



RECORD OF MEETING
REGULAR MEETING

Regional Planning Commission (RPC)
of the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG)
City Hall Building 235 Grand St. Waterbury, CT
Cass Gilbert Room
6:30 p.m. Tuesday, February 2, 2016

Attendance: Michael Opuszynski (by phone), Beacon Falls; Gary Giordano, Bethlehem; Marie Chasse (by phone), Bristol; Sue Goggin, Naugatuck; Margus Laan, Plymouth; Ruth Parkins, Shelton; Nancy G. Clark, Southbury; Jeremy Leifert, Thomaston; James Sequin, Waterbury; Robert Clarke (by phone), Woodbury.

Staff: Aaron Budris, Regional Planner NVCOG; Mark Nielsen, Deputy Director NVCOG; Joanna Rogalski, Regional Planner NVCOG.

The meeting opened at 6:35 PM.

1. Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call, Introductions, Public Participation

The pledge of allegiance was recited. RPC members, NVCOG staff and the guest speaker introduced themselves. At roll call nine (9) RPC members and/or alternates were present. At 6:53 PM another RPC representative joined the meeting. A quorum of ten (10) RPC members and/or alternates were present.

The public was invited to make comments. Shawn Ruest of Bristol commended the COG on its transparency regarding the FOIA request information. Mr. Ruest asked if NVCOG was expanding into economic planning. Chairperson Clark stated that nothing was independent, and that all were interrelated. Ms. Parkins asked Mr. Ruest for what purpose was he was filming the meeting this evening. Mr. Ruest replied that he is filming the meeting for his website the opengovernmentproject.org; he has been uploading videos about government meetings so that the public has access to them.

2. Guest Speaker

Katy Shafer, JD, Deputy Policy Director, Partnership for Strong Communities (PSC), a statewide housing policy organization, was introduced. The PSC works with planners, municipalities, community groups to advance affordable housing options across the state. PSC works closely with the legislature but are non-state contractors. Ms. Shafer presented PSC municipal housing profiles, which are developed every two (2) years, and provide a snapshot of the community's housing market. The PSC develops these profiles for the state, each CT municipality and county, and copies are available through the PSC website.

The NVCOG region is unique in that it has a wide range of housing choices, including varied age of housing stock, and this is exciting to PSC. the demographic trends of CT municipalities, and economic factors affecting housing demand in CT. Considering NVCOG region's varied housing resources, and



the transportation options coming online, Ms. Shafer wanted to foster a discussion to dig deeper into how the PSC could help the region unlock housing resources.

Ms. Schafer discussed the various demographic and economic reasons the housing market is vastly different from what it was a generation ago. Some of the points she made include:

- Over the past 23 out of 25 months housing prices has stayed flat even though housing demand has increased. As per the Dept. of Commerce, housing demand for multi-family has been at its highest since the past 28 years.
- Multi-family housing demand is driven by baby boomers aged 55-64 who want to downsize, young professionals with high amounts of education debt, and working families struggling under the burden of housing costs.
- Most housing in CT, except for Fairfield County, was built in 1970 or later for boomers who were starting their families; this has led to a skew toward single family houses. Grand lists need to grow, but with predominantly single family housing stock which is not in demand, this is difficult to do.
- Seniors would like to stay connected to the communities where they have raised their families, but a lack of multifamily housing stock prevents them from living there.
- CT has the sixth most expensive housing market in the US and the eight most expensive rental market. It takes an income of \$24.29/hr. to afford an average 2 bedroom rental in CT; half of all jobs in CT pay less than \$20/hr.
- There are state programs to help towns be more pro-active on housing development issues. These programs may help the towns find the best mix of housing stock and more affordable housing options. More state programs developed in the last five years than in the past thirty years.

NVCOG has a lot of the urban fiber and skeleton that a lot of other regions would love to have. Change is going to happen, and you have the opportunity to stay ahead of it. NVCOG has a lot of great assets: CT FastTrack, rail that is planned to be updated and brownfields to be redeveloped, but what are NVCOG's challenges?

Q: What's driving the decreasing population of school age children?

A: Compilation of factors: nationwide trend toward smaller families (less than 3 children per family), fewer housing options for younger professionals to come into a town, put down roots and start a family.

Discussion turned to myths about affordable housing. #1 it will add school children. Studies from MIT and Rutgers disprove that statement. If there are new school children, the schools have enough room and school budgets are not sensitive to school enrollment numbers.

Ms. Shafer then opened up discussion to learn from the RPC what their greatest challenges are from a zoning perspective and in respect to all of the assets that will be forthcoming, what the PSC can do to support the towns.



Q: Many young millennials cannot afford \$1200-\$1500 rents so they are sharing a unit, which has implications on land use, increased parking spaces and Transit Oriented development. In PSC's data compilation, do you see any increased sharing of rental units and reviewed the land use implications?

