



John Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 Cedar Street Newington, Connecticut 06111

Newington Housing Needs Study Committee

SPECIAL MEETING

6:30 p.m. Thursday, February 5, 2015

Town Hall Meeting Room L-101

MINUTES

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

Also Present: Dianne Stone, Senior & Disabled Center Director; Karen Futoma, Human Services Director; Erica Schwarz of LISC; Craig Minor, Town Planner.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Borjeson called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

II. ROLE CALL

The presence of the above-listed members and staff was noted.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

William Hall: made a motion to approve the minutes of December 18, 2014, seconded by Bob Serra, Sr. All were in favor.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

V. DISCUSS SURVEY REPORT

Professor Mitrano: The report was dense, but hopefully everyone has at least read the executive summary. Some specific findings: the strong desire for senior housing within the next 5 – 10 years; 31% wanted “affordable” single family homes. So, given this degree of satisfaction, maybe there is no new for Newington to make any significant changes. True, over 1/3 said they might move, but this might be due to the weather or taxes in Connecticut.

Town Planner Craig Minor: I prepared a chart that compares the respondent demographics with Newington’s demographics overall, and they were very similar. The only significant deviation was we had a higher percentage of seniors responding to the survey than in the overall population.

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William Hall: "senior" is subjective.

Terry Borjeson: I attended a very eye-opening presentation recently by Newington Economic Development Director Andy Brecher on the benefits of higher density, high income housing.

Karen Futoma: What exactly is "affordable" housing?

William Hall: These results are consistent with what the staff at his housing agency is hearing. But there isn't a big supply of affordable rental units with garage space, in town

Professor Mitrano: And maybe that's Newington's strength: that we cater to the middle class.

William Hall: Right; we aren't a pretentious town.

Karen Futoma: Very few apartment dweller responded to the survey.

Dianne Stone: Can we get cross-tabs of these responses?

Professor Mitrano: Craig has all the data on a disk. You can do whatever you want with it. Pull out the responses of women who earn at or below \$25,000 for example.

William Hall: So, the conclusion is that Newington doesn't need to do anything?

Craig Minor: Maybe, but 65% of seniors expressed interest in senior housing.

Dianne: That's very significant.

Terry Borjeson: The developers of the Harvest Village PUD recently told TPZ they're getting a lot of demand for master bedrooms on the first floor. That wasn't what the market wanted back when this project was originally designed, which wasn't that long ago.

Dianne: It's a problem that the term "affordable" wasn't defined in the survey. People's answers were based on their own perception of "affordable". We have pockets of poverty in Newington – the ALICE report shows that. We should look more deeply into the survey response data.

William Hall: We have lots of people living in hotels on the Berlin Turnpike.

Terry Borjeson: We are behind schedule in delivering a report to the Town Council. We need to make some recommendations.

Maureen Lynch: You need to make a distinction between "affordable" and "subsidized". That's where the confusion is. Hopkins Village is subsidized, but it nice. Where would be put more senior housing?

William Hall: That's why my group is looking to expand its mission. But if we build it, will they come? The survey questions are subjunctive: "if you", "would you", etc.

Robert Serra: What I hear is people want a small lot with a garden and a ranch-style house. The apartments being built "for" them isn't what they want.

David Nagel: I agree with what's been said. But does Amara meet the needs expressed in the survey?

Erica Schwarz: LISC is here to help. What we can offer is show you examples of what other towns have done in a similar situation. Some towns formed standing committees to analyze local zoning regulations, and to find sites for development, and work with non-profit developers. LISC can make presentations on this. There are examples available of beautiful housing that you wouldn't know was affordable housing.

David Nagel: The Newington Town Council had a discussion about this some time ago.

Dianne: Yes, that would be useful.

Terry Borjeson: I suggest Craig draft a report from us to the Town Council, to be discussed at our next meeting.

David Nagel: This should be presented to the Town Council either before or after the budget season.

Terry Borjeson: Okay, how about an informal report?

David Nagel: This Tuesday?

Terry Borjeson: Just informal.

VI. SET DATE FOR NEXT MEETING (IF NEEDED)

It was agreed that the next meeting will be on February 26, at 6:30 pm. Karen Futoma mentioned that she would not be able to attend. She asked Craig to distribute the ALICE report.

VII. ADJOURN

Bob Serra made a motion to adjourn at 7:33 pm, seconded by William Hall. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,


Craig Minor, AICP
Town Planner