

March 3, 2022 Affordable Housing Commission monthly meeting minutes

Present in person: Tim Hildner, Carol House, Colleen Gerber, Fritz Gahagan (working group member), Tina West. On Zoom: zero

1) Tim called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm. Four members does not constitute a quorum, so no votes were taken.

2) The February 3, 2022 minutes were approved with the addition of Fritz's clarification as underlined below in the following paragraph of those minutes:

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, i.e. whether the AHC was focused solely on state qualified affordable housing or on both that and naturally occurring affordable housing. Tim confirmed that the AHC was focused on both. The ensuing discussion revisited some of the options discussed recently and where their implementation is now:

3) Old Business:

a) Public Education Initiative. Tim's collaboration with the Old Lyme AHC to draft a letter to the area's realtors is ongoing.

b) Affordable Housing Plan. There has been a lot of activity in the last month. Our RiverCOG consultant, John Guskowski, was given a tour of Lyme on Feb 22 by Tim, Carol, Fritz and Tina. Fritz and Carol have drafted documents to guide John's draft plan.

The first meeting of the working group on Zoom on March 2 has been minuted by Tim and is appended to these minutes. There was a unanimous sense that those in attendance tonight endorsed his minutes.

Carol is writing up a description of RiverCOG's data sources, which will assist in our endeavor to understand how accurate RiverCOG's depiction of Lyme is. Fritz is working on a fourth version of potential goals and strategies. As will be clear from Tim's minutes below, the June 1 plan will include next steps towards implementing these strategies with full Town support and to further document the current state of housing and low-income households in Lyme and its policy implications.

A discussion of immediate housing needs in Lyme focused on the elderly. Carleen also raised the point that high turnover rates in affordable housing may not be desirable if we want new families to contribute to a stable community. Possible solutions include higher lease fees for households in new land lease houses if their income exceeds, say, 125% of area median income, or incentives for owners of new affordable houses with accessory apartments to rent to income qualified tenants.

Tina's request that all future drafts and documents from the AHC and the working group be dated, with the author's initials and version numbers where appropriate was unanimously endorsed by the group.

New Business:

Isabel Roberge has resigned from the AHC effective March 3, 2022. Her many years of hard work and her knowledge of mortgage programs have been very valuable and have been greatly appreciated.

Our state representative and state senator will be asked to hear our argument that the "Fair Share" upcoming legislation under the state's current definition of affordable housing is not realistic for Lyme.

The sense of the meeting was that next month's meeting on April 7 be in person only. Several members indicated that they will continue to mask.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina West

Affordable Housing Plan Working Group

Meeting Minutes

March 2, 2022

Present: Bob Cope, Janice Ehlemeyer (RiverCOG), Fritz Gahagan, Carleen Gerber, John Guskowski (Tyche Planning and Policy Group, a RiverCOG Consultant), Tim Hildner, Carol House, Jim Miller, Phyllis Ross, Kathy Tisdale, Tina West

The meeting began at 4:02 pm with an introduction of the meeting participants. Hildner then stated that the meeting's purpose is to lay out and review the steps and potential strategies and goals to be incorporated into Lyme's Affordable Housing Plan (Plan) in a way that will enable Guskowski to begin drafting a Plan that will reflect the intentions of the Town of Lyme.

By way of background information, Hildner referenced the 2/7/22 affordable housing community meeting hosted by RiverCOG and a 2/22/22 tour of Lyme with Guskowski that included Gahagan, House, West and Hildner. Hildner noted that on the day of the tour questions were raised regarding RiverCOG's consultant's statistical analysis that supported some of the conclusions about affordable housing in Lyme. Hildner emphasized that these questions will be answered through a systematic and thorough analysis that will be part of the initial steps of the Plan. Separately, Hildner also noted that RiverCOG has indicated that their consultants will be very willing to work with Lyme to incorporate the content of the outline for the Plan prepared by House into RiverCOG's "Affordable Housing Plan Annex" template.

The Community Values Statement (2/3/22) was presented and Hildner noted that 80% of the people participating in the polling during the 2/7/22 community meeting comprised those who either strongly agreed or agreed with statement. The working group agreed to proceed on the basis of the statement as presented.

Gahagan walked us through his work regarding the steps (Version 2, 2.21.22) to be included in the Plan to be submitted to the state by June 1st. Gahagan emphasized the importance of (i) gaining a clear understanding of the scope and extent of the affordable housing issues facing Lyme, (ii) addressing affordable housing that is both naturally occurring and qualified under the state's definition, and (iii) engaging town leaders, boards and commissions, as well as the general public in the work to be done under the Plan. Fritz thanked those who had provided comments on his work throughout the review process.

Gahagan then reviewed his list of Potential Goals and Strategies (V3, 2.22.22) to be included in the Plan. Gahagan emphasized throughout the discussion the importance of having a "toolbox of options" that would position Lyme to be

opportunistic in addressing its affordable housing needs. He also emphasized that the goals and strategies incorporated in the Plan should be presented as merely options for consideration that will be explored only after the Town has established a clearer understanding of its affordable housing needs. There is a lot of work that needs to be done before Lyme is in a position to pursue any particular strategy. Again, Fritz thanked those who had provided comments on his work.

Throughout the discussion of goals and strategies, the subject of the affordable housing needs of the elderly received particular attention. It was noted by Gerber that there is currently a waiting list for affordable housing that serves the elderly in the area. Tisdale shared her first-hand experience with elderly people who are struggling with housing costs. Other comments echoed the call to consider ways to create more affordable housing for the elderly.

The preservation of existing Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (“NOAH”) also received a good deal of attention. As a part of the discussion, Cope provided insights around the possibility of purchasing the right to develop NOAH properties into more developed, higher value housing.

Hildner reviewed a tentative timeline for the completion of the Plan by June 1st. He emphasized that, other than the June 1st date, the timeline represents “soft” dates that will be finalized as we move further along in the drafting of the Plan. Guskowski concurred that the tentative timeline represented a reasonable plan.

Hildner indicated that he would report back to the Affordable Housing Commission during their 3/3/22 meeting on the work of this Affordable Housing Plan working group.

The meeting adjourned at 5:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Tim Hildner