

Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Housing Committee
April 2, 2025
7:30 PM, Central Meeting Room, Town Hall 11 Meetinghouse Lane

Present: Mary Dean, Chris Dickerson, Elaine Feldman, James Graham, Kathy Hunter, Warner Marshall, Lewis Shaffer. Absent: Donavon Lofters (Board of Finance liaison)

A quorum is present

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m. by Kathy Hunter, Chair

1. Minutes of March 5, 2025 approved unanimously (Motion by Elain, Seconded by Lewis)
2. Public Comment: none
3. Housing Chair Report
 - a. An Ethics complaint involving multiple allegations by Cathy Wick and Amy Marella was filed against Kathy, who addressed them before the Board of Ethics this afternoon. Lew asked if it related to work on this committee, but reportedly the complaints were disjointed, making it difficult to identify the allegations. Kathy waived her right to confidentiality and requested that the hearing be made public, so in due course the video should be posted.
 - b. Collaborating with Conservation: Sharon DeKant has agreed to open dialogue and that a member of the Conservation Commission, Valerie [Holley-King], would be a good liaison between the groups. A joint meeting was also suggested. No responses yet about the video.
 - c. Mary and Kathy attended the SCROG meeting with Sean Ghio of the Partnership for Strong Communities about current legislative activity. Topics included State Rental Assistance Program (RAP), Work Live Ride, strengthening mechanisms within the Affordable Housing Appeals Act, and Just Cause Eviction Protections to ensure all Connecticut renters have quality safe stable places to call home.
 - d. The Naugatuck Valley and South Central Regional Councils of Governments (NVCOG & SCRCOG) are inviting elected officials, municipal staff, and other stakeholders from New Haven County to learn about the upcoming Comprehensive Climate Action Plan for the region.
 - e. Registration now open to the YIMBY conference in New Haven on September 14-16. Costs \$400.

4. Housing Informational Session

Kathy is now working on the project at Mica's request: this is the informational session that he proposed on housing with a lens on how it promotes economic stability for Woodbridge. The First Selectman's office has scheduled a panel of speakers who are able to make it for the new date, Wednesday, April 30th at 6pm. Not sure where it will be; she had reached out to the JCC but now that the Center Building is open, perhaps we can have it in the Center Cafe.

The panelists include Michael Santoro from the CT Department of Housing, Dale Kroop (working with the Economic Development Committee), and David Morgan

who is the CEO of TEAM Inc., a human service agency whose catchment area includes Woodbridge.

Phoebe Ploof of LISC will also be coming, speaking about a new suburban-rural initiative, Community House Connections. She'll talk about how investing in businesses, housing and other community infrastructure can catalyze economic development for towns.

The planning follows the original vision for content although it is now falling more under the aegis of the committee. Mica will participate. Justin LaFontaine will moderate the discussion.

Added to agenda [new business]: Chris asks to raise two points for consideration:

- a. He recommends being wary of discussing topics via email, e.g. a recent instance when something was erroneously assumed to have been part of the meeting discussion. There was no disagreement; the wording had been changed in error.
- b. On the subject of whether ADUs can count toward the 10% affordability goal, he consulted our town planner and learned that it would count if there is a 10-year deed restriction and that the unit would not add to the total housing unit count for the town. This is further incentive to advocate for ADUs, including recommending incentives from the town. Also noted: a bill currently under consideration that addresses this: HB7031. Information to be sent to the whole committee.

5. Considerations for Updating the Affordable Housing Plan

a) Discussion of our review of some other AH plans (Bloomfield, Woodbury, Bozrah) - Elaine noted Woodbury's short length and wondered what we could eliminate to shorten ours.

Jim commented on the way Woodbury addressed ADUs very well. Elaine also noted that they emphasized as a goal increasing awareness of CHFA etc. loans. That is in our AHP and our research and discussion of it was recapped.

Repurposing existing buildings was also noted. We only addressed this with commercial buildings, but that required zoning changes and that is no longer part of what the 2030 committee is focusing on. The question of whether the AH Committee should be spearheading the matter instead of the 2030 Committee was discussed.

Kathy commented that the Bloomfield plan had an interesting way of talking about population, linking it into the total fertility rate, and the social and economic value of housing, blending environmental concerns with the need for affordable housing, balancing it with social needs.

Also to be incorporated into our work plan: Stephanie Camp from SCRCOG will attend to consult with us about how our plans fit in with regional needs and using the SCRCOG Regional Housing Strategy.

Lewis reported on the SCRCOG meetings that he and Elaine have been attending. Materials from those meetings have been distributed.

b-c) Work session (comments on the first 16 pages of the AHP): Chris advocates that everything in the current plan that is data driven be given a citation. Mary asks whether we are making changes line by line or will we consider what to do with the document as a whole, perhaps restructuring it entirely. The conclusion was to make necessary corrections now but reserve major changes for the work plan next year for the required renewal in 2027.

Discussion of the data about population projections; additional investigation by Jim and by Chris is to be expected.

Kathy suggests that we consider making any changes to the original preface in an addendum rather than alter the original document. She also suggested that we incorporate the recommendations that we've identified since the AHP.

Chris has identified information as needing citation, Jim will recommend updates for the population box, and the second box requires clarification in the wording.

Mary advocated for more specificity in assigning responsibility for the goals.

Mary will be making all the corrections, so individual changes (clarifications and correction only) should be sent to her.

6. Planning for Earth Day, Saturday-April 26 from 10am to 5pm: Volunteers needed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m. (Motion: Chris/Second: Jim)

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Dean