

SPECIAL MEETING

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: S. Ferrigno, L. Watson
Staff Present: J. Kaufman, C. van Zelm
Others Present: Lucy Aldrich

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Ferrigno called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments received.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 15, 2022

Watson MOVED, Ferrigno SECONDED approval of the December 15, 2022 meeting minutes. PASSED unanimously.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS AT MEETING

A. Amendments to Article 10, Section W Related to Affordable Housing (PZC File #907-53) and Article 3, Section A: Establishment of a Temporary and Limited Moratorium on Design Multiple Residence (DMR) Zone and the Pleasant Valley Residential Agriculture (PVRA) Zone (PZC File 907-55)

Kaufman said that in 2021, the Town Council and Planning and Zoning Commission adopted an Affordable Housing Plan, which recommends increasing the required set-aside for affordable housing when a development of five units or more is built. The set-aside is currently 10%, but the PZC is proposing to increase it to 15%. There is still a fee in lieu provision, but most multi-family housing must go through the special permit process. Mansfield is currently subject to State statute 8-30g, under which if at least 10% of a town's units are not affordable, developers may propose affordable housing developments without being subject to local zoning requirements.

In response to a question from Ferrigno about the definition of affordable housing, Kaufman said the term refers to units deed restricted to people making 80% of area median income or below. The units must be deed restricted for 40 years to be counted. Kaufman said the fee in lieu calculation for The Standard came in at \$1.7 million, with 35 of its 392 units deed restricted.

Ferrigno said that at least before COVID, Mansfield had many units available for rent that were within the affordable range but were not deed restricted, eliminating the need to deed restrict units. He sees the issue as a definitional one. Kaufman referred to such rates as naturally occurring affordable housing and said only deed-restricted housing counts toward the State definition of affordable. The Town is not currently at 10% affordable units, and the Town Council, the PZC, and several residents have

expressed a desire to reach that point, with the proposed amendment intended to help the Town get there sooner.

Ferrigno asked if any proposed developments would be less likely to move forward if the percentage is increased from 10% to 15%. Kaufman said that after reviewing the policies of some other towns passing regulations about affordable housing, Tyche Planning and Policy Group concluded that 15% is an ideal level. Ferrigno noted that the average sale prices in most of these towns are significantly higher than Mansfield's. He added that while many developers have expressed interest in building in Mansfield, only one project has moved forward so far; he wondered if the Town could renovate older housing units and make them affordable rather than creating a mandate for new units.

Watson concurred with Ferrigno's concern about discouraging developments, noting that most of the towns Tyche studied restrict their developments to a particular zone and that this proposed regulation would apply to all of Mansfield. Kaufman said it would apply to all developments over five units, including subdivisions, which Ferrigno said would likely discourage subdivisions in town. In response to a question from van Zelm, Kaufman said the regulation would not apply to applications received before it goes into effect. Some planned developments would likely be received as applications after the regulation goes into effect and be subject to it.

Kaufman noted another proposed zoning text amendment for a temporary and limited moratorium on development within the Design Multiple Residence (DMR) and Pleasant Valley Residence/Agriculture (PVRA) zones. She said the Affordable Housing Plan recommends development of a middle housing floating zone. The DMR zone currently lacks strict design standards, and the PZC would like to pause and examine the DMR zone regulations to ensure there are appropriate design standards and determine if there is a way to incentivize small-lot single-family housing or less dense developments.

In response to a question from Ferrigno, Kaufman said the proposed amendment is for a temporary limited moratorium similar to previous ones on multi-family housing and cannabis establishments. The moratorium would be expected to last through December 2023. The public hearing on both of these proposed amendments will be February 21.

Ferrigno and Watson said they do not have any objections to the moratorium. Ferrigno said he is unsure increasing the required percentage of affordable housing is the right way to achieve the desired goal of increasing the Town's overall percentage of affordable housing. He would need more data or analysis to determine whether the change would be a net positive or discourage developers. Watson expressed concern that the analysis Tyche offered did not focus on Connecticut towns comparable to Mansfield, noting also that Mansfield's proposed change would apply to the entire Town, not a specific zone. Ferrigno said that if the towns in the study were picked because not many towns have similar provisions, it is worth noting that such provisions are not widespread. He noted that rents should decrease as the overall supply of housing increases. Watson questioned how likely it is that someone would propose to develop under section 8-30g; Ferrigno noted that developments under 8-30g would still increase affordable housing, just not according to the zoning regulations.

Ferrigno and Watson will draft a letter to the PZC expressing their concerns. Van Zelm said the letter will be shared with the full EDC as there are specific concerns being addressed.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

6. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next regular meeting of the Subcommittee is scheduled for February 16, 2023.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:42 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Joshua Stern
Mansfield Downtown Partnership Administrative Assistant