

**TOWN OF EAST HAVEN  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING  
MARCH 16, 2022  
HELD VIA ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE AND CONFERENCE CALL**

Attorney Coppola called the special meeting to order at 5:42 p.m.

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**I. Roll call**

The committee members were in attendance were as follows:

Louis Fusco - Present  
Amy Derbacher (exited at 7:00 p.m.) - Present  
Wendy Bellmore - Absent  
Paul Salisbury (joined at 5:54 p.m.) - Present

Michael Luzzi - Town Attorney  
Joseph Budrow - Planning and Zoning Administrator and Zoning Enforcement Officer  
Attorney Jennifer Coppola (joined at 5:41 p.m.) - Assistant Town Attorney  
Sotonye Otunba-Payne (joined at 5:39 p.m.) - Clerk

Members of the public present:  
Visitor A  
Karen Martin

**II. Discussion of Status of Housing Plan Survey**

Attorney Coppola indicated that what they need to focus on this the Strategy document that was received from SCRCOG (Southern Central Regional Council of Governments) that they began discussing a little bit about last week at the committee's meeting. She implored all to bring it up on their computer or take out their hard copies.

Attorney Coppola indicated that there were 540 responses to the survey. It is an excellent response. There were under 20 responses to the SCRCOG survey in the fall. This is a much better number of identifying the desires, needs, opinions about housing from the residents and property owners in the town.

There were under 50 responses from folks who do not reside in East Haven. So, the survey has captured some folks who are interested in looking at East Haven for housing. It is terrific to hear from them as well. As soon as the survey is closed at 11:59 p.m. on Friday, March 18, 2022, she will send out a summary of the responses so that the committee could take a look at that. She will also forward the summary to the consultants, RKG Associates Inc. This way RKG Associates Inc. could incorporate it into the existing conditions of housing needs assessment portion of the plan.

Attorney Coppola thanked the committee members as some had spread the word by posting on social media. She implored the members of the committee to continue spreading the word and encouraging everyone they speak with to take this survey. They have a very high completion rate. East Haven has a 74 percent completion rate versus SCRCOG's survey with a completion rate of 49 percent. Folks are completing the survey in less than 10 minutes.

Attorney Coppola stated that the point of going through all this is to have the community have a say from a planning perspective about housing issues. Everybody recognizes that affordable housing is a positive thing for a community. The community recognizes there's a need for that whether it's for seniors or young people just starting out, etc.

They had had discussions with Ms. Regina Comfort Rodriguez who had indicated last week that there were not a lot of single-family homes, and that rents were very high. Embarking on this endeavor may change the lives of some folks in the community. You do not want a situation where a judge is deciding or an outside developer is deciding via a lawsuit.

### **III. Discussion of Draft Housing Goals and Strategies**

Attorney Coppola turned to Strategy Type - Cross-Cutting which generally means that it's a strategy or plan that covers like a variety of disciplines, a variety of areas. There are a number of educational strategies within this particular strategy type.

Attorney Coppola indicated she was interested in hearing about any concerns the committee may have with a particular strategy or any strategy that the committee felt they needed more information in order that the feedback could be given to SCRCOG and RKG Associates Inc.

The task given to the committee is to mark each of these strategies with a y for yes and n for no and then need more information is the other choice in the drop-down window.

**Strategy Type: Cross Cutting** was discussed as follows:

1. Resident Education Program. Attorney Coppola stated that there are resources on the town's website. The committee could have its own webpage on the town's website. There could be guidebooks as well stating all the resources available in the town. This is a no-brainer.
2. Landlord Education Program. This is a little bit different. If a landlord is faced with an applicant who needs housing assistance versus someone who doesn't that there tends to be a tendency to favor the applicant that does not need assistance. The point of this would be to encourage an important stakeholder as far as rental housing is concerned, to educate them about rental assistance and to help to sort of bridge that problem. The landlords could help increase diversity of housing. This is a no-brainer.

Mr. Fusco indicated that he had gone through the strategies and lots of them involve education. He stated that they could think about one strategy that would cover education. The main strategy would be education.

