

**Affordable Housing Plan Committee
Regular Meeting**

July 8, 2021 - 6:30 PM

This meeting was held in person at Town Hall, Conference Room, and via Zoom.us and is available as a recording.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86772002073>

Meeting ID: 867 7200 2073

Phone 1-929-205-6099

Present: Bob Valentine, First Selectman; Mark Harris, Selectman; Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOC (Northwest Hills Council of Governments); Cindy Barrett, Planning & Zoning Commission; Todd Carusillo, Economic Development Commission; Bill Commerford, Economic Development Commission; Martin Connor, Town Planner; Josephine Jones, Goshen Housing Trust; and Chris Sanders, Goshen Housing Trust and Economic Development Commission and Don Wilkes, Planning & Zoning Commission.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Meeting was called to order by Bob Valentine at 6:30 PM.

2. APPROVAL OF THE 6/10/21 MEETING MINUTES:

IN A MOTION made by Mark Harris, seconded by Don Wilkes, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes of June 10, 2021, as presented. Vote unanimous.

3. DISCUSS ANY FEEDBACK/REVISIONS PROPOSED TO THE DRAFT GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

At the last meeting of 6/10/21, Bob had asked members to review the draft of goals and strategies and email any comments or suggestions. He reported that he had received the following suggestions from Committee member, Mark Harris, and that he had shared them with Jocelyn Ayer for discussion tonight with the committee:

Allow for townhouses on 5 acres with Torrington Area Health District approval.

Convert RA-5 zones to RA-2 zones.

Utilize the Town Land Acquisition Fund for bridge loans to nonprofits for land purchases.

Encourage land donations to be used for Goshen Land Trust and Goshen Housing Trust.

Encourage DPH (Department of Public Health) to approve small group septic systems to encourage more diverse housing.

Discussion was had regarding the suggestion of *converting RA-5 zones to RA-2 zones*, and the Town of Goshen Zoning Map from the Goshen Town website was shared on the screen by Jocelyn Ayer. Marty Connor shared the information about the Aquifer Protection Zone on East Street South and he suggested to leave the RA-5 in that area. He explained that a minimum of 40,000 square feet of really good soil is needed to locate a septic system, a well and a dwelling and that Torrington Area Health District and wetlands approval are needed in the process.

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Marty Connor explained the zones on the zoning map and that the "R" stands for residential and the "A" stands for agricultural and he noted the following zones:

RA-5 which really is the majority of the town.

RA-2 which are mainly along Route 4 and Route 63.

RA-1 - is not part of Woodridge Lake but can hook up to the Woodridge Lake Sewer District.

WL which is the Woodridge Lake zone all served by the Woodridge Lake Sewer District.

He explained the colors which provide a good visual for the zones: white is RA-5, red is RA-2, purple is RA-1, yellow is the Woodridge Lake Zone, and the big green parcel was approved as an overlay zone which was going to be Ivan Lendl's golf course but that never happened. The gentleman that bought the land left that zone like it is.

Further discussion was had on the suggestion of zone conversion and included the following:

Marty Connor noted that the majority of the town is RA-5 which is large lot zoning and most of the surrounding towns do not have a requirement of 5 acre zoning and that they pretty much have 2 acres in the rural areas.

Bob explained where the aquifer protection areas are located along East Street South. There is an aquifer there but there are Aquarian Water Wells as well right near Reservoir Road. Marty noted that the aquifer protection zone has special rules about uses.

Bob noted that Desegregate Connecticut put forward some legislation this past legislative session and some towns use exclusionary zoning to prohibit affordable housing.

Further clarification was made by Bob in regards to 40,000 square feet of good soils being needed. He noted that it is not a rule in our Zoning Regulations. Marty explained that it is a rule of thumb for an engineer working with Torrington Area Health District to come up with an area where a septic system, a reserve, and a well can all be located, and when you have a well, you have to draw a 75 foot radius around that well where you can't have a septic or a reserve area. By the time you are all done with the process, you have probably mapped out about 40,000 square feet.

Discussion was had regarding the suggestion of *utilizing the Town Land Acquisition Fund for bridge loans to nonprofits for land purchases*:

Bob noted that he was in favor of using the Land Acquisition Fund and that it would require an ordinance change. Funds could be used for bridge loans and a nominal interest fee could be charged.

