The Board of Selectmen May 25, 2022, Special Meeting may be viewed here: https://youtu.be/BJvryPMDgcA

The May 25, 2022, Special Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen was convened by First Selectman Beth Heller at 5:00 p.m. via WebEx.
Present: First Selectman Beth Heller, Deputy First Selectman Sheila McCraven, Joseph Crisco, Paul Kuriakose, David Lober, and David Vogel.
Present for staff: Media Specialist Pua Ford, and Board Clerk Geraldine Shaw.

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING – The Special Meeting was called to receive and discuss the “Woodbridge Affordable Housing Plan - Final Draft”.

FIRST SELECTMAN’S REMARKS
“Good evening and welcome to the May 25th, 2022 Board of Selectmen meeting. Tonight, we are meeting for the express purpose of discussing the Town’s draft Affordable Housing Plan and to receive feedback from residents about the plan. Unfortunately, due to the continuing pandemic, this will be a virtual meeting. Materials for the meeting, and ways the public may view or participate virtually tonight were published on tonight’s agenda.

By way of history, in February of 2021, the then Woodbridge Board of Selectmen established the Woodbridge Housing Opportunity Study Committee. This Committee was charged with “a) formulating a long-term plan for the Town to comply with Federal and State housing laws, including Fair Housing laws and (b) in promoting a mix of housing opportunities, including the development of an Affordable Housing Plan, as required by State law.” Every Connecticut municipality is required to submit a plan to the state by June 1st.

First, I must extend my deepest thanks and appreciation to the following Committee members: Chairman Dominick Thomas, Vice-Chair Kathleen Hunter, Debra Brander, Mary Dean, Buddy DeGennaro, Nicole Donzello, Elaine Feldman, James Graham, Donavon Lofters, Dwight Rowland and Lewis Shaffer.

Working collaboratively with consultants from RKG Associates and the South Central Regional Council of Governments, quoting from the Affordable Housing Plan final draft, “the Committee provided outreach and distribution of regional housing survey and reviewed the analysis. It also produced a Woodbridge-specific survey to further inform the final goals and strategies” of the plan.

The Committee directly involved town citizens and officials as much as possible. In-person participation was somewhat limited due to the global pandemic. Over many, many months, regular meetings were held on the first Wednesday of every month between May 2021 and April 2022. These meetings were available for anyone to review on the Town’s website, and to quote the report, there were also “Special Meetings, including meetings with town commissions, the Board of Education, and the Board of Selectmen.”

Additionally, the Committee held two public information forums, one on December 6, 2021, and another in-person on March 30, 2022. Public participation was solicited and, encouraged.
This evening, the Board of Selectmen will hear from our Town Counsel Gerald Weiner, and then we will discuss the report, and then act as the Board deems appropriate. I have invited Committee Chair Thomas and Vice-Chair Hunter. Kathy is unable to attend tonight but Dom will offer comments on behalf of the Committee, and also answer any questions the Board may have related to the report.

I only speak for myself, but one comment I would like to make at this point, is that I believe that NO ONE intends to put housing on Fitzgerald. I think it was listed by the committee as one of ten properties in town that was large enough to “maybe” accommodate housing. The committee was merely doing its job by listing all possible tracts of land but did not promote it for housing. Also, we must keep in mind that the report highlights these properties as where housing investment MAY be supported. It does NOT promote these properties for housing but only says they MAY be used for housing. I believe also that this report DOES NOT bind the Town to move forward with any parcel for development – the Committee only did what was charged to them, and that is simply to identify POSSIBLE areas for housing.

Also, in reviewing the report, we must remember that the First Church of Christ property, the JCC Parking lot property, Old Amity Road, Bradley/Litchfield properties, Merritt Avenue, and Hazel Terrace are all privately owned. The Town of Woodbridge has no control over these properties.

Later in the agenda we will receive public comments, either by e-mail, or live via Webex, and then the Board will discuss next steps with possible action as appropriate. Everyone should remember that we will continue to take public comments on this report, as we always do, at any of our meetings. We always may amend and add any ideas or suggestions to the state, at any point in the future by action of the Board. We are not closing the discussion on this report. Thankyou."

