

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING STEERING COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 2022**

The Glastonbury Affordable Housing Steering Committee held a Public Workshop at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, January 31, 2022 via Zoom video conferencing. The meeting was also broadcast in real time and via a live video stream.

Committee Members:

Deborah Carroll - Town Council
Sharon Purtill - Town Plan & Zoning Commission
Christopher Griffin - Town Plan & Zoning Commission
Neil Griffin - Executive Director, Housing Authority
Carl Stenman - Housing Authority Board of Directors
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 6:32 p.m. She explained that Mr. Chalder will provide an overview of the draft of the 5-Year Affordable Housing Plan for Glastonbury, which is also available for viewing on the Town website.

2. Draft Plan Presentation and Discussion

Mr. Chalder explained the various strategies recommended in the plan, broken down into five categories: to elevate housing issues, to increase assisted housing units, to increase deed-restricted housing units, to expand other housing options/choices, and other approaches. The plan contains an implementation element that addresses which agency will address what and when.

Ms. Purtill noted that the reference to 10 Glastonbury Boulevard on page 4 of the draft plan might be incorrectly listed, as it is a gas station. Ms. Augur will check. Ms. Purtill also asked what “deeply affordable,” as listed on page 9 of the plan, means. Ms. Augur replied that it is units which target those who earn 50-60% or less of the Area Median Income. Ms. Purtill asked to define that more clearly on the plan. Ms. Purtill also stated that accessory dwelling units are now allowed by special permit with site plan review. On page 12, the proposal is to enable it by right. She asked to keep it as it is, with the site plan review, because having something on file results in a better apartment and more information on available units.

3. Public Input of the Draft Plan

Laura Cahill of 17 Montauk Way, stated that the draft report does not outline how the community and region got into this affordable housing crisis. She believes it necessary to include a historic summary of the economic, social, and racial discrimination that form the foundation of why minority communities and lower-income families are locked out of affordable housing opportunities. She also finds that the plan reads more like a consultant's report, as it does not provide goals and clear action steps to establish timeframes or metrics for progress. She called for volunteers to join the ASDRC and the building zones regulations working group. She offered the following recommendations:

1. Recognize that inclusionary zoning is a town-wide affordable housing policy.
2. Establish a lead entity with responsibility for overseeing implementation of an affordable housing plan.
3. No one single entity is responsible for the coordination, execution, and progress evaluation of the affordable housing plan.
4. That CGS Section 8-2i be applied to all Glastonbury zoning districts.
5. Establish an affordable housing trust fund.
6. Review and update Glastonbury's zoning ordinance.
7. Purchase town land and work with an affordable housing developer to build new apartments and homes, with 25-33% set aside for affordable housing units.
8. Build affordable housing units in underused, vacant retail and office space through the creation of special zoning districts.
9. Expand the land acquisition fund to include the purchase of affordable housing developments.
10. Establish a municipal down payment incentive program by coordinating with the federal housing administration and the USDA mortgage programs.
11. Establish a municipal rental assistance program.

Nicholas Korns of 73 Shagbark Road, has several comments and questions, which he hopes will be addressed in the final report. He asked how many responses were received for the community survey, and whether the survey was limited to Glastonbury residents or not. He asked to include a link to the methodology and metrics used because he was not able to find it. He also asked how the area median income is defined and what is the number. He then spoke to the non-resident workforce, noting that this is a free market. Therefore, he does not believe that Glastonbury is under any obligation to provide affordable housing for those who choose to come and work in town. He asked to clarify a statement made in the draft regarding naturally existing affordable housing not being "guaranteed" to those who need it most. He also asked to clarify whether the intent, as listed on page 9, is to use the Reserve for Land Acquisition and Preservation to possibly build affordable housing units. He also asked how those who qualify for "deeply affordable" housing units will be able to pay their taxes and maintain the upkeep of their properties.

