

WILSON/ DEERFIELD ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(WDAC)
VIRTUAL MEETING
March 24, 2022
Regular Meeting

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

GUEST: *Katrina Overstreet;*

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bingham called the meeting to order at 7:13 PM. Present were committee members Tyler Cote, Alvin Bingham, Kim McCloud, Charles Jackson, Debbie Baker. Absent members: Lakisha Hyatt, Karen Zak, Katie Woodward.

Staff: James Burke, Economic Development Director; Patrick McMahon, Economic Development; Flavia Rey de Castro, Community Development Specialist; Don Melanson, Police Chief; Eric Barz, Town Planner.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Katrina Overstreet, from 99 Corey Street, indicated she is concerned about neighbors speeding on her street. She explained she had communicated with the Police Department (PD) but that they have not caught anyone yet. She suggested a patrol parks at the corner of Corey and Broadview to see how drivers ignore the stop sign. Also, she indicated she is interested in having a speed bump in her street noting she had some signatures from neighbors.

Bingham added that overnight parking is also an issue that needs to be addressed in the neighborhood. He indicated he will be taking a copy of the speed bump petition she has put together and noted that, at a later meeting, there would be a staff person from the town presenting on traffic calming.

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Police Department Communication Procedures* *this item was added as a discussion item after the agenda was posted.*

Bingham indicated he had invited the PD to attend the meeting for the public to get informed on the department's communication procedures. He explained there had been a shooting in the neighborhood, and noted that, as a resident, he was unaware of how to receive further information on this incident. Melanson, proceeded to explain the

incident highlighting that it was targeted at one specific house and that thankfully nobody had been injured. He explained that although it was still an active investigation, the incident was not a random shooting and that there were no risks to other neighbors. He noted that according to PD policies, they will not hide, but also not offer, information if they determine that the community is not in danger. He indicated that if the PD determines that safety is a concern, they will notify the media and send flyers to the neighborhood.

Jackson asked if Melanson would support residents in co-signing a petition for a speed bump. Melanson explained that the town has policies and procedure it follows for traffic calming. He noted that for a speed bump to be installed, signatures from neighbors are not enough and that the town would conduct a study and install speed monitors to gather data first. He noted he would bring this up at an upcoming traffic committee meeting for data to be gathered on Corey and Broadview.

b. Urban Forestry Grant

Bingham reminded committee members that Todd Sealy, Assistant Town Planner, was unable to join the meeting due to a last minute scheduling conflict. He referred to an email that was sent to all committee members explaining the grant and the town's urban forestry efforts.

McMahon explained that a grant from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection had been secured for this work. He showed a map of the proposed planting locations highlighting that these were located throughout the Wilson and Deerfield Neighborhoods. McMahon explained that the town was intending to develop programming for public education on urban forestry encouraged members to provide input on how to publicize the efforts.

c. Affordable Housing Plan

Barz introduced the Affordable Housing Plan development process. He explained that Windsor is currently working on its plan, that every town is mandated to have a finalized plan by July of 2022 and that he is currently seeking the public's input as he continues developing it.

He first introduced a legal and historical framework under which the plan is being drafted, noting that the state's goal for housing affordability is 10% and that Windsor is currently at 7.57%. He provided an overview of different tools currently available to towns to achieve this goal. Barz introduced the Affordable Housing Needs Assessment research he developed. He provided an overview of the town's demographic and socioeconomic data concluding that housing affordability strategies in Windsor should focus on workforce housing and housing for the elderly. He discussed local affordability trends for homeowners and renters vis-à-vis the characteristics of local housing supply highlighting that although homes in Windsor are relatively affordable, there is a significant portion of the population currently on housing stress (where housing-related expenses exceed 30% of the total income). Barz listed different housing affordability

strategies and efforts currently in place in Windsor, including the Housing Rehabilitation Program and the state's Help Elderly Against Rising Taxes. Barz also discussed the different Town's Planning and Zoning Commission's tools for housing developments, such as the design development process. He explained this was a strategy used for a number of housing developments in town, including Benjamin Court in Wilson and Windsor Station in town center. He also mentioned other strategies including the conversion of commercial properties to a mix of commercial and residential, currently allowed in town center and Wilson, and the newly adopted legislation on accessory apartments.