TOWN COUNSEL’S REMARKS
Mr. Weiner thanked the Committee for their time, efforts, and diligence to present a very workable document to the Town. He said that the Connecticut General Statute under which the Committee was enacted, 8-30j, states that “following adoption, the municipality shall regularly review and maintain such plan”. The statute also allows amendments to the plan as the Town deems necessary.

Mr. Weiner said that there is no requirement in the statute that the municipality hold a public hearing prior to the adoption of the plan. The Selectmen are holding this special meeting as a public informational meeting and the public is invited to offer comments, both written and oral to be presented to the Board. The Selectmen will receive a presentation from the Chair of the Committee, have an opportunity to ask the Chair questions, and discuss the plan. Mr. Weiner said that this fills the obligations under the statute whether the Board adopts or does not adopt the plan.

PRESENTATION OF THE WOODBRIDGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN – Chair, Atty. Dominick Thomas
Atty. Thomas thanked the Board for the individuals appointed to the Committee and each member for their diligence and hard-work: Debbie Brander, Mary Dean, Buddy DeGennaro, Nicole Donzello, Elaine Feldman, James Graham, Kathy Hunter, Donavon Lofters, Dwight Rowland, Lewis Shaffer, and Kristine Sullivan who staffed the Committee.
Chairman Thomas explained the steps the Committee followed to prepare the report, including review of the State Statute, gathering Information from various sources and residents, and submittal to the Board of Selectmen.

- the enabling act to the C.G.S. 8-30 states that a town’s zoning regulations must address housing disparities and needs. That it must affirmatively further the purposes of the Fair Housing Act
- that once adopted – it shall be reviewed and updated every five years
- that from time-to-time within the five-year time frame, the plan may be revised as required
- There are opportunities to revise the report
- The eight areas listed, are not designated for affordable development, but meet the criteria
- Several of the properties identified, are privately owned
- Woodbridge Town Plan and Zoning has been at the forefront of accessory housing
- Providing diversity of housing for young families, seniors, business singles, renters - increases economic development by increasing spending within the Town

He also addressed misconceptions regarding the Statute:

- the Town is not required to develop open space land for affordable housing
- Just because a private property is on the list in the report, it does not have to be only sold for affordable housing development – but may if the siting requirements are met

The Selectmen thanked Atty. Thomas and the Committee for their work and diligence in preparing the plan, which they referred to as a remarkable document. The Board discussed various aspects of the report including the importance of appointing a permanent committee to continue to review implementation of the plan; housing diversity through-out Town; risk of non-compliance; and the risk of filing late or requesting an extension.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Heller read several public comments received via e-mail. Copies of these comments are included with these minutes for the permanent record.

The following is a summary of a public comment offered via WebEx:

Chris Keevil, 94 Center Road – recommends considering developing affordable housing in areas that already have a higher housing density and the required sanitary and transportation infrastructure - not on the First Church of Christ Property, Fitzgerald Property, and Country Club property – areas considered the gems of Woodbridge.

As there were no further public comments, Ms. Heller declared the Public Comment segment of the meeting closed.

ACTION TAKEN BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Atty. Thomas stated that the Study Committee recommended the report for adoption by the Board and submittal to the State.

Mr. Weiner noted that Attorney Marianne DuBuque, consultant to the Town Plan and Zoning Commission, recommended that the Town adopt The Plan for submittal to the State. She also recommended that the Board appoint a permanent committee to oversee implementation of the report and any future revisions.
MOTION
Ms. McCreven MOVED, and Mr. Kuriakose SECONDED, that the Board of Selectmen, adopt the Woodbridge Affordable Housing Plan – Final Draft, presented this evening, with the understanding it may be modified at any time, and submit same to the State in compliance with the submittal date of June 1, 2022.

Discussion: Dr. Lober requested that the Fitzgerald Property and the former country club property be removed from the list of properties where housing investment may be supported. Mr. Vogel commented that there was no harm in delaying the adoption to give the public an opportunity to respond and recommend tabling action until more information is received. Ms. McCreven noted that a permanent committee will be appointed, discussion will continue, the current Committee’s role sunsets now, 18 months from the date of the charge, there is no reason to delay adopting the plan and submitting to the State.