Denise Weeks of 334 Hollister Way West, stated that the draft strikes her as more of a plan to make a plan, rather than a roadmap for closing the gap that Glastonbury faces in affordable housing. She was struck by the repeated use of words like "investigate," "consider," and "explore." She also lamented the failure to tie any of the recommendations to an estimate of

actual housing units that each recommendation might create. She does not believe that the plan adequately defines a lead entity for plan implementation and follow up. She fears that the plan will only lead to the creation of another plan. She urged more action-oriented language to strengthen the recommendations and improve the likelihood that the plan will lead to the creation of more affordable housing opportunities.

Pamela Lucas of 145 Moseley Terrace, echoed Ms. Cahill's and Ms. Weeks' comments. She finds it helpful for the plan to include a comparison of Glastonbury's demographics and affordable housing percentages with those of Hartford, the region, and possibly surrounding towns. She would also like it to include the Glastonbury Affordable Housing regulations with the PAD provisions and a brief description of the roles of the Town Council and TPZ in approving affordable housing development projects. She suggested that the plan articulate the following action steps:

1. Enact inclusionary zoning ordinances that require a certain percentage of affordable housing units for all new multi-unit residential developments.
2. Establish a single lead entity to oversee the plan implementation, conduct regular meetings, and prepare regular review documents. Members should include Ms. Augur, Mr. Neil Griffin, a developer with affordable housing experience, an attorney with zoning expertise, and citizens chosen based on their commitment, with Town staff support.
3. Enable Town authorities responsible for approving developments to require the inclusion of affordable housing units as a condition of approval.
4. Purchase and/or use existing municipal land to commence one or more development projects in conjunction with the Glastonbury Housing Authority through local, state, and federal funding. Require new subsidized affordable housing developments to be unrestricted by age and include some three-bedroom units.
5. Establish an affordable housing trust fund, with a substantial fee for developers in lieu of affordable housing for units not built, and with the opportunity for the public to make donations to it.
6. Review and revise housing and zoning ordinances.
7. Evaluate how to streamline the zoning decision and project development approval processes in general throughout town.
8. Establish a municipal down payment or entry-level affordable purchase incentive program to assist home purchasers receiving CHFA or USDA mortgages.
9. Establish a rental assistance program.
10. Review and revise the POCD to include expansion of affordable housing for all age groups, instead of waiting for the 2028 expiration of the current POCD.

Veronica Flores of 68 Ridgecrest Road, stated that she and her husband recently moved from Windsor. Her in-laws also live with them. The special permit requirement poses a financial challenge, as the basement needs a kitchen to be fully viable as an in-law unit. She advocates changing the special permit requirement.

Marvin Flores of 68 Ridgecrest Road, thanked the committee for leading the plan, which he views as a great start to expanding diversity. He also advocated for the special permit requirements to be changed. He then addressed Mr. Korn's comments, stating that everyone deserves a nice, safe place to live.

Kim McClain of 212 Sunset Drive, was a founding board member of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center over 25 years ago. She is saddened by the lack of significant progress of affordable housing in town. She thanked the steering committee for their time and efforts. She made the following recommendations:

1. Enact inclusionary zoning ordinances that require a certain percentage of affordable housing units for all new multi-unit residential developments and include this requirement as a condition of approval.
2. Establish a single lead entity to oversee the plan implementation, conduct regular meetings, and prepare regular review documents. Members should include Ms. Augur, Mr. Neil Griffin, a developer with affordable housing experience, an attorney with zoning expertise, and citizens chosen based on their commitment, with Town staff support.

David O'Connor of 1140 Main Street, supports the comments of Ms. Cahill, Ms. Weeks, Ms. Lucas, and Ms. McClain, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Flores' comments calling for more diversity. He made the following recommendations.

