

Lyme Affordable Housing Commission Meeting February 1, 2021

This meeting was conducted via ZOOM. Electronically present: Tim Hildner (Chair), Carleen Gerber, Carol House, Steve Mattson, Jim Miller, Isabel Roberge, and Tina West.

Hildner called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

The minutes of the January 11 meeting were accepted as posted.

Old Business:

Meeting Time: Hildner proposed a change in the timing of the monthly meeting of the Commission, starting at 6:30 p.m. rather than at 5:00 p.m. The meeting dates continue to be on the first Monday of each month. On months when there is a Monday holiday that falls on the first Monday, we would move to the second Monday of those months. A concern was expressed that our meeting on those four months might overlap with the Planning and Zoning Commission that meets at 7:30 pm on the second Monday of the month. Therefore, it was decided that in these cases the Commission will simply assign another member to continue taking meeting minutes after 7:30 p.m., if any, so that secretary House can move on to the P & Z meeting. The proposed change in meeting time was passed, to start with the March meeting. Hildner will resubmit this timing to the Town Clerk.

Public Education Initiative: The Commission discussed the revised draft of an online educational quiz that will be used to help remove misperceptions among Lyme residents about affordable housing and its potential impact on Lyme. The Commission also reviewed a marketing plan developed by John Kiker and Hildner to present the quiz to the public. The Commission approved the quiz and marketing plan (with a couple of small revisions) for posting. Separately, the Commission discussed a draft plan for expanding the use of the Commission's webpage as an educational tool. The discussion included consideration of the scope of the material that would qualify for posting on the website. The Commission thanked Miller for preparing the draft plan and carried over further discussion to the next meeting.

Affordable Housing Rental Model: The Commission approved a final draft of a letter to be sent to homeowners identified by the Lyme Assessor as having an accessory structure. The letter briefly describes the proposed program and offers these homeowners an opportunity to express interest in such a program and join with the Commission to discuss the details. The Commission directed Hildner to pursue mailing these letters.

Separately, Hildner reported out on his meeting with Ross Byrne, the Lyme Zoning Enforcement Officer, for an update on the two zoning modifications proposed by the Commission in Mattson's 5/17/2020 email to Byrne and Bernie

Gigliotti, Chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Affordable Housing Commission has held these proposed changes in abeyance in order to coordinate their progress as part of a larger package of zoning changes currently under consideration by the Planning & Zoning Commission. The proposed changes, intended to facilitate more rental units within existing residences qualifying as affordable under State regulations, include: 1) requirement for a separate egress; 2) requirement for a special permit within the R-40 zone. Hildner will review the requirement for a separate egress against the fire code and follow up with Byrne and Ron Rose, the Lyme Building Official. Upon the outcome of that review, the Commission will determine how it wants to proceed in regards to a possible informal presentation to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Finally, on the matter of encouraging homeowners to enroll their accessory structure in a possible affordable housing rental program, Hildner asked the Commission members to consider an incentive program for discussion at our next meeting.

Ruth Young Property: Hildner and Mattson reported out on their Jan. 12th status meeting with Kenneth McKeever, Esq., Town Counsel, regarding his ongoing review of the forms of the Ground Lease and the Eligibility and Application documents. Attorney McKeever will complete his review and follow up with Hildner and Mattson. Hildner also reported that he has not had any further conversation, since the Commission's last meeting, with those who have expressed a possible interest in constructing an affordable home on the site.

Affordable Housing Plan: Lyme is required by state statute to have an official Affordable Housing Plan. This Commission will have the lead role in the drafting of this plan. We will be working with the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG) to fit our plan within a regional plan. No additional action to report at this time. The Commission members were asked to give additional thought before the next meeting to the question of what our Affordable Housing Plan should look like. The members have been asked to consider this question particularly in the context of regionalization, as well the needs and concerns of those who qualify for affordable housing.

New Business:

Fund Raising – The Commission talked about moving to a more focused fund raising effort. All agreed that this would work best after we identified a specific project that would benefit from the fund raising efforts.

Hildner adjourned the meeting at 6:48 pm.

Next meeting: Monday March 1 at 6:30 pm. This will be a Zoom meeting.

Respectively submitted,
Carol House