

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE OF  
THE TOWN OF STERLING**

**June 27, 2019  
Town Hall, Room 201**

**Members Present:** Diana Baldarelli  
Paul Cathcart  
Patrick Fox  
Rob Protano  
David Shapiro

**Staff Present:** Domenica Tatasciore, Town Planner

**Consulting Staff Present:** John Hume, MRPC Planning & Development Director  
Sean O'Donnell, MRPC Regional Planner

**1. Approval of Meeting Minutes: June 4, 2019**

David Shapiro made a motion to approve; Patrick Fox seconded; unanimously approved by all.

**2. Comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment**

Mr. Hume and Mr. O'Donnell provided a high level review of the assessment and included data/statistics re: Sterling. Items discussed include:

- Accessory apartments don't count. Housing units are based on town records which are provided to the state and based on building permit data.
- Foreclosure rates are higher in Sterling than Metro Worcester; it seems like additional research is required.
- Items that Mr. Hume and Mr. O'Donnell agreed to follow-up on:
  - Are the Patriots Way condos captured in the total 68 affordable units?
  - Safe Harbor – it was noted that if the Housing Production Plan is in place and 12 units are built, then the town can request a safe harbor. Questions:
    - Can we spread out the Northgate Meadows project over 6 years, with 12 units/year, and request 6 years of safe harbor?
    - Can you count any if not finished by 12/1?
    - Can you count 12 per year even if built within 2019/20?
    - At what point are the units counted?

The Committee discussed/reiterated its purpose, which is to update the 2006 Housing Production Plan report. Once updated and if approved by the state, the Town will have more control over 40B applications going forward.

### **3. Prioritization of Housing Action Plan Summary**

The Committee reviewed the “Preliminary Recommendations for Sterling Housing Production Plan Updates” (Exhibit A). It was emphasized that the list is intended to be an actionable plan – a concise listing of items that are achievable.

The Committee agreed that the following actions, categorized as *valuable to include from the 2006 Housing Production Plan*, made sense to include in the new update:

1. Promote local approval for Community Preservation Act (CPA).

It was noted that this was previously brought to the town for a vote and did not pass. Mr. Hume and Mr. O'Donnell agreed to provide more information on eligible activities for CPA as well as tangible benefits, sample projects other towns have completed and the impact on affordable housing.

2. Make Town-owned land available for affordable housing.

The Committee agreed in concept, pending evaluation and feasibility. Mr. Hume and Mr. O'Donnell agreed to cross-reference developable land and town-owned land for a point of reference.

3. Ensure the Subsidized Housing Inventory is up-to-date and accurate.

The Committee agreed to include the following actions, categorized as *new recommendations to consider*, in the new update:

1. Collaborating with Habitat for Humanity and access to new housing resources (combination of new recommendation #1 with discussion item #3).
2. Expand housing options for an aging population for age-restricted, senior and assisted-living housing.

It was noted that there needs to be more detail and examples of what exactly this means. Mr. Hume and Mr. O'Donnell agreed to provide.

3. Explore the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs' Planning Assistance Grant application for the implementation of these action plans.

It was noted that this funding requires a matching grant, which can be of no cost to Sterling if awarded a District Local Technical Assistance grant as it can be used as the required match to satisfy this requirement.

The Committee agreed to include the following topics for *discussion purposes*:

1. Amend accessory apartment bylaw and incorporate accessory apartments in the SHI (combination of items #1 & #4 as 1 actionable item).
2. Adopt affordable housing on non-conforming lots (include and consider impact of Washacum Village).

The Committee excluded the waiving of permit fees when working with developers in exchange for affordable housing production due to the already low application fees.

The Committee agreed to add the exploration of cluster development/zoning.

The Committee agreed to remove all 12 items categorized as “*consider potentially removing the following in this update.*”

#### **4. Discussion of Public Forum**

Mr. Hume and Mr. O'Donnell will create a one-page summary of relevant Sterling statistics and a condensed list of recommendations for distribution at the public forum which will be held on July 17 at 6:30 pm in the Selectmen's room at Town Hall.

Ms. Tatasciore would coordinate a press release and for information to be disseminated in the Senior Center newsletter and on the Town's website

The Committee agreed to hold a meeting at 6 pm, immediately prior to the public forum. Additionally, the Committee agreed to also meet on Thursday, August 22, 2019 at 6 pm.

#### **5. Adjournment**

Upon a motion by Patrick Fox and seconded by Paul Cathcart, the Committee voted 5-0 to adjourn the meeting.