Chris Sanders stated that use of the Land Acquisition Fund (LAF) could make a significant difference in being able to pursue scattered site development in town which at the last meeting people were generally in favor of.

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Discussion was had regarding the suggestion of *encouraging land donations to be used for the Goshen Land Trust and the Goshen Housing Trust*:

Bob shared that he has always thought that larger parcels could be preserved and a small portion of a larger parcel could be used for affordable housing and achieve two goals.

Marty noted that there are new terms in regard to zoning in legislation passed this year that will have to be addressed in our regulations such as the use of the word “character” unless you fully define it.

Discussion was had regarding the suggestion of *encouraging DPH (Department of Public Health) to approve small group septic systems to encourage more diverse housing*:

Bob noted that just over the border in Massachusetts they have technologies that work just fine but that our agencies, DPH and DEEP, seem to not want to adopt those and he suggested think that we should continually push on this idea. The septic systems used in Massachusetts are more modern, more innovative than what are used here and they require less land to achieve the goal of subsurface sewage disposal.

Marty noted that community septic systems in other states are more readily approved, whereas, in our State to get a community septic system approved is a major ordeal and it takes a long time and it is very expensive.

4. PLAN FOR NEXT COMMUNITY-WIDE FORUM TO GET FEEDBACK ON THE GOALS AND STRATEGIES- DATE, LOCATION, FORMAT/AGENDA:

Based on the goals that were discussed at the last meeting on 6/10/21 and the discussion of additional suggestions, Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOC (Northwest Hills Council of Governments), shared slides that she had prepared for the Affordable Housing Plan Committee to review that could be used for the next community-wide forum.

She explained that the strategies and goals would be presented and explained, feedback would be obtained from townspeople, questions would be taken and answered, and polling questions would be used both in person at the meeting and for those residents attending on Zoom.

Slides were reviewed for use at the forum and could include information on Goshen’s housing needs, the next steps in the process of preparing the plan, what affordable housing looks like in other towns (refer to video that was made and shared at the last forum), the reason why Goshen is preparing a plan according to Legislation, and presenting the 4 overarching goals for review. The 4 goals are:

GOAL 1: Scattered site single family ownership.

GOAL 2: Downsizing options.

GOAL 3: Rental options for seniors and young people.

GOAL 4: Help keep seniors in their homes.

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Discussion was had regarding the following:

1. The possible use at the forum of the the Goshen - Soils Septic Suitability Map from the Incentive Housing Zone study that had been previously done to help educate townspeople on soils and septic system suitability in regard to a possible change from 5 acre zoning and 2 acre zoning.
2. The cost of sewers.
3. Bob reminded the committee that the charge of the Committee is to formulate an affordable housing plan. He stated that we are charged with putting together an affordable housing plan to present presumably to the Planning and Zoning Commission for their consideration in using it in the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).
4. The importance of presenting the plan, engaging the townspeople in discussion about the plan, and obtaining their input was stressed.
5. Marty pointed out new legislation and statutes in regard to "Accessory Dwelling Units - ADU's" or accessory apartments, and how sometimes these can create affordable housing and offer downsizing options in a town.
6. The timeframe of the plan was reviewed per Connecticut General Statue 8-30j, and Bob noted that an extension was obtained till December 2021 and Jocelyn stated that the town has to adopt it by June 2022.
7. Bob asked that current home sales data from 2020 through 2021 to date be included as home sale prices are still increasing in Goshen.
8. Jocelyn noted that many homes that had been rented in towns are now being sold because of the good housing market. Therefore, rentals are further diminishing.

5. NEXT STEPS AND NEXT MEETING DATE:

After discussion of the slide of "Next Steps in the Goshen Housing Plan Process", it was felt to have another informational session for residents on what has been worked on since the last community forum, based on comments/suggestions from participants draft the Housing Plan, and then proceed with the adoption process.

Bob will check the town calendars for dates in July that are available for the community-wide forum which will be a hybrid meeting allowing for both in person and via Zoom. Members of the Committee will be notified on the availability of dates and the community-wide forum will be publicized with date and time.

6. ADJOURNMENT: **IN A MOTION** made by Mark Harris, seconded by Todd Carusillo, it was voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Barrett
Cynthia Barrett

Received July 12, 2021 9:57 AM.

Attest Brendan Z. Blevins
Goshen Town Clerk