

**SPECIAL MEETING  
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

The following participated: Chair Robert Hammersley, Vice-Chair Robert Salka, Peter Santago, Secretary, Christina Volpe, Steven Walowski (*arrived at 7:38 p.m.*), Alternate Caleb Cowles, Alternate Kat Caird.

Staff: Maryellen Edwards, Director of Planning and Community Development

**Greeting**

Chair Hammersley greeted the commissioners and public saying that tonight’s presentation is an overview draft for the Affordable Housing Plan and timeline. He introduced Glenn Chalder from Planimetrics and invited the public for its input.

**Presentation of draft Affordable Housing Plan by Planimetrics**

Glenn Chalder of Planimetrics gave a presentation of the draft overview for the Affordable Housing Plan and timeline. CGS Section 8-30j requires that every town have a plan in place by June 1, 2022 and updated every five years. The plan “shall specify how the municipality intends to increase the number of affordable housing developments in the municipality”.

**Key Points**

Everyone needs housing that is affordable, available when/where needed, offers options/choices. Housing needs change as people age. Downsizing is a component without sacrificing comfort. Area medium income (AMI) determines eligibility for housing based on 80% of income and number of people per household. Maximum sales price per state DOH guidelines is based on a 30-year fixed rate mortgage at 3.5% with a 20% down payment. In 2019 and pre-Covid there may have been 8,000 NOAH units (“naturally occurring affordable housing”) which sold or rented at affordable prices. The State does not count the 8,000 units because they are not deed restricted. About 967 units in Southington are State-recognized (5.54%) which are affordable housing developments. Of the 967, 499 are assisted units (Housing Authority), 51 are deed-restricted units, 354 CHFA/USDA mortgage units for low/moderate income borrowers, and 63 are rental assistance units.

About 4,500 households in Southington are housing cost burdened *{About 23% of all households (1 in 4)}*.

Of the 6,800 households earning <\$75,000 annually, about 3,800 households (57%) are housing cost burdened *{About 2,600 owner households (57%)}; {About 1,200 renter households (58%)}*.

At the November public meeting, participants acknowledged housing cost challenges, offered possible strategies, expressed displeasure with CGS 8-30g, want to retain character and service levels.

A possible goal for affordable housing is to provide a variety of housing choices in Southington for people and households of all ages, incomes, and characteristics.

Strategies could include looking at ways to increase assisted housing, looking at ways to increase deed-restricted housing, and looking at ways to increase overall housing diversity including naturally-occurring affordable housing. This can include families whose circumstances change, older households downsizing, younger people / families starting out, smaller units for smaller households, and more choices that are less expensive. Another strategy can be to monitor mobile home parks for health and safety and convert them to resident-owned so that they can be included in the count for affordable housing.

To increase deed-restricted housing consider Zoning Regulations to require affordable housing, require 10% to not fall further behind, incentivize for higher percent (density, height, coverage, tax abatements, etc.), and evaluate tax incentives or other approaches to deed-restricted existing NOAH units. In addition, create and require use of standard documents / approved administrator / policies and protocols, consider extending deed restrictions beyond 40 years, and capturing value increment when restrictions expire.

To increase assisted housing, work with the Housing Authority and developers of assisted living communities. 19% of people receive state assistance while 33% receive assistance from CHFA/USDA.

Other strategies can include strengthening municipal capacity, establishing an advisory committee, establishing a Housing Trust Fund and considering ways of funding it; become Exempt From CGS 8-30g. Permanent Exemption = Add 848 units, and 4-year Moratorium = Document 363 HUEP since 1990.

### **Public Input/Discussion**

*Ellen Slipski, 80 Melcon Drive*, asked about the plan having impact on town resources and that they should be considered. She also asked what areas are being looked at in town. She said that Southington is becoming a city due to the increase in population.

Chair Hammersley said that the town is required by the state to develop a plan and that it be updated every 5 years. He does not think that the state guidelines are fair. Town needs to recognize what it has, what it needs and how to accomplish this. He said that he does not know of a way around town resources.

Commissioner Santago said that the town doesn't build anything, that 8-30j allows development anywhere, and that only 5% count as affordable housing. Of the 7,100 left of the 8,000 units, the challenge is how to get to the number that the state requires – 5 to 10%. He likes the idea of an advisory board and a separate body for coordination including those with knowledge of banking, property transfers, and real estate.

Vice-Chair Salka agrees that the town doesn't build anything and that it can take years to meet affordable housing goals. He said to collaborate with other towns who have the same issues and would like direction/guidelines from state government.

Commissioner Volpe said that we are in the planning stage and that we control regulations around building and may be doing this for years to come. We need to be responsible for what is best for the town and what is built in town.

Alternate Cowles said that the responsibility of the PZC is to protect regulations and that there is not a lot of flexibility with 8-30j. Developers can pick and choose where they build. He asked if any pieces can be taken to qualify a unit as affordable housing.

Chair Hammersley said that it is frustrating that the state has a standard of 10%. PZC has approved affordable housing in the past with modifications where the number of units was reduced but the number of affordable units was not. Hartford's plan is not well thought out.

Vice-Chair Salka said that to reach 10% will change the character of Southington. He would not sign a 40-year agreement under any circumstance and that the commission needs to look at this. It cost the town a fortune to develop the Liberty Street housing.

Alternate Caird is in favor of a housing trust fund and that through the application process developments are incentivized.

*Justine Simone, Darling Street*, said that Mr. Salka's comment about affordable housing sounded like "projects" will be developed changing the character of Southington. "Project" thinking promotes fear. Having fallen on difficult times, she has been able to live in an affordable community, Winter Grove, which is a nice place. As the PZC oversees regulations, she suggested that development take place on the outskirts of town. There is land in the area of Flanders Road. The plan appears to be cramming more into 10 miles and it will destroy the integrity of the town.

*Sev Bovino, Kratzert Jones*, said that there is no state representation at the affordable housing meetings and they need to provide input. A coalition of towns with similar challenges should be formed. People who work in Southington want to live here but cannot as there is not enough inventory available. He suggested allowing residences on the second floors of B-Zone with existing vacant buildings, and new residences in B-Zones. Existing buildings would utilize what is already there. They have been allowed in the past. He suggested establishing a new zone for smaller lots.

Commissioner Santago asked how long ago the B-Zone allowance was changed.

*Mr. Bovino* said 20 years ago.

Based on the preliminary 2020 Census housing count, Southington will need approximately 363 HUEP for a four-year moratorium to appeal. Chair Hammersley asked Mr. Chalder to provide an estimate of what the numbers are today and how much the town is short, i.e., housing unit "equivalent points" (HUEP). Mr. Chalder will have numbers available for the meeting on May 17.

Vice-Chair Salka asked how many units in B-Zone are potential for residential housing.

Mr. Bovino said that he will put together a list for the next meeting.

Vice-Chair Salka made a motion to endorse the Affordable Housing Plan as discussed and schedule a for public hearing in for May 17th. Seconded by Alternate Caird and unanimous by commissioners present.

**Adjournment of Special Meeting**

Commissioner Santago made a motion to adjourn the Special Meeting at 8:17p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Volpe and unanimous by commissioners present.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Dawn Quite*

Recording Secretary