Housing Committee
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 13, 2021

PRESENT:  John C. Kelly, Bettye Ragognetti, David Rintoul, Suzanne Wakeen (Committee Members)

A. Call to Order
   Meeting called to order at 5:06 pm

B. Approval of Minutes from June 8th Meeting: Mr. Rintoul made a motion to approve, Ms. Ragognetti seconded, and the motion carried 3-0. Ms. Wakeen did not participate as she was not a Committee member at the time of the June 8th meeting.

C. Public Comment
   None

 Actions and Discussion

D. Committee Activity

   • The Committee welcomed its new member, Suzanne Wakeen. Ms. Wakeen briefly discussed her background, including her 28-year residency in Wilton, her career in banking with a focus on commercial real estate finance, and her prior service on the Social Services Commission. Mr. Kelly noted that he understood that there was at least one other candidate for Committee membership being considered by the Board of Selectmen.

   • Mr. Kelly discussed the background for the June 24th Wilton Bulletin article about the Housing Committee’s work, including his e-mail exchanges with the article’s author/editor. The Committee agreed that the article accurately reflected the current state of affairs.

*Minutes have not been reviewed by this Board and may be subject to revision in future minutes.*
• Housing Potential of Town-Owned Properties – The current focus of the Committee’s analysis is on the Town-owned properties known as the Georgetown Cluster (Gilbert & Bennet School, 31 New Street and 7 New Street) and the Train Station Cluster (15/19 Station Road and 49 Old Danbury Road). Mr. Kelly noted that the Town was still awaiting a contractor’s assessment of the recently vacated property at 7 New Street regarding the current physical condition of the property and the cost of repairs / renovation necessary to re-tenant the space. Committee members discussed some of the issues that would need to be overcome in connection with any development of the Georgetown Cluster. Mr. Kelly indicated that he would reach out to Town official about the status of any inter-municipal discussions among Wilton, Redding and Ridgefield about the Georgetown area. Mr. Rintoul agreed to explore the details of community septic and other onsite waste management systems, including their cost and effectiveness. Ms. Ragognetti will contact Parks & Rec personnel to discuss the current and anticipated future use of the ball fields at both G&B school and Ambler Farm in order to understand the implications of development that might affect access to these properties. Mr. Kelly noted that he had finally completed a review of the recorded documents affecting the Ambler Farm property and would circulate a summary to the Committee.

• Development of Housing Inventory – One of the Committee’s key objectives is to produce a housing inventory that seeks to capture available information on all housing alternatives that exist in Town. The Committee hopes to expand the inventory to include additional data points that might be useful to Town decisionmakers as they seek to understand the current diversity of the Town’s housing stock, including perhaps the range of sales prices and rental rates for single family houses and condominiums, and the rental rates at the various multifamily rental projects in Town. Mr. Kelly had previously circulated a wealth of information that had been provided by Peg Koellmer, a local realtor and Chair of the Social Services Commission. Mr. Rintoul had incorporated certain relevant information in the Excel spreadsheet that the Committee is using for the inventory, and the Committee further discussed the information and how the inventory might be expanded and otherwise improved. Mr. Kelly noted that a review of the 10-year rental history suggested that a number of properties may have detached ADUs that have not been accounted for by the Town, and that unfortunately, some of the least expensive apartment units are scheduled to be demolished as part of approved multifamily and mixed-use developments. Mr. Rintoul and Mr. Kelly agreed to meet by phone to reconcile certain conflicting data and discuss some refinements to the inventory.

• Current housing-related P&Z activity – The Committee discussed the recent 8-30g proposals for properties at 24 and 221 Danbury Road, and the generally negative reactions from members of both the ARB and P&Z Commission.

• Zoning Activity with Statewide Implications - Mr. Kelly summarized his understanding of the recent actions by the Woodbridge P&Z Commission in response
to the OCA / Yale Law School-supported developer application to change the Woodbridge zoning laws. Woodbridge rejected the OCA/Yale request that would have allowed up to 4 units on any residential lot in town by permit only, e.g., without a public hearing. Woodbridge did approve certain changes, including permitting (i) ADUs up to 600 sf in all residential districts, (ii) duplexes by permit only if located in an area with public water/sewer, and with site plan approval if not located in a public watershed, and by special exception if in a public watershed, and (iii) multifamily units by special exception, if not located in a public watershed. OCA/Yale expressed disappointment with the result, but were unsure of their next action.

E. Future Meetings / Agendas

The Committee discussed future actions and agreed to explore the following:

- Mr. Rintoul would further refine the inventory, and the Committee would invite Ms. Koellmer to review and discuss it at the next meeting.
- The Committee will continue its outreach to the development community. Ms. Vanderslice has indicated that Mr. Tomasetti may be able to provide some contacts that could lead to additional conversations or presentations.
- Mr. Kelly will pursue discussions with the Town about the costs/benefits of a housing authority and the status of efforts to develop an 8-30j affordable housing plan.

F. Member Comments

There were no further comments from Committee members.

G. Public Comment

None

H. Adjournment

As there was no other business, motion to adjourn at 6:07 pm was made by Ms. Ragognetti, seconded by Mr. Rintoul, and carried 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted
John Kelly