

Town of Warren
Housing Plan Steering Committee Meeting

April 1, 2021
5:00pm
Meeting held via Zoom

Members IN ATTENDANCE: Tim Angevine, Diane Engle, Roger Grace, Jack Travers, Missy Woodward, Victoria Sahadevan Fossland. Staff/consultant in attendance: Jocelyn Ayer

MINUTES:

Members discussed the PRELIMINARY DRAFT goals and strategies for the Housing Plan (attached).

- It was decided that the “free second cut” ordinance would be removed from the strategies list as it could cause confusion or concern and was not likely to result in many, if any additional opportunities for first time homebuyer lots.
- Tim noted that the town already has a conveyance fee it has to collect per state statute. Some of this fee goes to the State and some comes to the town. It was suggested that a possible strategy would be to utilize a portion of that existing conveyance fee to create a Housing Fund. Jocelyn will send the Goshen conveyance fee example to the Committee.
- There was a discussion about possible zoning changes regarding allowing options other than single family such as 2-family, 3-family homes and whether this would be proposed to be allowed in all zones or in certain areas. It was decided that we would poll residents about this question at the next community forum on the Housing Plan. Everyone was reminded that any zoning change would be up to the Planning & Zoning Commission and have to go through a public hearing process.
- There was a discussion about accessory apartments and whether they would lead to more housing options for year around residents or lead to guest houses or Airbnbs.
- There was a question about what Section 20 of the Town’s Zoning regulations said and we reviewed it briefly. Victoria suggested that the language in this strategy was too vague and that it would be good to better understand what would need to be changed. Jocelyn will look into this and get back to the committee.

An update on new resources available to assist with Housing Plans was provided by Jocelyn:

- The short film showing affordable housing in NWCT’s small towns has been released and is now available to view and/or show at the next community forum. Members that had viewed the 10-minute video thought it was good and should be used.
- A NWCT Regional Housing Needs Assessment is also available which shows housing needs data for Warren and the other 20 towns in the NHCOC region. This could be made an appendix of the Warren Housing Plan in case readers want more information or regional context for Warren’s housing data.

The Committee discussed a date for the next community-wide forum on the Housing Plan when the committee can present the possible goals and strategies and get feedback from community members. It was decided that this would be held on May 17th at 7pm via Zoom.

- Jocelyn will work on an agenda, invite, and possible polling questions to send to the committee for feedback in preparation for the May 17th meeting.

The next meeting date for the Committee is May 6th. Meeting was adjourned at 5:55pm.

[Click for audio](#)

| Goal | Action/Task | Responsible Lead* | Partners |
|--|---|-------------------|--|
| Create first time homebuyer options (unit goal? 3 units in 5 yrs) | Encourage private giving of land or funding to Warren Affordable Housing Corporation (WAHC) to allow them to build first time homebuyer homes. | | WAHC, WLT |
| | Work with the Warren Land Trust to see if future donors could be asked to consider a portion of the preserved property being provided to WAHC to be used for housing. | | |
| | Adopt a town ordinance or zoning regulation change that allows a "Free second cut" for property owners who wish to donate a lot for affordable housing to a local housing non-profit like the WAHC. This would exempt the property owner from the subdivision regulations for this purpose (example: Salisbury, CT). Once the ordinance or regulation is in place, make residents aware of this new option at least once per year through newsletter articles, postcards, brochures, or other methods. | P&Z | BOS |
| | Consider a town ordinance that creates a conveyance fee to fund a Land Acquisition Fund (example: Goshen, CT) that could be used for the acquisition of land for housing. Allow local non-profits to make proposals for use of the Fund to the Board of Selectmen. | BOS | |
| | Increase awareness of down-payment assistance and free first-time homebuyer education classes available in the area and online | | Housing Development Fund, Neighborhood Housing Services of Waterbury |
| | Create a town or privately funded community revolving loan fund to provide down-payment assistance to income eligible potential homeowners seeking to buy in Warren. (Example: Town of Washington downpayment assistance program) | | |
| Encourage the development of "downsizing" options (unit goal?) | Update the town's zoning regulations to allow multi-family housing (2 or more units together in one structure or on one site) that could be built by a non-profit or private developer on parcels that can meet septic and well requirements. | P&Z | |
| | Ensure that the zoning regulations allow the conversion of existing homes to multi-family. Conduct outreach to let property owners know about this option. | P&Z | |
| | Examine the current accessory apartment regulations to add increased flexibility such as allowing two accessory apartments and/or allowing by site plan review rather than special permit. Create an accessory apartment guidebook. | P&Z | |
| | Consider adopting a flexible zoning tool such as a Planned Development District (PDD), Planned Residential District (PDR), or Incentive Housing Zone (IHZ) that would allow the Commission to consider proposed residential developments such as co-housing or condominiums at the request of an applicant. | P&Z | |
| Support the development of affordable rental opportunities for seniors and young people/families (GOAL= 15 units) | Continue to support the development of 10-15 units by the Warren Affordable Housing Corporation on a portion of the Town Hall property . Look for opportunities for the Town to apply for grant funding that would support the development of this project such as the Small Cities grant funding. | | WAHC |
| | Consider changes to section 20 of the town's zoning regulations that may be needed to accommodate the WAHC project on the Town Hall property to be developed in a way that is attractive, cost efficient, and competitive for grant funding sources. | P&Z | |
| | Assist the WAHC to build its capacity and resources to address housing needs in Warren such as helping to get the word out to residents who might like to join the non-profit's board, donate land or funding. | | |
| | Continue to support the Northwest Connecticut Regional Housing Council of which the WAHC is a member organization. Where the region's small towns share information and resources to help build their capacity to create housing options. | BOS | WAHC, NWCT RHC |

| | | | |
|---|---|-----|------------------------|
| Help keep seniors in their homes | Update the town's zoning regulations to assure that residents can add wheelchair ramps or meet other ADA requirements without needing a special permit or variance due to setbacks or other restrictions. | P&Z | |
| | Promote energy efficiency programs offered by Eversource and others once per year through the town newsletter or other means. | | |
| | Consider establishing a housing rehabilitation program that provides funding and technical assistance for accessibility modifications or other needed upgrades for income eligible homeowners. | BOS | |
| | Other services need to help keep seniors in their homes? Or outreach about existing services such as senior bus? | | Warren Social Services |

DRAFT for DISCUSSION