John Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 Cedar Street Newington, Connecticut 06111

Newington Housing Needs Study Committee

SPECIAL MEETING

6:30 p.m. Tuesday, August 6, 2014

Town Hall Meeting Room L-100

MINUTES

Present: Maureen Lynch; David Nagel; Terry Borjeson; Robert Serra Jr; and William Hall.

Also Present: Professor John Mitrano, CCSU; Mayor Steven Woods; Dianne Stone, S&DC Director; Karen Futoma, Human Services Director; Craig Minor, Town Planner.

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TOWN CLERK

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Borjeson called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

II. ROLE CALL

The presence of the above-listed members was noted.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Robert Serra made a motion seconded by William Hall to approve the minutes of July 29, 2014 with one correction: the budget for survey expenses is $7,500 and not $75,000. All were in favor.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

V. DISCUSS PROCEDURE TO FORMULATE AND CONDUCT SURVEY OF HOUSING NEEDS

a. Discuss proposed participation by Central Connecticut State University

Professor John Mitrano introduced himself, and said that he teaches a course in community research methodology at Central Connecticut State University. This course includes doing an actual survey for a municipal agency or non-profit organization. Recently they did a survey for the City of New Britain, and this year the class is doing a survey for New Britain on their proposed senior center. The class this year

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has fifteen students including a few Newington residents. Seven of them will be working on the Newington survey and eight will be working on the New Britain survey. The survey results will be available in early December.

Professor Mitrano then told the committee that he has looked at the sample surveys that LISC had provided and said that he will forward to the committee his own suggested survey format. William Hall asked if it was a good idea to let the Newington resident students work on the Newington survey, since the public perception of that might not be good. A long discussion ensued. Professor Mitrano said they would be using a "stratified systematic sample" type survey, and he would make sure that the random sample would not include the families of any of his Newington students.

Dianne Stone then asked Professor Mitrano to discuss the approach he intends to take. Professor Mitrano replied that he recommends we start by looking into "qualitative" issues via a series of focus groups to determine what those issues are. The focus group meetings should be conducted during the month of September; the results would be transcribed and used to develop a draft survey which would be presented to the committee for its approval; the survey would be sent out during the month of October; two weeks would be allowed for them to come back; the responses would be data-entried by the students; and then analyzed by the students and Professor Mitrano. The results would be presented to the committee.

Mayor Woods asked how the focus group participants get selected. Professor Mitrano replied that he is relying on the committee to tell him who should be represented on these focus groups, since the committee member know Newington better than he does. Dianne Stone said it should include key "informants" (people who can represent elements of the population that wouldn't otherwise be represented in a focus group). Chairman Borjeson said that the selection of focus group participants must not be seen as intended to result in a particular pre-determined outcome. Professor Mitrano said the names aren't important; the important thing is to make sure all impacted groups are represented in the focus groups. Other groups suggested were: high school students; CCSU students who are Newington residents; renters; the Chamber of Commerce; senior citizens; people living with housing needs, as well as people living in "privileged" housing; baby boomers and echo boomers. Professor Mitrano reminded the committee that the focus group is just to help us identify what the housing need issues are. He needs the committee to tell him what groups should be represented in the focus groups.

Chairman Borjeson asked how the focus group participants would be chosen. Professor Mitrano replied if, for example, one in five Newington residents are young, then we need to be sure that there are young people in the focus groups. William: by age? Income? Professor Mitrano said that would be hard to know, so perhaps by neighborhood (given that some areas of Newington are higher income than others).

Chairman Borjeson reminded the committee that the purpose of the study is to identify community-wide housing needs, and not any of the many other interesting and important questions of the day. Mayor Woods agreed and pointed out that was why the goal of the committee was expanded from the original topic of just senior housing needs.

Professor Mitrano said he would draft a list of possible focus group participants (groups), and questions for the focus groups to discuss. He will email these to the committee members in a few days, and ask for committee members' feedback.

Mayor Woods asked where the focus group meetings would be held. Professor Mitrano replied wherever most comfortable for the participants.

Professor Mitrano then turned to a discussion of the survey itself. Chairman Borjeson said that we have funding to mail the survey to every household in Newington. Professor Mitrano replied that could be

prohibitive in terms of cost and time needed to analyze the results. A "stratified sample" survey is sufficient. The analysis could use the Town's GIS information and voter lists to identify the neighborhoods that are higher income, predominantly rental, etc. A discussion ensued. Dianne Stone said there are approximately 15,000 households in Newington. Professor Mitrano said in that case perhaps the budget of $7,500 would be enough for a 100% sample. Chairman Borjeson said the survey could also be emailed to Town employees, so that would be at no cost. It was agreed that the survey would be mailed to every household, and emailed to every Town employee.

Professor Mitrano said he will send us his suggested survey questions to the committee now for their review; fine-tune them after the results of the focus groups is available; and then re-send them to the committee for the committee's approval.

b. Discuss sample surveys provided by LISC

The committee then reviewed the two sample surveys from other Connecticut towns that were previously provided by LISC. Many of the questions were discussed. The consensus was that many of the questions were not relevant to what this committee is looking into. Professor Mitrano reiterated that he will send the committee a draft list of proposed survey questions.

Professor Mitrano asked the committee what they thought the maximum size of the survey should be. Mayor Woods replied not more than a single two-sided page. Chairman Borjeson mentioned that Lesley Higgins-Biddle apologized for not being able to attend this meeting, and that he will ask her to work directly with Professor Mitrano.

William Hall made a motion seconded by Robert Serra to officially request Professor Mitrano and the students of his "Community Research Methods" assist the committee with conducting the focus groups and the survey. All were in favor. William Hall asked the Professor if there should be a contract of some sort. Craig Minor said there ought to be a "letter of understanding". Professor Mitrano said he would talk to the University about that.

VI. SET DATE FOR NEXT MEETING

Chairman Borjeson asked Professor Mitrano when the next meeting should be. Professor Mitrano replied that he would like the students to meeting at least some of the members of the committee, in the classroom. That would be on a Tuesday, between 9 am and 1 pm. It was agreed that as many committee members as possible would go to CCUS on Tuesday, September 2 at noon, for approximately one hour.

The date of the next committee meeting was set for August 26, 2014 at 6:30 in the same room.

VII. ADJOURN

William Hall made a motion to adjourn at 8:00 pm, seconded by Bob Serra. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Minor, AICP
Town Planner