



Town of Hamden
Planning and Zoning Department

**Hamden Government
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March 14, 2022

MINUTES: The Planning and Zoning Commission, Legislative Council, and Economic Development Commission, Town of Hamden, held a Public Hearing and Regular Meeting in person at Thornton Wilder Auditorium, located at 2901 Dixwell Avenue, Hamden, CT 06518 and using Zoom teleconferencing technology with the following results on Wednesday, March 16, 2022 with the following results:

Staff in attendance:

Erik Johnson, Acting Director of Planning and Development
Tim Lee, Assistant Town Attorney
Natalie Barletta, Clerk
Sharon Regan, Economic Development Technician

Erik Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. He then gave a brief overview of the process, and introduced the topic of affordable housing.

Eric Halvorsen, Vice President and Principal of RKG Associates, addressed the Commission and Audience members. The goal is to have the housing plan come from the community, and they are looking forward to hearing the feedback. Mr. Halvorsen went through the data in Hamden. Hamden has gained more residents over the years. It is primarily owner occupied housing, but Hamden has seen an increase in renting. The median income in Hamden is \$77,000, which is above the county average. He went through the data in income as well. Furthermore, he also went through housing trends, and stated that sales and rent prices median sales price went up over time, and discussed cost burden. Cost burdening impacts lowest incomes. He also went through the 8-30 g statues and housing gaps across the different income brackets.

Michele Mastropetre, Planning and Zoning Commission, asked if the color coding on the map had any meaning. Eugene Livshits, SCROG, answered that it's the SCROG logo. She asked if it had any meaning. Mr. Livshits answered that it did not.

Majorie Bonadies, Councilwoman, asked what they can do to keep the rents from rising so much that people can't afford them, and can current apartments can go back down in price. Mr. Halvorsen answered that's something that they can look into, and went through the various programs such as FHA mortgages, and potentially approaching existing property owners of rental units and negotiate a rent requirement, as well.

Sarah Gallager, Councilwoman for the fourth district, asked about methodology in collecting the data, and asked how that was determined as a need. She noted that changed during the pandemic, as many residents applied for rental assistance during the pandemic and eviction protection. Mr. Halvorsen answered that whatever the most recent census data, and the only think is available is population in housing units and tried to use as much publicly available data as they could. He had used Redfin and Zillow to reflect pandemic price changes. As far as renting goes, they look at renter households, and how many of them have an income that falls under 30 percent of AMI, and existing rental units that are priced affordably and subtract the two to get the number.

Ted Stevens, Councilman, asked if this represents the town currently, and asked if there was an under supply of housing. Mr. Halvorsen answered as of 2019 estimate and population grows, they didn't do housing demand estimates.

Robin Colewell asked if the homeless population was considered. Mr. Halverson said he didn't look at homeless population, and if there were gaps in temporary housing, that can be added in the goals, which would be the next step in the process. That can be added in the plan as well.

Ms. Gallagher asked with the rental supply units, are those naturally occurring housing units, and if there was any risk of losing them, whether they be permanent or naturally occurring, or deed restrictions. Mr. Halvorsen answered the units they see here, deed restricted in one manner or another and a subset of the total units. Ms. Gallagher asked if they were naturally occurring affordable housing units. Mr. Halvorsen answered yes.

David Fink addressed the commission. He wants to hear the community goals, and they do not need to not be specific. He will then return those list of goals with a list of potential strategies to meet them. A lot of towns like Hamden have income on both the lower and the higher end of the spectrum. It may seem counterintuitive to lower some of the price pressures for the median.

Patricia Vener, resident, suggested the goal of keeping people who are aging in their homes.

Ms. Bonadies suggested that there wasn't enough elderly housing and that for 20 somethings that there is more nightlife.

Marissa Mead, resident, suggested small scale development and more multi-family housing in single family neighborhoods. Mr. Fink went through some ideas on how affordable housing has been created in other agencies.

Mr. Johnson then turned it over to the in person audience to provide their input.

Ms. Coldwell wants to see more single family home owners, and state rental assistance. What this accomplishes is that it will control housing and increases a stakeholder. This will in turn decrease the wealth gap, and have more empathis on single family owner occupied structures. It also should be affordable, as well as possibly have a rental assistance payment program to lock in mortgage rates so they don't become unaffordable.

Arnold Kerry, Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven, stated that one goal to make it for the town to provide that property with their organization. Ms. Mastropetre commented that she had a home that was beautifully restored in her neighborhood by the same organization, and she commented that it's a wonderful organization. She suggested that the town can donate properties that are either blighted or the Town considers the use of tax sale list to bolster that amount inventory. She also suggested that liens, foreclosures, and they could have the first dibs on these homes. There was a brief discussion.