1. Enact inclusionary zoning ordinances that require a certain percentage of affordable housing units for all new multi-unit residential developments and include this requirement as a condition of approval.
2. Recognize inclusionary zoning as a town policy. Modify existing zoning regulations that impede affordable housing project development.
3. Rather than depend on several town agencies, he supports the establishment of a single lead entity to oversee the final plan implementation.
4. Purchase and/or use existing municipal land to commence one or more development projects, which the Glastonbury Housing Authority could oversee.
5. Establish a housing trust fund.
6. Create an awareness building program to strengthen public knowledge and support for increased affordable housing opportunities.
7. Support a fair share approach to affordable housing.

Erin Boggs of 612 Manchester Road, has lived in town for over 20 years, but she grew up in Washington, DC, where she encountered lots of diversity in school. Her organization, Open Communities Alliance, is committed to addressing the root causes of segregation. Only 2.2% of the housing units in town are affordable and open to families with children, with the remaining available only to seniors. She asked to work backwards by starting with the goal of the number of units that the town could set aside for affordable housing, and plan around that. She asked to change not only planning and zoning, but also town behavior, to actively encourage mixed housing development.

John Guskowski, AICP, is a Planner at Tyche Planning and Policy Group, which has worked with OCA and TALK to develop a Fair Share plan for Glastonbury's affordable housing. He offered to work with the Town to incorporate some of their recommendations into the plan.

Anne Bowman of 62 Morgan Drive, thanked the committee and Mr. Chalder for their work on the plan. She made the following suggestions:

1. Require new subsidized affordable housing developments to be unrestricted by age and include some three-bedroom units.

2. Adopt an inclusionary zoning regulation to increase subsidized affordable housing developments.
3. Establish a housing trust fund, with a substantial fee for developers in lieu of affordable housing for units not built.

Bruce Bowman of 62 Morgan Drive, echoed the recommendations of most speakers tonight. He supports developing a single entity to oversee the implementation of an affordable housing plan. He also requests that the entity provide an annual report to town residents as to its progress. He supports recognizing inclusionary zoning, unrestricting developments by age and including three-bedroom units, as well as the creation of a housing trust fund. He echoed the prior concerns of language usage in the draft, to move away from ambiguous terms to more specific, goal-oriented terminology.

Kristine Vitelli of 9 Martin Terrace, advocates not just for social justice issues, but also for environmental justice issues, such as not constructing new buildings when existing buildings can be utilized. The pandemic has increased remote working, which provides an opportunity to acquire office space and convert them into residential units. This is advantageous because these units contain lots of existing parking spaces, and would place residents near restaurants, shopping, and public transportation options. She asked that the committee clearly convey to the public that the plan will expand affordable housing in a responsible way without changing the character of the town.

Pamela Lockard of 10 Southgate Drive, hopes that the committee will assist the Flores' by streamlining the process of acquiring an accessory dwelling unit. She also supports establishing a replenishable fund to encourage the transfer of housing vouchers from other towns to Glastonbury. This would help lessen the number of rental units that would need to be built for affordable housing in town. Additionally, landlords could be given a tax incentive. She thanked the committee for their efforts.

Anthony Woods of 696 Ash Swamp Road, also supports removing the obstacles for acquiring an accessory dwelling unit. Historic farms carry a tax burden, and this could help them reinvent themselves while also benefiting the region.

Stewart Beckett of 308 Tryon Street, does not believe that owned units can ever stay affordable over a long period of time. To meet the State threshold, which requires that 10% of housing stock in town be affordable, 550 more units need to be made affordable. He encouraged the Glastonbury Housing Authority to take the lead on that. The population of Glastonbury is 60% singles and couples. He hopes that the focus is set on expanding affordable apartments, especially for seniors looking to downsize. He also supports a fee going towards the creation of a housing trust fund.

Richard Eldridge of 108 South Mill Drive, supports moving forward on the presented proposal.

Lisa Eldridge of 108 South Mill Drive, agreed with Ms. Vitelli's comments about using existing buildings to not cut down more trees or use open space to accomplish their goals.