Attorney Coppola indicated it was a good goal. This is something she could suggest to them. The committee does not need to have all listed. The committee could choose what the town would do within the next five years because there is an administrative workload piece to this as well.

3. Create or Continue Affordable Housing Committee in the Community. Attorney Coppola stated that, ultimately, this is the Town Council's decision. An implementation committee potentially was mentioned. This committee would be looking at how the strategies are performing, so to speak, and doing an evaluation of this committee's plan pursuant to some set time frame such as quarterly, yearly, etc. This implicates the Planning and Zoning Commission's authority. So, this is a why joint meeting was scheduled for March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022.
4. Review Existing Zoning to Remove Barriers to Housing Production/Increase Housing Production. Attorney Coppola stated that this is looking at use, looking at zones, looking for opportunities to increase diversity of housing and areas to provide potential ownership, etc. This committee will get feedback from the Planning and Zoning Commission. There are opportunities within the regulations to develop affordable housing throughout the town.
5. Expanded Capacity for Accessory Dwelling Units. Attorney Coppola indicated that she had made mention that this is something the Planning and Zoning's feedback is really super necessary on because there is legislation, Public Act 21-9 that both the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Town Council, the legislative body of East Haven, have to act on before January 1, 2023. We do not know the Planning and Zoning's decision ultimately will be regarding that legislation. This could be skipped.
6. Create New Local Funding Sources for Affordable Housing. Attorney Coppola indicated that there are a number of strategies in here that require funding. There is an administrative cost, as she had mentioned, and a workload component as well to this. She asked if the committee members would like some more information. She asked if they thought this would not suit their town. Some of these responses may be more appropriate for larger communities as there are other municipalities that are part of SCRCOG. A piece of this is not within this committee's authority such as tax abatement, etc. This is within the authority of the Town Council. There will be input from the survey regarding this. This could be put aside to get the Planning and Zoning Commission's input. This could be done in the next plan as well.

After discussions, it was decided that more information was needed. So, it will be marked undecided.

7. Identify and promote locations for housing in your community. Attorney Coppola stated that this committee is doing that through its plan. There was a preliminary locational analysis. Mr. Budrow has provided this committee with his opinion about their draft. Mr. Budrow is doing some more work on that. When Mr. Budrow is ready, he would reach out to the consultant about it. There is a promote aspect of this as well.

So, this community is much better off than many of the other communities in SCRCOG. This community dropped last year probably due to folks not qualifying for assistance any longer because of a change in circumstances or something like that. The community is almost at eight percent of affordable. This community's housing stock is very large. The 2020 number was 12,533. So, 10 percent is a big number.

8. Host developer roundtables and invite developers to visit potential housing sites or locations. Attorney Coppola indicated that talking to developers would benefit the town. This does mention incentives. Incentives has to go through another process through the Town Council. Attorney Coppola indicated this was a no-brainer.
9. Provide additional resources to specific populations. Attorney Coppola stated that this goes to identifying people in the community with a need for affordable housing. There are some obvious ways of doing that. There are folks receiving assistance of different forms presently. The data is there. The goal is to identify people in the community who are spending more than 30 percent of their annual income on housing to try to assist them before their housing situation is made worse too. This is not stating a specific resource such as monetary resource. This is general.

Mr. Budrow said they would find programs for people. They would assess all of East Haven's buildings and housing stock. They will assess the population. They would have a link on the town's website for affordable housing where people could go to for information. It's a lot to take on right now, but they are setting the course. They have one year to get a lot of the goals into motion. It will be slow and organized, but the course has to be set first.

Ms. Bellmore commented that it sounded like people were compartmentalizing. She wanted to make clear that from her perspective there are many people who just are living on the edge of surviving. They are not handicapped or elderly. They are not too young. They are not otherwise experiencing food hunger or loss of justice in their lives or anything else. What people in this committee think as distress may not be the same definition of distress for people getting by. The idea of sending people to the various resources within the town for each thing they need is a wrong approach. She wanted to caution against that.