VOTE – ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT AND SUBMIT TO THE STATE

First Selectman Beth Heller called the roll for a vote on the motion:
  David Vogel – No
  Dr. David Lober – No
  Paul Kuriakose – Yes
  First Selectman Beth Heller – Yes
  Joseph Crisco - Yes
  Sheila McCreven – Yes

Ms. Heller stated that the motion passes by a four to two vote of the Board and the Woodbridge Affordable Housing Plan is hereby adopted and is to be forwarded to the State.

ADJOURNMENT
On a non-debatable motion by Ms. Heller, seconded by Mr. Crisco, the meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Geraldine S. Shaw, Clerk
I want to correct on one point in the present draft of the housing plan. The state projection that the population of Woodbridge is aging and decreasing is not true. Even on my small street young families are moving in. The couple across the street from me have a new baby. In addition, new houses are being built all over town. A lot that stood vacant for years on Pease Road now has a McMansion. I can count more than a dozen large, new houses just in my part of town.

Thank You Roger Sherman

5 Fair View Rd.
Dear Gerry

Can you pass this on to Beth Heller for tonight’s meeting?

Many thanks,
Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim
29 Spoke Drive
Woodbridge CT 06525

May 25th Town Meeting

We offer these suggestions to affirm the concerns of others in our community:

1. Since the Housing Committee just submitted their lengthy report very recently, and the BOS and the public have not had a chance to properly review it yet, please do not vote at your May 25th meeting whether to accept or decline the report.

2. Probably the most important person for everyone in town to hear from about this plan prior to anything being sent to the state is Attorney Marianne Dubuke. No one understands the legal issues on this better than she does since she assisted the TPZ all last year.

3. There is no need to put the town’s precious open space on the list of possible places for affordable housing when there are plenty of other possibilities in the business district and elsewhere in town. No one in town will ever want affordable housing at the Fitzgerald Property or the First Church of Christ given how special those pieces of property are to everyone.

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim
29 Spoke Drive
Woodbridge CT 06525
Dear town leaders,

I would like to provide two comments regarding the draft Housing Committee report.

1. Given the length of the report, (96 pages), I believe we town residents need more time to digest all the information presented therein. These are difficult choices with long-term ramifications for the town. There are various groups of people who have been involved with town land use options (e.g. the dog park, Massaro Community Farm, the Baldwin Road Farm, etc.) who would like to weigh in on the plan.

2. Open space is a major asset for the town of Woodbridge. Our excellent schools and the magnificent parks, trails, and recreation areas make our town the very special place that it is. Having the Fitzgerald Property or the First Church of Christ become locations for affordable housing would severely diminish these treasured assets.

I am in agreement that we need to identify and build more affordable housing in our town, however, those two locations should be off the table. I further think the the town should not jump to considering the Woodbridge Country Club as a location for affordable housing as well. That 150 acres of open space could be much better put to use as an "agri-voltaic", solar farm site and park. It is rare that such a large, open space as the WCC becomes available, particularly so close to a large city like New Haven. When the town granted a motivated group of citizens like those who have worked on Massaro Community Farm, some good things happened. I recommend that the BOS consider removing the WCC as a site for affordable housing, too; there are better locations in the town.

I urge the Board of Selectmen not to vote on accepting or rejecting the plan until more citizen input has been received.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Jon

Jonathan Gorham
President Emeritus
Massaro Community Farm
41 Ford Road
Woodbridge, CT 06525
I emailed last night, asked for an acknowledgement of email, didn’t get one, so I will try again.

I am an advocate of Tiny Home communities/villages. I am also in favor of single units as opposed to multi unit housing.
My friend lives at Rolling Meadows in Milford, CT
His home is approx. 1200 sq. ft. It is 3 bedroom, 2 bath, single family on a very small lot. It has a 2 car driveway, no garage, cellar or attic. It does have a small attached storage shed on the back. The homes are approx. $200,000. There are around 10 houses in his development. My friend was picked for lottery as low income. He is also a Vet and a senior citizen. This was a development of the D'Amato Bros., Quarry Rd, Milford.
Homes in this size and on smaller lots, are affordable for many people, for couples, seniors, young families, handi-cap.
I think that there should be an option for villages like this, to be spread throughout Woodbridge in small communities.
I am attaching pictures of the property my friend lives at.
Thanks for your consideration,
Sue Torgerson
19 Park Lane
Dear Gerry - This is my comment:

In line with the introductory comment made by former First Selectman Amey Marella, with which I strongly concur, and which I here repeat, "I urge the BOS to slow down and give your constituents time to absorb the lengthy draft report submitted by the Housing Opportunity Study Committee. The delay is necessary to afford adequate time for comment."

