

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
MAY 17, 2021; 7:00 P.M.
HELD VIRTUALLY VIA INTERNET AND PHONE

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Present: Ken Edgar, Chairman; Jane Connolly, Vice Chairwoman; Don Saltzman, Sally Korsh, Harry Falber, Britta Lerner, Richard Wolf

Also Present: Tracy Kulikowski, Land Use Director; members of the public

Digitally Recorded [held virtually due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency]

7:05 p.m. Chairman Edgar called the meeting to order.

TOWN OF WESTON AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN PUBLIC WORKSHOP WITH SLR CORPORATION – DISCUSS POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

Chairman Edgar introduced Mike Zuba and Elizabeth Esposito of SLR Corporation. SLR presented a PowerPoint on the Town of Weston Affordable Housing Plan – Workshop Summary and Strategy Planning. [The presentation is posted on the Town website.]

Mr. Zuba and Ms. Esposito stated that this Public Workshop would provide an opportunity for the Commission and the public to comment on the Plan's potential principles, goals and actions. SLR discussed potential strategies to address affordable housing options for the Commission to consider for possible inclusion in the Plan. Ms. Esposito discussed incorporating diversified housing options in the proposed Village District. Ms. Esposito stated that the implementation of Accessory Dwelling Units as a potential strategy is influenced by the current legislative session and proposals that could impact zoning laws governing these units. SLR discussed Open Space Subdivisions for the Commission to consider as a longer-term potential strategy.

Chairman Edgar stated that the Plan is intended to identify potential strategies to address affordable housing. He stated that the Plan will not change zoning and that it is the amendment of regulations that would effectuate such change.

The following members of the public spoke:

Jill Bregy, 167 Lyons Plain Road – expressed her interest in this topic and that she attended the meeting to learn more about affordable housing.

Debbie Carrothers, 10 November Trail – asked for information on Open Space Subdivisions. Chairman Edgar stated that this potential strategy is a longer-term initiative for the Commission to consider and that there is no current plan to amend the zoning regulations to permit Open Space Subdivisions. Ms. Carrothers asked about the conditions required for affordable housing and if the Commission had discussed the Plan's oversight.

Margaret Wirtenberg – expressed concern about the possible relocation of the Onion Barn in the proposed Village District. Chairman Edgar stated that the 2020 Town Plan of Conservation & Development contemplates relocating the Onion Barn and that this possible consideration does not affect affordable housing.

Michael Imber, 6 Glenwood Road – asked about the timeline to create and submit an Affordable Housing Plan to the State and asked about the State's Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Act.

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Ellen Strauss, Ladder Hill Road – asked if SLR had spoken with the property owner of the Town Center to discuss their potential interest in creating a proposed Village District which may incorporate affordable housing. Mr. Zuba spoke about discussions that will occur with the property owner and those owners that surround the future boundaries of the proposed Village District, concerning the creation of Village District Regulations. Ms. Strauss asked about State bills that may affect affordable housing requirements. Laurie Bloom, 180 Georgetown Road – expressed her concern that affordable housing may negatively impact septic and water waste management. She asked about the income threshold requirements for affordable housing.

Shay Frimmer, 27 Old Easton Turnpike – gave support for Accessory Dwelling Units and asked to hear more about the Commission's stance on these units.

Jack Audibert, 14 Norfield Road – asked whether the Plan intends to set forth a goal to achieve a minimum number of affordable dwelling units in Weston. Chairman Edgar spoke about the State's desire for each municipality to have 10% of its total housing units qualify as affordable. He stated that the State mandates that each municipality create an affordable housing plan and that the Commission, with the guidance of SLR, intends to create a plan that works for Weston. Mr. Audibert asked if developers had been contacted to begin the discussion of affordable housing.

Brent Shaffer, 36 Old Orchard Drive – asked if the development of affordable housing could work in conjunction with federal and/or state programs. Mike Zuba spoke about resources available to developers to make affordable housing financially feasible.

Amy Jenner, 22 White Oak Lane – expressed her concern about the vibrancy of the Town Center and its ability to support affordable housing and asked about potential recipients of affordable housing.

Kate Roe, 38 High Noon Road – asked if the Commission had received input from new residents and from residents of other towns as part of this process.

Holly Charlesworth, 8 Tubbs Spring Drive – asked if the proposed Village District could incorporate regulations that would allow commercial space and residential space to be interchanged. She also asked if developers were contacted to begin the dialogue of creating affordable housing.

Marlene Schimenz, 115 Lyons Plain Road – spoke about the Town's natural characteristics and expressed her concerns about deed-restricting dwelling units as affordable.

Michael Widland, 42 Trails End – commended the Commission's work and spoke about the feasibility of these potential strategies.

Chris Hill, 89 Davis Hill Road – asked about potential opportunities to partner with the State and to engage developers.

Daniel Gershburg, 72 Catbrier Road – provided positive feedback and gave his opinion that the Commission's initiatives will help bring diversity in housing options.

Jessie Schwartz-Kwasnik, 139 Steep Hill Road – asked about possible incentives to property owners of accessory dwelling units that are created to qualify as affordable housing. Chairman Edgar spoke about pending State legislation that, if enacted, would preclude deed-restricting these units as affordable housing.

Marlene Schimenz – expressed her opinion that a diversity of increased services and amenities in the Town might add to Weston's attractiveness.

Martin Mohabeer, 10 Hyde Ridge – spoke about the importance that these potential initiatives help promote ethnic diversity.

Margaret Wirtenberg – agreed about the significance and value in promoting diversity.

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Hearing no further discussion, Vice Chairwoman Connolly made a motion that the Commission adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Sally Korsh. All in favor, the motion carried (7-0).

9:06 p.m. Meeting adjourned

Submitted by: AnnMarie Fontana, Assistant

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