

RIDGEFIELD AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes

November 29, 2023
Town Hall – 400 Main Street, Ridgefield
Small Conference Room, Lower Level

PRESENT: Kent Rohrer (Interim Chair), Debra Franceschini-Gatje (Acting Vice Chair), Jennifer Brakenwagen, Kevin Brown, Whit Campbell, Sharon Coleman, Lori Mazzola, and Krista Willett

ABSENT: Sheryl Knapp

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.

1. Public Comment: Andrea Beebe raised questions about the new houses proposed for two lots at 54 Ketchum Rd. She was concerned that the developer was perhaps gaming the new inclusionary zoning reg by building one house less than would be required for affordable housing. Guest speaker Rob Hendrick from P&Z addressed her concerns at the end of the meeting.

2. Current Business:

a) The Committee reviewed assignments from the Ridgefield POCD. The lack of progress on the Halpin Lane property leased to Ability Beyond was discussed. Ability Beyond has stated that development of Halpin Lane is part of a larger capital campaign. Kent will ask Rudy to approach Ability Beyond for the status/timeline of this capital campaign and inquire if there is any way to make Halpin Lane a priority project.

b) Debra will schedule another CHFA Promotion and Assistance seminar in April 2024.

c) Whit shared updates to the ADU brochure. He will make additional updates and email the final copy to the Committee for review.

3. New Business:

a) Kent polled the Committee to ascertain who will return in 2024. Kent will return but will relinquish the chairmanship. Whitt will not return. Krista has yet to decide. All other Committee members will stay on board for 2024.

b) The December meeting will be held as scheduled on December 20, 2023.

c) Rob Hendrick from P&Z joined the Committee's discussion on the creation of a Housing Trust Fund. The discussion centered on the 9/1/21 Ridgefield Housing Trust Fund draft proposal.

Kent suggested that the lengthy list of methods for collecting funds could be shortened to four ways: inclusionary zoning fees in lieu regulation, donations/gifts, state grants, fees from town land sales. Jennifer suggested it was premature to make any concrete recommendations before seeing the results of the new P&Z fee in lieu regulation.

Rob said P&Z is open to all ideas on how the Housing Trust Fund is funded and what groups are responsible for administering it. Jenn and Deb will work together to get more details on how Housing Trust Funds from similar towns are funded and administered.

d) Jenn asked that the Committee investigate if Ridgefield has racist deed restrictions and, if it does, that the paperwork is in place to remove them.

4. Public Comment:

a) Andrea Beebe asked if the new inclusionary zoning reg allows builders to only build four homes to avoid affordable housing. She questioned the rationale of 4 vs. 5 homes as the minimum for an affordable housing unit. Rob explained that the new reg includes subdivisions so developers could not play a number's game.

5. Review Previous Minutes: Debra moved to accept the minutes. Lori seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

6. Next meeting: The next Regular meeting is scheduled for December 20, 2023.

7. Adjourn: Lori moved to adjourn; Sharon seconded, and the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 9:03PM.

Prepared by Sharon Coleman