This matter is central to the future of this town, and to the realization of the wishes and views of the residents of Woodbridge, whose considered and well-informed input should be a condition precedent to any BOS action.

Sincerely,

Thomas E Weil
70 Woodfield Road
Dear Board of Selectmen,

It is a moment of the greatest of choices for Woodbridge: where to build "more" Woodbridge while keeping the integral beauty and historic importance of this place. Benjamin Woodbridge himself walked and worshiped on this special town center land with structures known by many faiths. What part of Woodbridge center can support that land being dug up, built on, and opened to more "town". The great expression "open space" is on the table, and no two words on this globe where climate will ultimately force change upon all have more power for the citizenry to consider.

I have lived in Woodbridge for more than forty years. I understand the beauty of special open spaces, special structures of historic import, and a globe straining to accommodate those living upon it. Affordable is a word one cannot use lightly when considering land that has and will always be a gift from nature itself. Once gone, until other dwellers upon this globe arrive, that land will be gone. The entire Fitzgerald property is a blessing for all, including the dogs, birds and wilder creatures which know it. The First Church of Christ, on land that Woodbridge himself knew, on acres people of all faiths once regarded as a place to worship—this space has its sacred strength as well.

The town’s open spaces are not open. Fitzgerald and Woodbridge are names of claim which bring strength to this particular space, a space welcoming fireworks, walkers, worshipers, garden tenders and natural beauty to be seen and enjoyed. These places are already full to overflowing with utility and beauty. Certainly one can ask and expect from the town leaders that town open space be respected and left to continue its gifts to all.

I hope you will consider my comments as you meet tonight.

Constance Cryer Ecklund
27 Cedar Road
Woodbridge, CT 06525
I am strongly opposed to using open space for affordable housing. Much more research is needed before making or proposing a plan.

Virginia Schneider, 37 years in Woodbridge
Dear Mrs. Shaw,

I thought I would comment on the draft affordable housing plan and request you share my ruminations with the Board of Selectmen. Although I don’t share the fear of many in Woodbridge of affordable housing I think the approach of identifying specific parcels for such development is anathema to good public policy. Such an approach will result in developing ghettoized districts for those perceived to be of special financial need. Instead we should be looking at comprehensive zoning policies that encourage denser mixed use development. I have advocated for such an approach in the "flats" where we have the current infrastructure to support it. Such an approach could be taken in the town center but would require a more comprehensive approach than simply identifying two existing properties - the context would need to be broadened. I also don’t agree with many that we need to preserve more open space (including the Fitzgerald tract). As I understand it, when the tract was gifted to the town it was meant as an opportunity for additional municipal buildings such as a new school; we tend to forget this and assume the cornfields are therefore sacrosanct as walking trails and a dog park - I disagree.

Many improvements to affordable housing stock could be made by allowing for increased density as of right. Encouraging mixed use with density supplements but carefully controlling where retail and restaurants can be constructed would be the ideal approach. There has been much written about such an approach by renowned planners. Were we to take such a path, in the long run, we would see an increase in our taxable base and also encourage more affordable options thus a win for the town.

One additional thought, I can never understand why people are afraid of younger families with kids moving into town - this keeps our town vibrant.

