

## Affordable Housing Commission Minutes from February 3, 2022

Present in person: Tim Hildner (chair), Carol House, Phyllis Ross, Carleen Gerber, Tina West, Fritz Gahagan ( P&Z AH Plan working group member).  
Zoom: Steve Mattson, Steve Olstein, Jim Miller

Tim called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

The January 6, 2022 meeting minutes were approved as submitted.

### Old Business

- Public Education Initiatives. Tim reported that the Status Update for AH and publicity for the February 7 RiverCOG Zoom presentation are available on the Town website, thanks to John Kiker. AHC members please encourage Lyme residents to attend.

AHC members heartily endorsed Tim's suggestion that Lyme and Old Lyme AHCs send area realtor offices a joint letter on available financing programs for lower income buyers. He will continue his discussion with Michael Fogliano, chair of the OL AHC.

### -Affordable Housing Plan report

The next steps towards completing the AH plan report due June 1,2022 are to:

- circulate the draft Community Values Statement as now approved by the AHC for comment.

- incorporate appropriately the valuable information provided by the 58 responses to Steve Olstein's questionnaire as presented at the meeting.

- make appropriate use of RiverCOG's newly presented information as it relates to Lyme's objectives and to the recent changes in the housing and job markets.

- familiarize RiverCoG's consultants with the context of Lyme's AH objectives, including a tour of Lyme and a meeting with the working group that precedes RiverCOGs first draft of the report.

- finalize ASAP the working group membership to include Lyme residents familiar with 1) the lower income 30% of Lyme's population; 2) District 18's current issues and 3) Lyme's environmental objectives and obligations to the state and federal governments.

Several members expressed dissatisfaction with the interactive policy questions asked at RiverCOG's Jan 24 Zoom presentation on the grounds that participants could not be expected to give well-thought out answers and were probably not a representative group. The AHC agreed to restrict Questions on Feb 7 to obtaining data on the participants. Tim will inform River COG of this decision and provide them with our list of questions.

Jim Miller summarized his CT Examiner OpEd piece on the history and the resulting frictions in changing zoning regulations to encourage AH. Current owners tend to feel entitled to the status quo, and changes often create winners and losers. Successful change requires a balancing act for specific community circumstances, not a one-size-fits all mandate.

Fritz seconded the problems of owners' beliefs in their "rights" and asked for clarification of the AHC's objectives in order to structure the report around them. The ensuing discussion revisited some of the options discussed recently and where their implementation is now:

- accessory apartment regulations seem to be only in need of clarification and outreach. RiverCOG's data show average rents to be effectively at the affordable level. Deed restriction seems highly unlikely but this should not discourage the Town from continuing its long-standing efforts to promote accessory rentals
- duplexes appear to be closer to P&Z serious consideration and the AHC should articulate how AH opportunities could increase.
- given that RiverCOG's data show that about 10% of Lyme's housing stock is "naturally affordable" the AHC should develop ways to conserve as much as possible when these lots come up for sale. Possibly the AHC Fund could purchase an option to buy and then raise further funding.
- the largest scale objective is outlined in the Status Update/Marketing Plan: Town purchase of a bigger than minimum lot for Town-controlled development of Lyme-appropriate rental housing. Overlay zones or special AH permits could become allowable if fully supported by Town residents.

Residents' support in Town meetings and for private funding will be conditioned in large part by promoting AH that is good for the community but does not conflict with most residents' perceptions that AH must not be environmentally damaging.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40

Respectfully submitted,

Tina West