

Town of Fairfield
Office of Community & Economic Development
Affordable Housing Commission
July 18, 2012

The Affordable Housing Commission of the Town of Fairfield held a meeting on July 18, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Room in Old Town Hall.

PRESENT: Steve Grathwohl, Chair; Mary Galgota; Gerry Stuhlman; Lisa Winjun

Also Present: Mark Barnhart, Director of Housing and Economic Development; Sally Parker; Carol Martin, Executive Director Fairfield Housing Authority; Vincent Maiola

Mr. Grathwohl called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

Distributions: Minutes of April 17, 2012

Minutes:

The minutes of April 17, 2012 were approved.

Train Station

Mr. Barnhart said Black Rock Realty had not yet applied to the TP&Z for a variance to build housing in place of an office building. It does conform to the 'overlay' as adopted for the Commerce Drive area. The proposal calls for 187 units with 10% of each type of unit to be affordable. BRR is still looking for tenants for the Concourse Building. Mr. Stuhlman asked if the plan is realistic. Mr. Barnhart said financing is available now and that the market is good for residential development.

Fairfield Housing Authority

Ms. Martin, recently appointed as Executive Director of the FHA, said she is applying to HUD for a spot AMI for Fairfield. Currently, the town is in the sphere of Bridgeport and this is unrealistic given the costs of housing in Fairfield. Ms. Martin spoke about the financial position of the FHA and the development of plans to put it on a sustainable basis and fulfill its mission. In her role as director of the Westport Housing Authority she has been successful in the development of Hales Court and is seeking CHFA aid in replacing the existing trailer park on the Post Road with new affordable housing units. Mr. Grathwohl said the AHC is supportive of any efforts to expand the available units in Fairfield and would like to be informed of any applications to this end. Ms. Martin said one possibility for expansion is to add a second storey to existing buildings. A younger, more able population would most likely inhabit these units. Mr. Barnhart asked if there were any concerns about mixing such populations. Ms. Martin said it is essential to involve residents in the process to have a successful outcome. Mr. Grathwohl asked if preference could be given to town employees. Ms. Martin said that an examination of the existing waiting lists show that 80-85% of the applicants have some ties to the town and that a qualification of this type is problematical.

Ms. Martin said that she expects growth within the HCV program. Currently, it is underused and the town is not getting the funds it could collect and distribute.

Mr. Grathwohl asked if it would be helpful for the AHC to make contacts with HUD and Representative Jim Himes on behalf of the efforts of the FHA. Ms. Martin encouraged the Commission to do so. The next scheduled meeting of the FHA Board is at 6:00 p.m. August 22 at the Pine Tree Community Room.

Campfield Drive

Mr. Grathwohl said the TP&Z approved the development without a zone change. There will be 12 units. Four of these will be qualified as affordable.

Apartments Next to Bed & Bath

Mr. Grathwohl said the plans for this site do not include any affordable units. Mr. Maiola asked if an available lot was found, would there be a way to develop it for affordable housing. Mr. Barnhart said it was unlikely that the town would purchase such property. It would be necessary to find a non-profit developer. There is a need to creative incentives for for-profit inclusionary zoning. Ms. Parker said she would like to see an overlay area from Fairfield Center to Southport, similar to the one enacted for Commerce Drive.

130 Fairchild Avenue

Mr. Grathwohl said that the denial of this application for 54 units is in litigation. Mr. Barnhart said there was no expert witness called by the developer in the first hearing.

Exide

Mr. Barnhart said there would be a public information session in August conducted by the DEEP regarding the remediation of Mill River.

Fairfield Lumber Site

Mr. Barnhart said this application for housing is before the Conservation Commission.

Other Business

Ms. Parker referred to a Yale Law Review article that addresses affordable housing issues. She will ask Mr. Barnhart's office to distribute it to the Commission members.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be Wednesday, August 15, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen Goethner