Respectfully,
David Barkin FAIA, MPA
203-214-2954
Good morning First Selectman Heller,
I want to start by saying thank you for your dedicated service to the Town of Woodbridge. I appreciate your commitment.
The reason I am writing is I feel you and your (Democrat) Selectmen have a blind spot to the wishes and best interests of the community when it comes to the subject of the future of open space in Woodbridge. There is a recurring effort towards development of housing on the property of the former golf club despite the history of resounding support for not doing so, originating with the movement to purchase the property initially. The argument that it will increase tax rolls and revenue is not a legitimate case to advance; the net effect of increased taxes versus expenses that will be incurred is the only fair way to measure benefit but your team seems averse to preventing the cost side of this comparison. The additional argument in favor of this development is to support broader offering of affordable housing. I believe this is a disingenuous argument as well given the expansive property ready for development, but with no activity, in the southern Litchfield Turnpike area of town. The most alarming “word on the street” is that there is consideration of surrendering other open space (e.g. “the cornfield”) to development, losing treasured open space in the pursuit of admirable goals but with misguided logic. I plead that you listen to the population and find a way to further defend and protect our open space for future generations.
There have been numerous ideas offered both towards development and towards preservation of the country club property. I believe what is essential yet missing is a comprehensive vision point-of-view as to the town’s aspirations for this land in particular and other open land in general.
Best regards,
Dave

David T. Jensen
dave@thejensenfamily.net
(203) 464-0844
Comment to be read aloud at the May 25, 2022 Special BOS meeting:

This comment focuses on handling of the current draft of the housing plan.

Accuracy is of paramount importance. Once given a vote of approval by the BOS, the draft of the housing plan will gain a level of protective validation that makes it more difficult to correct in the future. This meeting’s agenda shows a reckless rush to meet a deadline without sufficient regard for the quality of the current text.

While the Housing Committee has worked hard to identify and correct inaccuracies in the draft composed by SCRCOG, more fact checking is needed to make certain the report truly represents Woodbridge. The Committee once planned to offer residents a series of “charrettes.” I feel strongly that residents deserve in person opportunities to discuss, debate and improve the draft before it goes to the state.

The quality of this housing plan will affect the future of our town. We need to get it right even if that means extending deadlines.

Martha German
1170 Johnson Road
From: Gerry Shaw  
Sent: Tuesday, May 24, 2022 3:46 PM  
To: Gerry Shaw  
Subject: FW: 5-25-2022 - public comment

From: Gerry Shaw  
Sent: Tuesday, May 24, 2022 3:30 PM  
To: Beth Heller <bheller@woodbridgetc.org>  
Subject: 5-25-2022 - public comment

Via phone conversation

Arthur & Judy Katz, 8 Cleft Rock Lane – (203 – 389-1607) the Fitzgerald Property should not be considered for housing.
Dear Ms Heller,

I was not able to attend the town hall meeting, but I was reading about the suggested developers for the affordable housing.

I was originally supporting the idea, but was alarmed to read that the proposed developers, Arbor Haven has no experience in a project like this, and their projections are inflated. I very much hope that the town will find a developer who has experience and accurate projections and will solve the problem, rather than create a new one.

Sincerely,
Erzsebet Pusztai  — 30 North Racebrook Rd.

Sent from my iPhone
Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

Draft housing plan

I fully support the points made by Amy Marcella. People need to slow down and digest the various points. There’s simply no reason why any plan that’s so important to the future of Woodbridge has to be completed in a few short weeks. To do otherwise would be foolish.

Carol Rosen
Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "conserve.woodbridge.ct" <conserve.woodbridge.ct@gmail.com>
Date: May 24, 2022 at 9:21:06 AM EDT
To: undisclosed-recipients;;
Subject: Other issues in Draft housing plan

The following email has been sent to the Selectmen by Amey Marrella, who identifies other issues of concern in the draft Housing Plan.

As I stated at the Annual Town Meeting, I urge the BOS to slow down and give your constituents time to absorb the lengthy draft report submitted by the Housing Opportunity Study Committee. The delay is necessary to afford adequate time for comment. At a minimum, town residents should have the opportunity to offer comment at the BOS’ regular June meeting, with an extended public comment session on the agenda to show the Selectmen’s interest in what constituents have to say. While
the draft report states (p. 8) that CT law requires a public hearing before the draft is adopted, and a minimum of 35 days’ notice of that hearing, there is no clear statement that either the Housing Committee or the BOS will revise the draft to reflect the public comment received. Surely it is better to pause now to offer time for feedback, before the formal process begins?

