

Lyme Affordable Housing Commission Meeting March 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.

Visitors: Steve Olstein, Susan Fox

Hildner called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm.

The minutes of the February 1 meeting were discussed. The following addition was added to the posted minutes under Public Education Initiative - *In the discussion of the web content on the Affordable Housing page of the Lyme Website, the Commission agreed it should focus on matters specific to Lyme.* The minutes were accepted as corrected.

Old Business:

Meeting Time: The time change of the Commission's monthly meetings to 6:30 p.m. (previously 5:00 p.m.) was submitted to the Town Clerk. This was deemed a minor change and not subject to the requirement that the Commission publicly repost it's the annual schedule with the opportunity for public comment.

Public Education Initiative:

The Commission discussed results from the online educational quiz about the status of affordable housing in Lyme. Per this date, there were 55 people who took the quiz, with 9 comments/questions. The Commission is planning to answer questions on its web page, and to take additional actions to further publicize the quiz.

Separately, the Commission continued to discuss expanding the use of the Commission's webpage as an educational tool, with the scope of information to be focused specifically on Lyme. Two items that should be added: the guidelines for drafting a town's affordable housing plan; the state's criteria for classifying a housing unit as "affordable."

Affordable Housing Rental Model: The Commission sent out a letter to homeowners identified by the Lyme Assessor as having an accessory structure. The letter briefly described the proposed program and offered these homeowners an opportunity to express interest in such a program and join with the Commission to discuss the details. There were few responses.

The Commission further discussed zoning modifications intended to facilitate more rental units within existing residences to qualify as affordable under State regulations. After discussion with Town building and zoning officials, there is unlikely to be a change in the requirement for a separate egress, including for homes in which the tenant has use of the principal residence's egress. Further,

per the State Building Inspector's office, a 1-hour firewall between the rental unit and the main part of the house is required, if the rental unit has a separate egress.

Ruth Young Property: After being carried in the Town's budget for two years, the funding for site development (\$60,000) is not currently in the Town's budget.

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 to the ideas we would like to see in the plan, but we are on hold until there is additional action by the RiverCOG.

New Business:

Susan Fox talked about the need to acknowledge and address the issue of racial disparity in housing throughout Connecticut. She talked briefly about work she was involved in when she lived in New Haven. There was a need for teachers, especially minority teachers, in New Haven but affordable housing for first-year teachers was very hard to find. They were able to achieve community funding for an affordable housing facility where teachers could live rent free. This led to hiring more and better teachers. More broadly, Fox said that local zoning regulations have contributed to racial disparity by disallowing multi-family dwelling units. There are moves throughout the state to make changes in these zoning regulations.

Hildner adjourned the meeting at 8:11 pm.

Next meeting: Monday April 5 at 6:30 pm. This will be a Zoom meeting.

Respectively submitted,
Carol House