

TOWN OF WASHINGTON
Bryan Memorial Town Hall
Post Office Box 383
Washington Depot, Connecticut 06794
Zoning Commission Special Meeting

MINUTES

January 8, 2024

7:30 P.M. – Hybrid Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: J. Hill, D. Werkhoven, B. Farrell, J. Averill, V. Andersen (arrived at 7:38pm)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ALTERNATES PRESENT: S. Smith, L. Adams

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STAFF PRESENT: T. Rill, M. Haverstock

PUBLIC PRESENT: Ann Jamieson (Press: Voices), D. Wright, D. Wright, C. Charles, D. Hopkins, J. Gorra, M. Gorra, R. Gray, A. Carron, C. Matteo, D. Rimsky, W. Hileman, H. Barnett, D. Arturi, S. Funk, K. Atlas, L. Ilyinsky, E. White, L. Glover, D. Arturi, S. Lee Martin, K. Atlas, O. Cespedes-Medina, Other Members of the Public

Chair Hill called the meeting to order at 7:32pm.

She seated herself, D. Werkhoven, B. Farrell, J. Averill and L. Adams for V. Andersen.

Ms. Rill read the Legal Notice that was submitted to and published in the Republican American newspaper.

Mrs. Andersen arrived at 7:38pm.

Chair Hill gave an overview of the proposed language of the revisions for Section 13.12 – Multifamily Housing. She explained that the proposed revisions had come into play due to Public Act 21-29, a Connecticut State law which requires all Connecticut towns to address and affirm fair housing. The Zoning Commission formed a subcommittee consisting of Zoning Commission members Nicholas Solley, former Chair of the Washington Zoning Commission, Janet Hill, Valerie Andersen and Ed White, Washington Housing Commission members Judith Gorra, Robert Woodroffe and Darryl Wright. The group met and worked diligently for 14 months, often twice a month, to draft language that they believe is fair and sensible to address the current needs for the town. The Zoning Commission is now asking for the public's input as they move forward with the drafted language.

Ms. Rill read a summary from Ms. White, Land Use Administrator, stating that responses had been received from the Council of Governments and they believed the proposed revisions are of local interest and will have minimal intermunicipal impact.

Chair Hill asked Wayne Hileman, chair of the Washington Planning Commission, to read the referral submitted by the Planning Commission.

Judith Gorra of Winston Drive read a letter submitted by Robert Woodroffe of Christian Street, on behalf of the Washington Housing Commission.

Denise Arturi of Shearer Road questioned if limiting the use of multifamily units as short-term/vacation rentals was considered. Chair Hill stated she was unsure how this could be regulated but understood the concern.

Dimitri Rimsky of Parsonage Lane stated that he, as a member of the Planning Commission, supported the recommendations of the referral made by the Planning Commission.

Oscar Cespedes-Medina of South Street explained that he is currently an intern for Michelle Gorra, the Town of Washington's Economic Development Coordinator. He stated that the need for affordable multifamily housing is dire in Washington, not only for younger people and families, but for the elderly population looking to downsize.

Michelle Gorra, Economic Development Coordinator, summarized a letter that she submitted to the Commission.

Kristen Atlas of Hinkle Road questioned how the proposed changes would protect property values and neighborhoods.

Sarah Lee Martin of Gunn Hill Road questioned if allowing large multifamily housing in smaller neighborhoods was taken into consideration, noting that it could take away from the rural nature of the neighborhood.

Darryl Wright of Scofield Hill Road stated allowing multifamily housing in and throughout the town would allow for housing options for volunteers for our fire department and ambulance association.

Ed White of Parsonage Lane stated that he had been a member of the PA 21-29 subcommittee and felt they had formed a balance between what is being mandated and what is suitable for the town while protecting neighborhoods. He added that multiple levels of housing are needed to ensure Washington is a viable town.

Wayne Hileman, addressing the Commission as a resident of River Road, stated that he believed sprinkling multifamily housing throughout the town as a form of "sharing the burden" is a false premise and that it should be viewed as "sharing an opportunity" instead. He felt housing should be focused in and around the village centers, to maintain its viability.

After a discussion regarding potential properties in town that would be suitable for housing, the concern over location (flood zones, wetlands), and cost were mentioned. Mr. Wright stated that by the Zoning Commission adapting the revisions, it could ease the burden of what is already a lengthy and expensive process.

With no other comments raised by the public, Chair Hill asked the Commission if they felt the Public Hearing should close or be continued.

The Commission agreed to close the Public Hearing, received a Motion and a second. However, Andrew Carron of Gunn Hill Road requested that the Public Hearing be continued so that he could make further comments. After a brief discussion, Mrs. Averill, Mr. Farrell and Ms. Smith stated that they would be interested to hear Mr. Carron's comments. Due to the Motion made, the Commission needed to hold the vote.

MOTION: To close the Public Hearing regarding Revisions to the Washington Zoning Regulations, Section 13.12 – Multifamily Housing, by L. Adams, seconded by D. Werkhoven, denied 2-3 vote.

MOTION: To continue the Public Hearing regarding Revisions to the Washington Zoning Regulations, Section 13.12 – Multifamily Housing, to the January 22, 2024, regularly scheduled Washington Zoning Commission meeting at 7:30pm in the Main Meeting Room of Bryan Memorial Town Hall, as well as via Zoom Video Conference, by B. Farrell, seconded by J. Averill, approved 3-1-1 vote, with D. Werkhoven abstaining.

MOTION: To adjourn the January 8, 2024, Washington Zoning Commission Special Meeting at 8:45pm, by Chair Hill seconded by Mr. Farrell, approved unanimously.

Meeting Recording here:

https://townofwashingtongcc-my.sharepoint.com/:u:/g/personal/trill_washingtonct_org/EUuOr85RxJdMtrZYVGe56GkBvw5ZACVI_56qBaBigOrO-A?e=EcFziW

Respectfully Submitted,

Tammy Rill

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Land Use Clerk

January 10, 2024