In regards to developing new strategies, Barz introduced several possible approaches. He explained that according to recent research, in order for an affordable housing development to be financially viable, municipalities have to offer incentives that are higher than normally expected, including allowed density and tax incentives. He noted that new approaches could include the development of more multifamily houses, the increase densities of existing multi-units, or amending regulations to account for number of bedrooms as opposed to number of dwellings to accommodate better young households and empty nesters. He also mentioned adding affordability requirements throughout town as a possibility; however, he warned that this strategy would imply finding ways for these developments to be financially viable. Barz, also mentioned exploring zoning changes from agricultural to residential, and allowable residential densities for these, noting this would not be an ideal approach. He also explained that the creation of an Affordable Housing Land Trust, as a non-profit, to promote, create, and ensure long-term affordable housing would be an option. He mentioned that the Planning and Zoning Commission's role could be expanded to demand a minimum ratio of affordable housing in all new developments, including new single family subdivisions and multifamily complexes. This could be complemented by density bonuses or reduction in lot sizes.

Barz then proceeded to delineate possible affordable housing goals for Windsor. He explained that given the current number of housing units in town, in order to achieve the 10% mandated by the state, one goal could be to have 288 additional affordable dwelling units. However, he emphasized that this would be a moving target as this number would change as market-rate units are being built. Another possible goal, he mentioned, would be to address the actual need. He revisited the local statistics on housing distress and indicated that in Windsor, there are 2,700 owner-occupied households under housing stress and 980 owner-occupied households on severe housing stress or spending 50% or more on housing costs.

Barz emphasized that this is where the town is looking for input from the public, to set an impactful goal. Cote expressed support for the Land Trust idea since bringing a developer into the equation is not the most direct path to achieving an affordability goal. He noted that in the future, as the town's older population passes, there will be plenty of available housing stock that will need to be maintained, and that building mixed-income housing will not address this issue. Burke explained that if this was managed by a non-profit, depending on how it was set up, it would not have the same requirements for

acquisition and disposition of public property as the town would. Bingham indicated that, in regards to the issue of housing stress, the government cannot be the solution for everything. He also emphasized that in many occasions, the housing stress that Barz is referring to, is a choice that the homeowner makes. Bingham also raised a concern about most affordable housing development ending up in Wilson. Barz noted that the regulations would affect all neighborhoods in town the same way, however, he agreed that both Wilson and Town Center have a better infrastructure to handle higher population densities. Bingham, indicating he has many thoughts on the proposal, proposed to that he would set up a meeting to discuss the topic separately.

Barz delineated upcoming steps for the Affordable Housing process. He indicated that the draft would be published online, including some key statistics and facts for the public to consider. He explained that a survey would be published and disseminated throughout town so that residents can voice their opinions. He noted that in May there would be another public workshop, in June a draft would be finalized and in July there would be a public hearing. Bingham requested the town pay attention to the location of those filling out the survey versus the ones being affected by them.

4. ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*At the end of the meeting, Bingham acknowledged Burke's upcoming retirement and recognized and thanked Burke for his service to the committee over the years.

5. STAFF REPORTS

Rey de Castro proposed the committee hosts another Wilson Community Cleanup event for Earth Day. She explained she would expect committee members to help with the event outreach, volunteering. She proposed, Saturday April 23 and May 7th (as a rain date) as dates for the event. Cote and Jackson expressed interest and noted they would participate. Rey de Castro indicated she would communicate further on this via email.

Rey de Castro introduced two housing-related programs that the Community Development Office is proposing to be funded by the American Rescue Funds the Town received. She explained that one of these programs would provide incentives for homeowners to make energy efficiency upgrades and that it would leverage Eversource's *Home Energy Solutions* program. The second program, she explained, would provide incentives to small landlords to address code-correction work.

McMahon informed committee members that the Community Development Office will be applying to the small cities CDBG program in order to recapitalize the funds that run the housing rehabilitation program. He provided an overview of the planned public participation efforts for the grant and requested that the committee endorses the proposal.

Bingham made a motion that the Wilson Deerfield Advisory Committee support the CDBG application for the Town of Windsor. The motion was seconded by McCloud and passed 5-0-0.

6. APPROVAL OF 1/27/22 MEETING MINUTES

Baker made a motion to accept the minutes, which was seconded by Cote. The motion carried unanimously.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Jackson made a motion to adjourn, Cote seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.