structures very aesthetic and likes that it creates a mini community, with different groups of people living within short proximity of each other. Mr. Chalder agreed that people tend to be enamored with them quite often. Their aim is to try to reduce the appearance of the heavy density.

Ms. Purtill asked if they are looking to achieve a target number, for affordable housing in town. Ms. Augur explained that Glastonbury currently stands at 5.7%, so they do not meet the 10% threshold for State Statute 8-30g. Mr. Chalder added that towns passing the 10% threshold are not subject to the affordable housing appeals procedure. While subject to the affordable housing appeals procedure, should an application be turned down for reasons other than public health or safety, or approved with conditions rendering the project infeasible the applicant can appeal directly to the courts, where the burden of proof will be on the Town and not the developer. Some towns are trying to get to a moratorium, which is based on 2% of a town's housing count. This provides them with four years in which they are not subject to the act. Mr. Stenman added that the requirement is that this town/committee has a plan in place by next June.

Mr. Chalder explained that the committee's next meeting will center on the input of the survey, which they intend to deploy in September.

## **5. Adjournment**

With no further business to come before the Steering Committee, the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m. The next meeting will be held August 25, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

Lilly Torosyan  
Recording Clerk