Due to the inadequate comment period offered so far, I have had time to skim but not review the full report. Here are a few thoughts regarding the draft, based on my preliminary review:

1. The report expressly promotes the use of town-owned properties for affordable housing and lists both the Fitzgerald Tract and the CCW. State law doesn’t require the Town to offer public land for affordable housing development and I think it is wrong to offer either of these properties for that purpose given the State’s rival priority known as the Green Plan.

1. At page 7 the report claims that more than one third of the town is open space. This is clearly incorrect when you look at the POCD.

1. The draft advocates for a permanent housing committee and raises the prospect that additional town staffing and/or contractors will be needed to promote affordable housing. First and foremost, consideration of these steps is premature. The Town should give the private market time to respond to TPZ’s sweeping zoning changes before taking either of these two steps. Since the law requires review of the housing plan every five years, it is more appropriate to consider these two ideas five years from now, once the private market has had time to respond. I may have further thoughts on this issue but haven’t had time yet to consider it thoroughly.

1. The draft states that the town is projected to decline in population by 20% over the next 20 years. Really? This projection seems to be based on outdated, pre-COVID models as well as other flaws. In my immediate neighborhood I am seeing houses sell primarily to young families, expanding the net number of residents per household.

1. The draft at page 12 refers to the “State’s mandated 10% requirement.” It is alarming to see that the committee doesn’t understand the law on which its report is grounded.

1. The report lists ten potential places for affordable housing but the JCC is limited to the “existing parking lot” when the Federation owns much more adjacent land and the JCC has public sewer and public water service, as well as a bus line. Surely that area is worth a closer look?

1. The report generally supports sewer expansion without recognizing that existing homes in the Highlands area (behind Brookfield Market) perhaps should receive sewer service first due to on-going septic problems. Further, the avoidance of sewer expansion was the official policy of the state some dozen years ago due to the on-going challenges of existing systems in meeting Federal Clean Water Act requirements. Surely the report should reflect current state policy regarding this issue?
There are sections of the report that I have yet to review in any substantive way and would certainly do so if the BOS recognizes that the public deserves more time for comment on the draft. For example, there’s a large section on existing housing and demographics. While I merely skimmed this section I noticed that the demographics data is gleaned from 2019 or earlier while some of the housing cost data covers 2021. That inconsistency needs to be acknowledged, at a minimum, and may merit correction. There’s also a multi-page table of specific recommendations that I simply had no time to review but deserves to be studied closely.

To conclude, I and I’m sure many residents need more time to review the entire 90+ page draft and offer substantive comment. Please grant us that opportunity! Sincerely, Amey Marrella (184 Rimmon Road)
Hi Gerry,
Please pass this letter on to the Board of Selectmen:

Dear Board of Selectmen,

Upon further consideration of the situation the town faces with the Housing Committee’s report, I offer the following 3 recommendations:

1. Since the Housing Committee just submitted their lengthy report very recently, and the BOS and the public have not had a chance to properly review it yet, please do not vote at your May 25th meeting whether to accept or decline the report. While the state has requested we submit a report to them by June 1st, there is no penalty if we are late. Give yourselves a chance to discuss it on Wednesday and create more opportunities for the public to weigh in afterwards, before deciding what to do about it. Trying to rush to a decision without proper inputs is not only unnecessary, but unwise.

2. Probably the most important person for everyone in town to hear from about this plan prior to anything being sent to the state is Attorney Marianne Dubuke. No one understands the legal issues on this better than she does since she assisted the TPZ all last year. Give her time to properly review it and then create an opportunity for the whole town to hear what she has to say.

3. There is no need to put the town’s precious open space on the list of possible places for affordable housing when there are plenty of other possibilities in the business district and elsewhere in town. I would be willing to bet that no one in town will ever want affordable housing at the Fitzgerald Property or the First Church of Christ given how special those pieces of property are to everyone. So why put them on the list and potentially make them candidates? And a great many people including myself do not want to see affordable housing at the Country Club either, particularly when there are ways we can preserve that land for future generations while making money for the town from a solar park that can be removed down the road. Once you build houses, the land you build on is gone forever. For the sake of everyone, including future generations and the ecosystems of these properties, let’s preserve our precious land. Let’s do what’s right environmentally AND what’s right socially by listing possible sites for affordable housing that meet both criteria.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Mary Gorham
21 Old Mill Road
Woodbridge, CT
Good morning Gerry,

Please share these comments with the Board of Selectman in preparation for the Wednesday night (May 24th) meeting to discuss the ad hoc Housing Opportunity Study Committee’s Draft Affordable Housing Report.