10. Augment federal housing choice vouchers with a locally funded rental housing

assistance program. Attorney Coppola indicated it falls into the category of needing funding. She indicated that she wanted the committee to think of whether it agrees with anything that needs funding. She passed this.

11. Help developers to connect with remediations funds for projects in your community. Attorney Coppola indicated that it mentioned specifically Brownfield. This is being done anyway.

Mr. Budrow indicated he printed off the list on the state's website. There were at least four pages of properties in East Haven that fall under contaminated sites or potentially contaminated sites. He did not think any of them were flagged for major remediation. Many were residential properties regarding oil tank leaks. There were commercial properties such as gas stations. People could be pointed in the right direction when looking for any specific properties on that list.

Attorney Coppola indicated this is not something requiring the town to expend any funds. It's sharing information with developers. This is okay.

12. Amend POCD to align with the Affordable Housing Plan. Attorney Coppola says the affordable housing plan should align with your POCD. East Haven has a POCD in place, and it is only revised and amended every 10 years. She added that she and staff would be assessing to make sure that in terms of final goals and strategies, there is nothing that conflicts with the housing strategies in the POCD, affordable or not. This is something that is part of the process that they will be going through. The committee will be informed of any issues, if any, arises.

13. Create/Increase Funding for a Housing Rehabilitation Program. Attorney Coppola indicated this would be a town program.

After discussions, Attorney Coppola indicated that this is not something to include in the committee's initial plan.

14. Evaluate Staff Capacity to Implement the Affordable Housing Plan. There will be continual opportunities for training on affordable housing matters.

**Strategy Type: Supply** was discussed as follows:

- 1 Create an Incentive Housing Zone(s). Attorney Coppola indicated that this is getting a higher density. However, to get that higher density, they want those units restricted affordable. That is one type of zoning regulations that's out there. This will be skipped for the Planning and Zoning Commission's input.
- 2 Disposition of Publicly-Owned Land for Housing Production. Attorney Coppola indicated that this was one of the questions asked in the survey regarding whether public properties should be used for affordable housing. They will see what the result is on that.

- 3 Acquisition Fund. Attorney Coppola indicated this is trying to create partnerships with potential stakeholders or for the town itself to acquire properties that could be used for affordable housing. This goes along with the survey results. It is okay to skip this too to see what input the committee gets on that.
- 4 Permanent Supportive Housing Pilot Program. Attorney Coppola indicated that this is slightly analogous to what Ms. Bellmore had previously indicated that there are people that chronically experience homelessness who are sort of living on that edge. There is an enormous amount of legwork with this. Attorney Coppola indicated that if the committee wanted to consider this, maybe not in the initial five years especially regarding East Haven's status as a distressed community.

Mr. Salisbury indicated that when one looks at this, one is looking at a veteran's situation, a mental health situation. There are a number of things involved in that. Are they necessarily how the committee puts together a town plan that aligns with all those things that are happening at the same time? This is a multi-faceted issue that happens with folks like that. This is sad.

Attorney Coppola asked if the committee wanted information on people that have chronic illnesses.

Mr. Fusco indicated that this may be better suited for larger towns like New Haven. It should be saved for after the first five years.

- 5 Employer Assisted Housing. Attorney Coppola indicated this is another educational piece. It should part of the town's strategy.
- 6 Housing as a Marketing Tool. Attorney Coppola indicated this may not apply to the employers in East Haven.
- 7 Encourage Missing Middle Housing Option. Attorney Coppola indicated they would speak with the Planning and Zoning Commission about this.
- 8 Options for Senior Housing. Attorney Coppola indicated that this is an important one. This seems like an obvious one. The type of housing and particulars are within the authority of the Planning and Zoning Commission.
- 9 Implement Inclusionary Zoning. Attorney Coppola stated that this is for the Planning and Zoning Commission. It is also included in the survey as questions of private developers being incentivized were asked.
- 10 Create an Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Attorney Coppola indicated that some funds come from towns adding an additional permit fee through the building

departments fees, through the Planning and Zoning department fees for particular applications. The fees go into a separate fund that is used for things like emergency rental, rehabilitation of older affordable homes and units, etc. Maybe East Haven should explore this.

