

MEETING OF THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

VIA ZOOM – 17 FEB 2022

Attendees: David Bindelglass, Glenn Chalder (Consultant), Jackie Kaufman, Kevin Rodrigue, Phil Doremus, Ray Martin (Chair), Darrell Harris (Secretary)

Meeting called to order at 13:09

A. Thoughts and feedback on the meeting

a. Planning Conservation and Development Commission

- i. Beverly felt that she wasn't listened to regarding a previous town P&Z meeting, but the meeting result was out of Glenn's control; the commission went in a different direction.
  1. Area around Silverman's Farm, and classification of the Center Area as a Non-Conforming zone.
- ii. In the future, we'll need to address the concerns, and report the reasons why we go in a particular direction, into an appendix. This will head off future criticism of how town decisions are made, especially with regards to Affordable Housing.
- iii. Ray and Jackie have worked with Glenn on several projects, and vouch for his professionalism and thorough approach to town business.
- iv. Meeting went well. It was great that the public had the opportunity to weigh in on the process as it stands so far. This meeting helped the committee to refine the direction of the AH decision process. People were generally in favor of increasing the AH stock

B. Review of Glenn's document

- a. Residents seemed to be receptive to AH that blends into the background of Easton
- b. Options for increasing the amount of Affordable Housing stock in Easton:
  - i. ID property in Easton; Perhaps the old elementary school property can be used for this purpose.
  - ii. Provide supplemental payments (i.e., a Housing Choice Voucher) for residents, so they can afford housing that they obtain; this is market-driven, and the property will need to satisfy 'safe and sound' housing requirements.
  - iii. Don't necessarily earmark housing, but perhaps look at the criteria for that housing.
  - iv. No appetite for private firms (profit or nonprofit) to be involved in development. This includes a Housing Authority.
    1. Glenn mentioned Kent Affordable Housing, Inc. program as an example of a successful entity.
    2. The meeting attendees were impressed, however, by the quality of some of the pictured projects that Glenn pointed out.
    3. There is a well-founded concern about what might happen in the future. A final report may include a provision for memorializing those concerns.
    4. Any option needs to be balanced by environmental concerns. Easton does have a ban on community septic systems.

5. Can we 'ringfence' any decisions that the town makes, so that the state can't come in and impose their will unilaterally on Easton? Possibly, but 8.30(g) always opens the possibility for an entity to try and develop. Working on a town AH plan does show that we are willing to tackle the issue as a town in good faith, even if we may never realistically get to the 10% AH target that the state would like to achieve.
  6. The committee then had a discussion of different housing models (duplex, single level), with different house sizes and arrangements (cottage cluster, or pocket neighborhood), and potential residents (elderly, etc.).
  - c. Ray suggests establishing a Community Operating Authority, rather than an HOA, take care of housing needs such as sewer in the AH development.
  - d. Can we tackle the AH classes one at a time?
    - i. Glenn said that the state incentivizes AMI percentage above senior housing, for instance. 8.30(j) is structured to have towns tackle all aspects of AH, not cherry-pick those aspects that may be more attractive near-term options first.
  - e. Can we look at a holistic development within Easton that encompasses all classes and age combinations in a place in town (Ray)
  - f. We have two more public meeting opportunities; an informational meeting set for 28 March, and a final public plan adoption meeting set for 26 May.
- C. Glenn's Draft
- a. 20-30 pages
  - b. Outline the need for affordable housing, not just because the state mandated it, but because we're addressing a need that has been identified by the data
  - c. Outline possible strategies to address the issue
  - d. Visual of different types of housing; much like the slide presentation
    - i. Outline what pictures people like, and what they don't like ("I like picture #7, but not #9", for example)
  - e. Jackie would like to see
    - i. Some mention of what percentage of Easton's units are protected and affordable; exactly how many are available and functioning right now.
    - ii. Bullet points of (in general, not including exact addresses) where some of the accessory units are now.
      1. Are they in the 3-acre or 1-acre zone, or is it balanced?
  - f. Phil: there are existing, non-conforming structures that the assessor's office has on file.
  - g. Glenn's goal is to have a draft available for public review and comment well before the next public meeting on 28 Mar.
  - h. Phil: This document, and all our committee work, is meant to be acted on by P&Z after the Board of Selectmen approve. This committee is not a sub-committee of P&Z.
- D. Meeting adjourned at 14:40 PM.