I appreciate all the work the ad hoc committee did to evaluate the situation and put together this very lengthy report. Given the length of the report which was only distributed recently, I urge the Board of Selectmen to give the public time to read this report, digest it, and weigh in on how the Board ofSelectmen should respond to it. The state has asked for us to submit a report by June 1st however there is no consequence if we do not meet this deadline. I look forward to the discussion on May 25th, but ask that you do not approve or disapprove the plan on May 25th, and give residents time to read and evaluate the report.

I see on pp. 14-16 of the plan ten recommended sites for affordable housing including the Fitzgerald Property, the First Church of Christ and the Country Club property. We surely should not be including options that will use pristine, undeveloped land, open space recreational land, or something as quintessentially linked to the history of the town as the Center Church property. These properties should be removed from the list.

I am 100% for Woodbridge containing affordable housing. I believe there is strength and energy to be gained by having that housing available. However there is no reason to destroy open space and/or change the nature of our town center in order to have it. Between the business district and other spots opened up from our new zoning laws, there are plenty of other options.

Thank you for listening to my concerns.

Anne Boucher
574 Amity Road
Woodbridge, CT 06525
203-393-2983

Anne Boucher | Clinical Research Manager/Outpatient Product Owner
3M Health Information Systems
400 Research Parkway | Meriden, CT 06450 | United States
Office: (203) 949-6497
amboucher@mmm.com

3M Science. Applied to Life."
Please submit for public comment

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: bobe buzasi <bbuzasi@hotmail.com>
Date: May 24, 2022 at 8:41:22 PM EDT
To: Beth Heller <bheller@woodbridgestct.org>
Subject: EXTERNALAffordable housing

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Ms Heller,

I was not able to attend the town hall meeting, but I was reading about the suggested developers for the affordable housing.
I was originally supporting the idea, but was alarmed to read that the proposed developers, Arbor Haven has no experience in a project like this, and their projections are inflated. I very much hope that the town will find a developer who has experience and accurate projections and will solve the problem, rather than create a new one.

Sincerely,
Erzsebet Pusztai

Sent from my iPhone
Gerry Shaw

From: Fred Ginsberg <fbg0120@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 23, 2022 9:24 PM
To: Gerry Shaw
Subject: EXTERNALDraft plan for affordable housing

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I have read the draft plan for affordable housing, and have some major concerns about some of the proposed locations for the construction of some units. The particular locations of concern include the Fitzgerald fields and walking trails. This tract of land is utilized by MANY Woodbridge residents and represents one of the few off street locations for safe walking and jogging, in addition to providing a quiet place to visit, as well as providing community gardens and a dog park. In my opinion, it is irresponsible and unfair to the many townspeople who treasure this location!!! Don't do it!!

Also, I do not know how the JCC parking lot could possibly be utilized for housing purposes.

Thank you for hearing my objections.

Virus-free. www.avg.com

Gerry Shaw

From: Fred Ginsberg <fbg0120@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 24, 2022 8:13 AM
To: Gerry Shaw
Subject: EXTERNALAffordable housing

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Gerry, I failed to mention my displeasure with considering the Congregational Church also. Pretty town center should not become congested, in my opinion.

Thanks.
Hello Gerry – Please share the following comments with the entire BOS. Thank you.

As I stated at the Annual Town Meeting, I urge the BOS to slow down and give your constituents time to absorb the lengthy draft report submitted by the Housing Opportunity Study Committee. The delay is necessary to afford adequate time for comment. At a minimum, town residents should have the opportunity to offer comment at the BOS’ regular June meeting, with an extended public comment session on the agenda to show the Selectmen’s interest in what constituents have to say. While the draft report states (p. 8) that CT law requires a public hearing before the draft is adopted, and a minimum of 35 days’ notice of that hearing, there is no clear statement that either the Housing Committee or the BOS will revise the draft to reflect the public comment received. Surely it is better to pause now to offer time for feedback, before the formal process begins?

