

To be approved

Minutes of the March 1, 2023 Housing Committee Meeting  
Meeting was held virtually via WEBex

In attendance: Kathy Hunter, Mary Dean, Elaine Feldman, Donovan Lofters, Jim Graham, Staff Support: Kris Sullivan, Special guest: Sean Ghio, Director of Policy from the Partnership from Strong Communities

Handouts provided: *Case for Preserving and Producing Small Multifamily Housing Developments*, authored by Sean Ghio

Meeting started at 7:05. Kathy introduced Sean Ghio.

Kathy provided an overview of what has been accomplished by the Housing Committee that includes looking at existing town owned property that could be targeted for housing development. Currently, CUPOP is developing a comprehensive list with pertinent information such as properties with restrictions. The Committee also provided a recommendation to the P&Z Commission to expand Opportunity Housing for Multi-housing development to DEV 1. Members are also participating in the SCRCOG Housing Task meetings which helps generate ideas for implementing the plan such as how the use of conventional subsurface sewage treatment and disposal system and wells work for higher density housing. As educating the public is a key strategy in the housing plan, the committee is planning on holding community conversations for residents.

The following are some key elements of the discussion with Sean Ghio for actions a town can do to increase affordable housing:

A critical piece is expanding existing infrastructure. Important to talk about it as NOT being a fixed resource. Should be presented as an option. Sometimes the lack of sewer/water infrastructure becomes a convenient argument for not building affordable housing. This should be considered a long-term strategy. There are plenty examples of affordable housing being developed across the state on conventional septic and well systems that are sanctioned by the State Department of Health. Need to conduct a site build-out analysis, to determine what the site capacity is to understand underlying features. The State also owns property in town that can be used for development. For example, the DOT owns lots of property. An example is the town of Westport that was able to get state DOT land for a development of 100 affordable housing. Used ARPA funding and housing trust fund for the development. SCRCOG might have a map of state-owned land.

What the town can do is make it easier for housing to be build, lowering regulatory barriers, assembling the sites. This provides the Town the power of deciding where affordable housing gets built. Even small towns like Morris have identified a site that was town owned site and allocated \$50K for predevelopment. Sources of technical assistance to help with housing development includes LISC, CDFI.

Some towns establish an Affordable House Fund, that could be funded from town appropriations, fees from permits, opt-out fees for inclusionary zoning ordinances, or donations. There are best practices for creating one if the town is interested in this. This funding is critical for funding a development concept as this initial idea phase is hard to fund given the risk.

The town can contract with a regional housing authority or form a regional housing authority. A common need is for senior housing which is usually more acceptable than building for families or people with disabilities. The town can also work with a private developer though Housing Authorities have access to public funding.

Discussed lower lot size requirements. Current 2-acre lot sizes are not a standard required for development. Lot sizes should be based on regulations that include the Clean Water Act and in the Department of Health. There are plenty of examples such as Litchfield, that built a multifamily housing development on 24 acres utilizing a septic system and well system.

Discussed other options for increasing housing choice such as adaptive re-use of structures that have outlived their use and may be an eye-sore in town. This could include strip malls, office buildings, etc.

Ridgefield is an example of a town that identified where they want to build affordable housing. The town can be proactive in identifying sites and putting that out to the development world. Ultimately, the work of the Committee is to have the town understand that more housing would make Woodbridge better and more equitable.

#### Update on Community Conversations.

Kathy reported that Ben Fink was planning on being in Woodbridge on March 23<sup>rd</sup> so the goal is to schedule a couple of sessions to begin the community conversation process. Mary reported that she did have a conversation with Cathy Wick who was assembling people from the land trusts. Kathy reported she spoke to Steve Lawrence who could bring in members from the DEI community.

Meeting ended at 9:10 pm.