

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING STEERING COMMITTEE
AMENDED SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES (pages 4 & 5)
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2021**

The Glastonbury Affordable Housing Steering Committee held a Meeting at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 22, 2021 in the Council Chambers of Town Hall at 2155 Main Street. The meeting was also broadcast in real time and via a live video stream.

Committee Members:

Deborah Carroll - Town Council
Lillian Tanski - Town Council
Sharon Purtill - Town Plan & Zoning Commission {excused}
Christopher Griffin - Town Plan & Zoning Commission
Neil Griffin - Executive Director, Housing Authority {excused}
Carl Stenman - Housing Authority
Nick Paindiris - Community Member
Patty Parent - Community Member {excused}
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 6:07 p.m.

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

- b. **Minutes of August 25, 2021 Meeting**

There were no comments on the minutes.

2. Public Communication and Petitions

Alice Sexton of 45 Hardin Lane, asked that these meetings be held on Zoom for the public to be able to attend remotely.

Pamela Lockard at 10 Southgate Drive, appreciated that last week's meeting was recorded. She thanked Town Hall staff for helping to direct her to access the minutes and watch the meeting online. At the last meeting, she spoke in favor of Section 8 housing based on her own experiences. She supports avenues for increasing affordable housing that would require the least

amount of building, with equal distribution across Glastonbury and the least amount of red tape. She then asked a series of questions:

- Why is the Section 8 voucher program in Glastonbury currently closed for new applicants?
- This November, will Glastonbury apply to the grant program that the Housing Authority had discussed at the last meeting?
- It seems that developers could build housing units without any need for zoning compliance. Is that correct?
- Which method for increasing affordable housing would provide the least tax increase?
- Will there be affordable housing units in the current proposal for apartments on Hubbard Street?
- Will an existing apartment complex in town be required to accept a certain number or percentage of housing vouchers?

3. Special Business

a. Continued Discussion of Potential Affordable Housing Strategies for Glastonbury

Mr. Chalder recapped that, at the end of the last meeting, the Committee began discussing deed-restricted units. The feedback he received from the Committee prioritized the rental model over the ownership model, since Glastonbury has had a challenging history with deed-restricted ownership units. However, he cautioned that, even if they do not wish to pursue deed-restricted ownership units, that may still happen, should an applicant choose the ownership model instead.

Although the units of potential are few, the Town could acquire properties that become available and consider them for deed restrictions. There are several ways to convert existing rental units into deed-restricted units. Some require funding, which becomes a challenge because financial considerations are longer and harder to accomplish. Mr. Stenman stated that significant capital funding would need to be available to acquire and maintain a property, realizing that resulting cash flows will become restricted once the property becomes deed-restricted and is not fully subsidized from a rental perspective. Mr. Chalder explained that it will become an owned deed restricted unit, which comes with its own set of issues, and if it becomes a rental property, there may need to be some capital improvement; in that case, the Town may have to put money in.

Mr. Paindiris asked how many properties have been acquired by foreclosure in the past 20 years. Mr. Johnson stated that the residential properties that the Town has acquired have largely been to protect the Town's interests because they were adjacent to a Town facility. Of the three properties he listed, none are deed-restricted units. Mr. Chalder recommends that the Town prepares a list of standard documents so that all deed-restricted properties follow the same

parameters and creates a list of approved third-party administrators who can oversee the sale and rental of deed-restricted units.

The Town should also evaluate whether to extend the term of deed restrictions beyond the statutory minimum of 40 years and evaluate how and when to address the possibility of windfall, which can occur at the end of a deed restriction term. Ms. Tanski believes that these two items should be moved up in priority (from the white box to the blue box) to help reflect the notion that affordable housing is a benefit for the entire community. Mr. Chalder suggested changing the verb from “evaluate whether” to “investigate how,” which is more proactive language.

On page 9, Mr. Chalder noted that these options move out of the affordability realm to expand upon other housing choices in the community, such as naturally affordable housing. The first strategy he suggested is to conduct a comprehensive review of the Zoning Regulations to address Public Act 21-29 and impediments to housing choices. The second is to adopt either an ordinance or zoning regulation to require that “age-friendly” universal design features be incorporated in new multi-family developments. Other strategies are to investigate ways to incentivize and preserve housing units to people who earn 100-120% of area median income. This would help ensure that those who are just above the 80% threshold can still qualify for affordable units. He also suggested identifying locations and areas where housing options could be expanded, and investigating options to establish middle housing, such as cottage courts and street-front townhouses.