Mr. Fusco indicated he would like to see more information on this. Attorney Coppola indicated she would circulate information on this.

- 11 Implement performance requirements related to provisions of affordable units for long-term TAX Stabilization Agreements (TSAs). Attorney Coppola indicated these are agreements between developers and the municipalities that reduce the amount of taxes paid on the property for a period not to exceed 20 years. So, like a tax abatement program. There is a lot of information on this. She indicated she was not familiar with what the town had regarding this. This is within the Town Council's authority. The committee could recommend it.
- 12 Increase supply of low-cost capital. Attorney Coppola stated that this a loan guarantee. She is unfamiliar with this. She is happy to look into this.
- 13 Purchase USDA and CHFA loan programs. Attorney Coppola indicated there are some changes to CHFA. She would provide the committee with information regarding this. This is a no-brainer
- 14 Reduced parking requirements for qualifying development. Attorney Coppola indicated this is for Planning and Zoning Commissions. There is some opt-out legislation which is the part regarding accessory.
- 15 Manage Vacant Property Inventories. Attorney Coppola said that often times it is through blight enforcement that towns discover properties are vacant. A list of vacant properties should be added to an inventory list.

**Strategy Type: Homeownerships** was discussed as follows:

- 1 Establish Housing Counseling. Attorney Coppola stated that there are resources for information regarding what programs are out there regarding lending.
- 2 Implement First Time Homebuyer Program. Attorney Coppola indicated there was something going on with the state with regard to this. After discussions, it was decided the committee should wait until the state decides how to move forward with this.
- 3 Create Housing Education and Resources. This was agreed to.

- 4 Implement Senior Tax Relief or Work Off Program. Mr. Fusco indicated the town has something.
- 5 Use Deed Restrictions to Create Workforce Units. This is for the Planning and Zoning Commission.
- 6 Shared Equity Housing Programs. Mr. Fusco suggested this could be in the 10-year plan. They are not there yet.

**Strategy Type: Preserve/Maintain** was discussed as follows:

- 1 Preservation Fund. Attorney Coppola indicated this is preserving the affordable housing that the town has. More information would be provided on this.
- 2 Maintain an Affordable Housing Preservation Unit Count & Annual Report. Attorney Coppola indicated that every municipality was reporting to the state. It is creating essential database. It is a doable thing. More information would be provided regarding this.
- 3 Public Housing Redevelopment. More information is needed regarding this.
- 4 Rehab/Redevelopment without Displacement. After discussions, Attorney Coppola indicated some research is required regarding this.
- 5 Creation of a Rental Registry and Inspection Process. Attorney Coppola indicated that they ought to look at what the town has and see what critical research needs to be done.
- 6 Public Employee Housing Choice Program. After discussions, the consensus was that this could be problematic.
- 7 Create a stand-alone accessibility assistance program. Attorney Coppola indicated this was a lot.
- 8 Create a program that offers forgivable gap financing for purchase rehabilitation project. The funding aspect of this was concerning.
- 9 Implement a Right of First Refusal Policy to preserve existing affordability or assemble land critical to meet the community's affordable housing needs. Attorney Coppola indicated she would share the strategy document with the Town Council.



**IV. Public Comment**

Attorney Coppola called for public comment. There were none.

**V. Discussion of Future Committee Meetings**

There were discussions regarding time for the next meeting on March 22, 2022.

**VI. Election of Officers**

Attorney Coppola indicated this would be done next week. There were requests to do this at the next meeting.

**VII. Adjournment**

**Mr. Fusco moved to adjourn. Said motion was seconded by Mr. Salisbury. The motion passed unanimously.**

The next scheduled joint meeting with the Planning and Zoning Commissions is on March 22, 2022.

The Committee adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sotonye Otunba-Payne