

2025 JAN 30 AM 11:00

REC'D BY:



**SUFFIELD PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
January 23, 2025**

- Present:** Mark Winne, Chairman
Erin Golembiewski, Vice Chair
Ginny Bromage, Secretary
Brian Dunn
Christine Sinopoli
Scott Guilmartin
Jacob Byrnes, Alternate
Geoffrey Kaplan, Alternate
- Absent:** Jeff Girard, Alternate
- Also Present:** Bill Hawkins, AICP, Director of Planning & Development

The proceedings of this meeting were recorded and are available on the Town website, along with the application materials.

I. ROLL CALL

Chairman Winne called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM as a hybrid meeting with eight members in attendance.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

III. PUBLIC HEARING - None

IV. OLD BUSINESS - None

V. NEW BUSINESS

Discuss Affordable Housing Committee (AHC) recommendations to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Members had listened to the recordings of the Board of Selectman (BOS) meetings that discussed the Affordable Housing Committee's recommendations to get a sense of how the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) might proceed. The consensus of PZC members was that they should review the six specific recommendations individually and determine which recommendations, if any, they would want to implement. It was noted that the BOS indicated that they were particularly interested in providing more senior housing and have asked Mr. Hawkins to do research into possible funding programs available for housing projects. He has started that process. Mr. Hawkins provided maps of utility locations in town and information from the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) as helpful tools for the PZC to use in their discussions.

The first recommendation was to extend the life of the AHC which the BOS had not been in favor of. PZC members noted that this was not a priority at this time for them and that they could ask individual members of the AHC who have done extensive study on the topics to attend meetings and give their input if needed.

Recommendation #2 was a recommendation that the PZC use the Affordable Housing Plan and the POCD as a guide when they are evaluating applications and discussion planning initiatives. Members were in agreement with this and already use the POCD as a guiding document.

Recommendation #3 concerns providing an outline and guiding documents for developers to assist early on in the application process. There was discussion about Appendix A which was drafted as part of the AHC recommendation report dated June 9, 2024. This type of guide or document could be on the Town website.

There was emphasis on this being a simple document that would have basic initial information. It was noted that this would also save time for staff. There was discussion that this is a way for the PZC to help guide the application process and give an idea of what might be a feasible project rather than only being reactive to applications.

Recommendation #4 was to have a basic guideline for the design of higher density housing and multi-family housing. There was discussion of specific Town owned land that might be suitable for this with the needed infrastructure. Mr. Hawkins noted that consultant help might be needed to work out the details for such a guideline or policy if the Commission wanted to follow this recommendation. He also noted that in order for housing to qualify as affordable housing the property needs to be deed restricted. There was also discussion of privately owned properties that might be feasible for development. Discussion took place regarding the importance of educating the public about affordable housing and the benefits to the community. Mr. Guilmartin explained the role of tax credits available to investors to make this type of development possible and there was discussion about creating a Request for Proposals (RFP) to get bids from private developers for some town owned properties to build housing.

Recommendation #5 was for PZC to guide the location of 8-30g higher density housing by identifying possible locations. Mr. Hawkins noted that he was asked by the BOS to explore the possibilities for Town owned land and to investigate the grants or funding sources that might be available. He will also research the role of the Housing Authority in senior and affordable housing. Mr. Hawkins explained that presently Suffield is 231 units short of reaching the 10% State requirement, he further noted that 28 of the 169 towns in the state have met the percentage.

Recommendation #6 suggested reviewing and updating zoning regulations to encourage more affordable and/or diverse housing options, with six suggested examples. The first two were to encourage the use of existing regulations. Mr. Hawkins explained the additional suggestions and the possibility of implementing overlay zones and text amendments. In the discussion it was noted that the PZC might work with a consultant to see how the possible changes could best be addressed.

In summary, the PZC will continue to discuss the recommendations, gather information and determine the best way to proceed to address these recommendations.

VII. REPORTS

Chairman – None

Director of Planning & Development – Mr. Hawkins distributed documents to the Commission for the upcoming meeting on January 27th.

VIII. MINUTES – None

IX. CORRESPONDENCE – None

X. ADJOURNMENT

With nothing further to come before the commission, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 9:08 PM. The motion passed 6-0-0.

Submitted,

Ginny Bromage, Secretary

cc: Assessor, Building Official, Conservation Commission, Selectmen, Town Clerk, Town Engineer, Zoning Enforcement Officer, Commission Counsel

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