Ms. Tanski agrees that the Town’s choice to increase affordable housing will have broader implications on the market and could have potential price pressures for people who are just above the 80% threshold. She believes that it is also important to meet the needs of those with middle income and doing so would help to garner community support. Mr. Paindiris asked if there are any four-family structures in Glastonbury. Mr. Johnson stated that there are a couple brick structures on Griswold Street and Prospect Street. Mr. Paindiris asked if there could be alternative measures for affordable housing, outside of area income. Mr. Chalder stated that the Town could pursue that, but it would not necessarily count towards its Affordable Housing Appeals List (Connecticut General Statutes 8-30g) total. He suggests that the Town uses the state parameters and recognizes that anything outside that is a choice and will not get credit. Moving ahead, having a visual gallery will help people see that these units are not so aesthetically displeasing and can fit right in with Glastonbury.

Mr. Chalder then reviewed Section 4, which looks at other approaches. If a community peaks on the adoption of the plan and walks away, the plan tends to not have much influence. He asked which entity in the future might oversee these tasks. Mr. Paindiris agreed, adding that some do not have enough knowledge about the zoning regulations to know what to do. Two meetings ago, a lawyer from a nonprofit spoke, who seemed to be very knowledgeable about zoning

regulations. Bringing in industry specialists to this committee would be a very fruitful exercise. Ms. Tanski recommends that the Council not be the sole repository for the responsibility to review these matters, since housing is not their area of expertise, and their members can change. Mr. Chalder stated that when the time comes to share their document with others, such as the Council, they will convey that this effort is important to continue in the future.

Mr. Chalder noted that he placed the establishment of a Housing Trust Fund in the white box (high priority) and funding it in the blue box (lower priority). He shared several funding opportunities, such as implementing a fee on zoning permits. Another way is a little-known provision that is buried in the state statutes. The requirement is that donations to the community then get matched by the state. Mr. Johnson added that the funding would come from a wide variety of sources, and donations are tax deductible. Mr. Paindiris shared that, initially, he was opposed to a housing trust fund because he viewed it as competition, but he has changed his mind on it. However, it is not enough to just establish it; funding it must also be a high priority. Mr. Chalder cautioned that ‘fund’ is a strong verb. He suggested changing the language to “Investigate how to fund.” *Chris* Griffin asked who is administering the fund in other communities. Mr. Chalder stated that the final decision is made by the legislative body in town, but in one case, it is the affordable housing authority who decides how they get the approvals.

Mr. Chalder reviewed a few options for establishing/strengthening design guidelines. One option is a form-based code, which is an independent discussion of what this committee seeks to do. Other options include written guidelines/graphic guidelines or a state “pattern book”. Ms. Tanski expressed concern about the pattern book, noting that the state’s history of producing such things in a timely fashion is questionable, and she believes that most people in Town would like to see something Glastonbury-specific. Mr. Chalder replied that it might be in their best interest to promote graphic guidelines. He has worked with the Town of Simsbury who had pictures that showed what was encouraged and discouraged. In the sidebar, they could mention that the state book is anticipated for some time in the future and might help inform future efforts.

Mr. Chalder noted that there are currently 40 units of rental assistance certificates in town. One strategy is to increase, or seek a way to increase, the number of “tenant-based” rental assistance certificates which Glastonbury gets credit for. Ms. Tanski suggested working with landlords on this, specifically to aid them with connections in the form of a matchmaking service. Another strategy is to seek to attract buyers receiving CHFA/USDA mortgages through education of realtors and lenders and counseling of purchasers. They could also incentivize buyers receiving these mortgages since such units count towards the Towns’ Affordable Housing Appeals List. Mr. Chalder noted that Farmington does this by entering a partnership with the home purchaser and buying the property.

He also explained that “aging in place” is something that more and more people are interested in doing. One strategy is to continue to help support people who are aging in place. Another option to investigate ways to enable easier permitting of handicapped ramps and help support seniors/lower-income households with maintenance. *Chris* Griffin believes that it makes sense to tie the maintenance component into the housing fund because rehabbing projects is enhancing community beautification. Mr. Chalder also shared that Glastonbury cannot do everything on its own, so supporting regional efforts is important.

b. Community Survey

The survey closes on Monday. Mr. Chalder will compile the results and forward them to the committee. He might be out of state next month, so they may move the next two meetings forward by a week, to get a draft plan in by Thanksgiving. Ms. Carroll suggested following the Council’s protocol for meeting format: if Glastonbury is in the red zone, the Committee will meet over Zoom; if it is in the orange zone or below, they will meet in-person. The Committee agreed to follow that protocol.

Mr. Stenman responded to the public comment which asked if the Housing Authority will be making an application this November for funding. He clarified that the comment that was made at the last meeting was in reference to the annual applications for 9% low-income tax credits administered by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority. Those applications are for development of new affordable housing communities. They do not have anything at this time, so the Housing Authority is not submitting an application this year.

4. Adjournment

With no further business to come before the Steering Committee, the meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lilly Torosyan
Recording Clerk