

Town of North Canaan
Housing Steering Committee
Town Public Forum
February 28, 2022 via zoom

Zoom meeting was opened at 7:00pm by Jocelyn Ayer indicating that the forum was being recorded so it could be watched.

First Selectman Charlie Perotti welcomed everyone to the forum. He explained the structure of the forum. Ms. Ayer gave an introduction and an explanation of why the State is requesting the Town to create an affordable housing plan.

Ashleigh Bergenty spoke about Wangum Village. MaryBeth Wabreck spoke about Beckley House. Kevin O'Connell CEO of Geer spoke as a local employer the housing needs he (as well as other employers) face when there is a deficit of affordable housing. Having to find and keep staff who have to drive over ½ hour to work is difficult and creates a shortage of staff. Bob Whelan of Habitat for Humanity explained that currently there are 2 homes in Canaan and an additional 2 are planned to be constructed. Each speaker explained the process, criteria and waiting times for their respective facilities.

Ms. Ayer gave some data points including cost burden, the age of houses and the lack of rent to home options.

A portion of a video created by Ted Perotti regarding housing in Northwest CT was shown.

Mr. Will Perotti spoke about the housing needs survey that was requested of the residents to fill out and about the Employer survey which was given to local employers for their employees.

Public Comment:

Sue Boults gave information on how she came to live in North Canaan and her feelings on how the town has improved and how it can continue. Kevin O'Connell indicated it is difficult to find out what is even available for rentals in town. Perhaps in the short term the town could come up with a way for people to access a list of available units and contacts. Stephanie Grant spoke about the need to bring in/keep young people in the town and housing is a huge issue for that. Selectman Craig Whiting stated that even for real estate there is very little for sale so in order to create housing it would most likely mean adding buildings. Of course the thought is housing would be preferable close to town. The EDC and others are currently trying to figure out how to conserve land in town as well. So we need to be careful not to lock up land that we may need. Has to be a compromise. Bader Hamzy would like things such as the theatre be brought back to bring the young people back to town. Stephanie Grant stated that there is money out there for towns such as Canaan so we need to get some help with writing and managing grant funding to help with these things.

Additional comments included the possibility of HUD money for projects and also changing planning and zoning regulations to keep costs down – for example being able to construct buildings vertically vs horizontally. Building up.

Ms. Ayer thanked everyone for their input. The next steps will be meetings with another forum in late spring before the adoption process for the plan.

Selectman Perotti stated that the meetings are the first Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm via zoom and are open to the public. Next meeting March 2.

Forum ended at 8:00pm

Respectfully submitted,

Ayrslea A Odell

Recording Secretary