Ms. Augur provided a summary of the public comments that were emailed to staff:

Greg Hermanowycz of 440 Addison Road, asked why the current PAD regulations are the only regulations that address affordable housing. He also expressed concerns about more affordable housing being in the center of town and what burdens that places on the school system.

Lynn Avitabile of 28 Cutter Lane, asked what additional services the Town would need to provide as affordable housing comes to town.

Mark Sheridan of 28 Cutter Lane, asked who would be accommodated by affordable housing, and whether race of candidates is used as a criterion for allocating units.

Alison Bliss of 34 Hubbard Run Drive, provided general support for affordable housing and offered to help support the group.

James Wagner of 40 Staples Lane, outlined the need for more affordable rental units.

Loretta Rivers of 16 Knox Lane, expressed concerns about the GHA in its design, management, and involvement of residents in its conduct.

Jill Grieveson of 3 Tryon Farm Road, supports inclusionary zoning and the creation of an affordable housing trust fund. She asked for more direct language in the plan, and that it have a more family focus, not just seniors.

Julia and Rob Dakers of 15 Trifiro Circle, asked for more specificity in the recommendations, urged the adoption of inclusionary zoning regulations, and called for the plan to contain housing targets as measures for implementation success.

Carl Bristol of 219 Sunset Drive, asked if the Town is considering inclusionary zoning and whether inclusionary units would be included in the former tobacco warehouse.

Mr. Stenman asked those who spoke tonight to include their comments in a written format so that they could be disseminated to the committee. He also asked that the plan be shared in a red line format and watermarked, so that there is no confusion about which version they are dealing with. He would also like to see greater specificity in the plan, especially regarding the number of units and timeframes.

Mr. Paindiris asked what charge the committee has in implementing the public's asks. Ms. Augur reviewed the process and next steps, explaining that the plan is envisioned to proceed to the TPZ for comment and recommendations to the Council, who will ultimately adopt the plan. Ideally, the committee's recommendations would be sent to the TPZ in the spring. Mr. Paindiris asked how they would come up with the plan. Ms. Augur stated that the draft plan has not significantly changed since November. It is up to the committee to decide what they would like to do with it, based on the comments received tonight.

Ms. Carroll finds the big takeaway of tonight's comments to be a call for greater specificity in the plan, with target numbers and a target timeline. The committee's recommendations need to be actionable, not philosophical, and she thinks that they are most of the way there. She agreed with Ms. Cahill's comments about adding context in the form of a historical background.

Ms. Purtill does not think that it is the committee's charge to describe the history. She believes that the report is supposed to be a general plan, and the implementation is through actions from the Council, the TPZ, and the Housing Authority. She emphasized that none of the existing accessory apartments are included in the number of affordable housing units because the definition of affordable housing units under the State statute does not include those units. She has trouble with the use of municipal land to build affordable housing. Over the last 30 years, huge town resources have been spent to try to save land from being developed. She finds the concerns expressed tonight about the tax impact to be valid.

Mr. Paindiris asked that, at the committee's next meeting, they consider prioritizing the various ideas discussed. Neil Griffin agreed. Ms. Purtill stated that one of the priorities should be an in-depth look at inclusionary zoning. Chris Griffin agreed, stating that the benchmarks will require monetary information. He would like to know which strategies would be the most economically feasible. Ms. Carroll clarified that land which has been purchased for open land preservation cannot be developed. However, land is a high priority because there is not a lot of space available for development in town. Mr. Stenman suggested using resources such as ARPA specifically for parcels designated to affordable housing opportunities with proximity to sewer and water. Ms. Carroll stated that there have been three public hearings for the ARPA funding, and they await more public input on how to use those funds.

Ms. Augur asked the committee to identify where they would like to see more specificity in the plan. They will discuss this at the next meeting, to be held on February 23, 2022.

4. Adjournment

With no further business to come before the Steering Committee, the meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lilly Torosyan
Recording Clerk