

Minutes

February 26, 2019

(re-scheduled from February 13)

A Joint Workshop of the Town Council and Planning Board to discuss Housing issues

Council Members present: Gary Friedmann, Matt Hochman, Stephen Coston, Paul Paradis, Joe Minutolo and Erin Cough

Planning Board Members present: Tom St. Germain, Joe Cough, Basil Eleftheriou and John Fitzpatrick

Staff present: Town Manager Cornell Knight, Planning Director Michele Gagnon and Code Enforcement Officer Angie Chamberlain

Gary Friedmann called the workshop to order at 7:00pm. Council requested this meeting with the Planning Board to look at possibilities to help alleviate the housing crunch.

1. Zoning Districts –Housing Density

Tom St. Germain provided a handout broken down by district showing minimum lot size, whether on town water/sewer, allowances for transient and single/multi-family use, etc. He identified the fastest way to encourage more single-family houses is to lower the minimum area per family. He stated the Planning Board is seeking policy direction from Council.

There was quite a bit of discussion on how increasing the density in areas served by town water and sewer would allow for more Multi 1 & 2. Also discussed was the concern about them being used for short-term rentals and the legality of regulating that.

Council agreed to direct the Planning Board, guided by Michele, to look at increasing density in the districts that have sewer and water to accommodate residential and workforce housing and rentals thereof of 30 days or longer in legally defensible ways.

2. Temporary Housing Amendments- employee dormitories, rooming houses and workforce dormitories. See the memo from Angela Chamberlain dated 1/31/19.

Discussion revolved around the history and delay of the proposed ordinance amendments being presented to Council. There was agreement that with some minor changes based on the noted suggestions in the margins, and after a review by Michele, that the proposed ordinances can proceed toward a town vote. One objection raised by Ms. Cough was not having a property manager on premise, which is now a standard for B&Bs.

3. Short term Rental Discussion

- a. Current ordinance restrictions review
- b. Cap on the total number of short term rentals allowed in town?

- c. Owner on site or homestead exemption conditions?
- d. Amnesty- delayed enforcement?
- e. Permit registration goes with the owner or the housing unit?

Tom St. Germain asked whether Council sees two separate issues, supporting vacation rentals as way for people to afford living here and vacation rentals contributing to departure of families from the area. The Planning Board would be able to address changes in the definition of a vacation rental.

Discussion included: need for fairness and balance, how vacation rentals are only a part of the larger complex housing issue, need for data and public input, forming a committee/task force to explore, legality, property rights, etc.

The following residents spoke: Martha Searchfield, Earl Brechlin, Garric Worcester, Jim O'Connell, Amber Howard, Deborah Page, Eric Olson, Sherri Dyer, Damian DeFalco, Shawn Keeley, Anne Damm, Chris Strout, Julia Thomas, Rob Jordan, Jeremy Dougherty, Sarah Keeley and Jan Hanscom. Recurring themes were reducing the number of nights from five to three and allowing rentals of a room. Residents asked if changes could be made for the upcoming season. Because these changes require amending the Land Use Ordinance, the process would be Planning Board Public Hearing, followed by recommendation to Council who holds a public hearing, followed by Council signing the order to place it on a warrant for a town vote. The earliest possible town vote would be November.

Meeting adjourned at 9:52pm.

Sharon M Linscott, Town Clerk