Mr. Stevens recommended that when looking for location for multi-family homes, 8 elementary schools are equally represented to spread the affordability in town, northern end of town. He also added that he would like to see strategies to see how they can best develop the type of density that the septic parts of town can support instead.

Ms. Gallagher said one of her goals is to focus on the lowest income renters and looking town wide to look at vacant and underused properties. Furthermore, she encourages them to look at the longest term of affordability as well as land trusts and other ways to have permanent affordability for citizens. She thinks the goal should be to educate on affordable housing as well. She also mentioned tenant protection, and to look at the zoning regulations to address issues that need to be addressed.

Ms. Coldwell asked could have developers that build but the town should have the ability to the own land. Instead of selling town owned land, why not do a long term ground lease and have a sale. Mr. Fink said he will make a point that what is sent is a draft that can be edited.

Janice Elliot, resident, said she wants to second this and thinks that on the Zoning piece, the town's Zoning Regulations doesn't support it and she thinks it's an important next step. There should also be supportive housing for people with disabilities and experiencing homelessness as well.

Ms. Vener asked if there were any more town meeting to discuss items that they may want to address. Mr. Fink said based on the meeting, they will send the town a list of draft goals, and it's up to the town if they have forums to allow input. Towns must send plan by June 1, 2022. Mr. Livshits answered that the plan needs to be done by June 1, 2022 and needs to be updated every five years. The region is here to assist as they move forward. This is an important part of the process to improve the situation.

Mr. Johnson stated that the process of amending some of the Zoning Regulations have already begun, and there are resources currently available

Ms. Veneer mentioned concerns of rising taxes and maintaining the property that she experiences, and wondered if there were others that felt the same.

Sarah Clark, resident, asked if the goals can be made visible to the public, and if there is an email address to reach out with comments or ideas. Mr. Johnson answered yes, and put his email address in the chat. Ms. Clark asked if the goals will be posted online. Mr. Johnson stated that it's posted on the Economic Development website currently.

Laurel Coleman, resident, asked if there were other sessions before this one. She has lived at her home for over 20 years. She now has difficulty staying in her home, and wants to know if there are ways to stay in the home. She thinks the town needs to consider greenspace as well.

Mary O'Connell, resident, asked if the experts in towns that are doing better than us and it's greater than us. Mr. Fink stated that the towns are the same but different. He then listed generic goals that we try to see, and once the town figures out what the goals are and they will get a chance to look at that. Hamden is unique in many ways, and they are trying to figure out goals and see if they exist. He added that the draft plan that is adopted by the town is a living document, and discussions will be edited to improve it.

Mr. Halverson answered that as part of the overall affordable housing plan, they propose pulling together a locational map to identify locations. These are all specific areas of where the town may want to do affordable housing, and in some of the communities it's surplus properties. Some communities are encouraging housing rehabilitation, and there are a lot of different ways. He then showcased a map, and went through the details. He suggested taking suggestions. Mr. Johnson clarified does not mean that these are sites that are owned by the town or individuals, but these are potential property ideas. These areas include Maselli Farm (town owned property that was once a farm that has been sitting for 15 years), High Meadows (former state owned facility for teenager that is now vacant and town can acquire), Walgreens in Spring Glen, as well as a property near Dixwell Avenue and Arch Street.

Mary O'Connell suggested Dixwell between Putnam Avenue, Treadwell Street, and Mather Street.

Jeron Aston asked how large the sites were. Mr. Johnson answered that there are 30 acres, but only 27 acres are usable. He added that High Meadows is 34 acres, but not all were usable.

Mr. McDonagh suggested State Street as a potential area as well.

Ms. Mastropetre asked if there were any plans for commercial development on Dixwell Avenue, as it's prime commercial property. Mr. Johnson answered that all T-zone requires housing to have mixed uses.

Mr. Johnson suggested some parts of Whitney Avenue. Mr. McDonagh suggested going up to the connector, and what would be the college district.

Ken Goode, Economic Development Commission, suggested a property on Old Dixwell Avenue.

Mr. Johnson said he will follow up and thanked members of the Economic Development Commission, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Legislative Council, as well as the public. He will schedule another meeting to go through what was presented. He will make sure that the housing goals and the full data report is on the website as well. He added that he is trying to be as transparent as possible, and want to have an open dialogue with the citizens as well.

The meeting ended at 7:08 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Natalie Barletta, Clerk of the Commissions

To view a recording of the meeting, please click here:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/9Q9ZiIe3Wtr8n1XDZlgJuOT0yqruwcZ412jckEDSzYrkpaBP3dXcU2TuXc8eSzn.OtefHESGTWaxEcYh>