Due to the inadequate comment period offered so far, I have had time to skim but not review the full report. Here are a few thoughts regarding the draft, based on my preliminary review:

1) The report expressly promotes the use of town-owned properties for affordable housing and lists both the Fitzgerald Tract and the CCW. State law doesn’t require the Town to offer public land for affordable housing development and I think it is wrong to offer either of these properties for that purpose given the State’s rival priority known as the Green Plan.

2) At page 7 the report claims that more than one third of the town is open space. This is clearly incorrect when you look at the POCD.

3) The draft advocates for a permanent housing committee and raises the prospect that additional town staffing and/or contractors will be needed to promote affordable housing. First and foremost, consideration of these steps is premature. The town should give the private market time to respond to TPZ’s sweeping zoning changes before taking either of these two steps. Since the law requires review of the housing plan every five years, it is more appropriate to consider these two ideas five years from now, once the private market has had time to respond. I may have further thoughts on this issue but haven’t had time yet to consider it thoroughly.

4) The draft states that the town is projected to decline in population by 20% over the next 20 years. Really? This projection seems to be based on outdated, pre-COVID models as well as other flaws. In my immediate neighborhood I am seeing houses sell primarily to young families, expanding the net number of residents per household.

5) The draft at page 12 refers to the “State’s mandated 10% requirement.” It is alarming to see that the committee doesn’t understand the law on which its report is grounded.
6) The report lists ten potential places for affordable housing but the JCC is limited to the “existing parking lot” when the Federation owns much more adjacent land and the JCC has public sewer and public water service, as well as a bus line. Surely that area is worth a closer look?

7) The report generally supports sewer expansion without recognizing that existing homes in the Highlands area (behind Brookfield Market) perhaps should receive sewer service first due to on-going septic problems. Further, the avoidance of sewer expansion was the official policy of the state some dozen years ago due to the on-going challenges of existing systems in meeting Federal Clean Water Act requirements. Surely the report should reflect current state policy regarding this issue?

There are sections of the report that I have yet to review in any substantive way and would certainly do so if the BOS recognizes that the public deserves more time for comment on the draft. For example, there’s a large section on existing housing and demographics. While I merely skimmed this section I noticed that the demographics data is gleansed from 2019 or earlier while some of the housing cost data covers 2021. That inconsistency needs to be acknowledged, at a minimum, and may merit correction. There’s also a multi-page table of specific recommendations that I simply had no time to review but deserves to be studied closely.

To conclude, I and I’m sure many residents need more time to review the entire 90+ page draft and offer substantive comment. Please grant us that opportunity! Sincerely, Amey Marrella (184 Rimmon Road)
From: Alfred E. Smith, Jr. <ASmith@murthalaw.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 25, 2022 5:39 PM
To: Gerry Shaw
Cc: adrienne micci-smith
Subject: EXTERNAL Comments on Housing Plan

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Gerry:

Please enter these comments on the record. Thanks

1. Please allow a reasonable amount of time to read and digest the plan. It was made public only recently, describes many important issues and deserves thoughtful consideration. There is no legally required deadline for action. I am concerned that the decision not to characterize the meeting as a “public hearing” may be an attempt to avoid having a 35-day notice requirement and to hasten, unnecessarily, a decision.

2. The report expressly promotes the use of town-owned properties for affordable housing and lists both the Fitzgerald Tract and the CCW. Information indicates that few, if any, towns in CT are advocating the use of town-owned open space for housing. This is poor planning, sketchy economics and inconsistent with the State’s Green Plan.

3. At page 7 the report claims that more than one third of the town is open space. Please compare to the POCD.

4. The draft at page 12 refers to the “State’s mandated 10% requirement.” The law clearly imposes no such mandate. The Committee’s misunderstanding of the law should give us all pause. Before placing the town’s imprimatur on any report, we should be sure, at the very least, that there are no obvious errors.

Thank you

Al Smith

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