A: Rental market challenging to track. Rentals change hands more frequently than homeownership. PSC has seen new housing formations. For example Hartford's Perfect sixes (working class family housing) are typically three bedroom apartments that millennials without families will share because there are no other housing options for them in town. However the millennials then displace families who would have rented that unit. Because there are not enough housing choices, the pressure builds in the middle market, which in part drives up the rental prices up for a limited supply of multi-family housing that is in demand but in short supply.

Q: Is that rent inflation concentrated around the higher education centers?

A: Happening all over as many workers migrate to various job centers in urban and suburban settings. Housing choices are needed in urban and suburban centers. In areas near public transit, people have less need for a car which releases pressure on parking. A parking space may mean an extra \$50k per unit development cost so the reduction in pressure to have a car makes development more attractive in the TOD areas.

Q: Has the PSC seen an increase in the construction of units with one parking space?

A: West Hartford has recently revised their zoning regulations to reduce the amount of required parking and have introduced a TOD overlay zone which lowers parking thresholds. These units have been constructed more often near transportation.

Q: Hartford building many of these units: how many have been occupied and do they provide parking, and if so, how many spaces?

A: Ms. Shafer will speak to the Capitol Region Development Authority (CRDA) to find out their parking requirements. Absorption of these apartments have been higher than expected. Not all units have come on line so effects are yet to be seen.

Q: And what is happening with McMansions as they get McOlder and McEmpty and McFarther away from transit? And how many people are coming in with the income to want such a large house and yard?

A: That's the challenge of zoning commissions to be proactive by saying "these aren't selling, what can we do? Do we have enough buyers in the market, do we not have enough, and can we bring them to the market? What's being demanded? Do we have one or two bedroom small apartments that are affordable and will be close to transit or downtown services?" It's a challenge. You need to have buyers for the market that will buy that senior's home when the senior wants to downsize. Another consideration is the age of the housing stock. NVCOG has a lot of housing that was built before 1970 and has a maintenance implication, but it is a gem as well because those homes tend to be smaller.

Q: Has PSC looked at ways to repurpose the McMansions into something other than single family homes?

A: PSC looks at the need to diversify the housing market. They want towns to be proactive in bring buyers in to town. It looks for ways to create entryways young professionals into town by way of



smaller units which are affordable. By bringing buyers to the town pressures will be released. Hartford has a lot of old mansions which do not fit the needs and definitions of existing families, like the Scarborough 11 which is known as an intentional family. Those older stately homes don't fit the needs of current families because they were built to house a staff as well as family.

Q: Decline in school age children, but Derby has an increase. Do you know what Derby is doing to achieve this?

A: Child population numbers are based on the birth and death rates from the state data center. About 57 % of Derby's housing units have 2 or fewer bedroom so they may be able to attract a different type of demographic.

Q: Any other myths about affordable housing, other than school children?

A: Affordable housing will bring crime. Not true. Affordable housing will reduce property value. Not true. UCONN study has shown that towns which have a higher diversity of housing options tend to have higher home values. The PSC income and jobs fact sheet details who needs affordable housing, such as the dental assistant, the preschool teacher, which are not the usual suspects.

Q: Could you define affordable housing in a positive light?

A: Stereotypes of affordable housing persist from past developments. Trend today is toward mixed rate housing, some that is affordable and some that is market rate.

Q: Accessory unit as affordable housing, which CGS 8-30(g)a describes and allows a ten year deed restriction – has that been a successful option?

A: Short answer is yes to do all that. CGS 8-30(g) which states that if 10% of your town is not affordable housing, a developer can come in and develop. Incentive Housing Zone program addresses the fact that 10% affordable housing is not a doable goal for all municipalities. If a municipality can achieve 2% affordable housing stock they can have a moratorium from CGS 8-30(g) for four years, which is a more doable goal.

Comment: State needs to relook at CGS 8-30(g) because it mainly benefits the developers. Developers use CGS 8(30)g loophole which allows them to develop regardless of your zoning laws if a Town has not reached the 10% affordable housing stock threshold.

The Incentive Housing Zone program aims to help towns proactively get to the point where they don't have to worry about CGS 8-30(g).

Q: What happens when homeowners start adding accessory dwellings making them two family houses in areas zoned single family residential – what does that do to the people who have bought into a single family zone?

A: I can share with you research about how affordable housing affects home prices. Often these conversions are illegal, depending on the town's zoning.

Discussion about CGS 8-30(g)a followed. An accessory apartment can be counted toward the affordable housing count if it is deed restricted. If you want to rent it out, need a deed restriction. Additionally, the person who is renting the unit must have an income that falls within the affordable



income restrictions for that rental unit to be counted toward affordable housing. Senior housing counts but it has to do with a points and calculation system. Town's regulations must be followed regarding accessory units. If a 3 acre property exists in a one acre zone, you can structure the regulation such that you can have double the acreage, then build an accessory unit above the garage, and still have the same density of 1 unit per acre. But if you have one acre and build an accessory unit, the density calculation changes. Also need to consider septic units – often an accessory unit needs its own septic to be considered for affordable housing counts. Concern that seniors that are brought to live with their children in accessory units, that those units be considered as affordable housing. The deed to the unit and the renter's ability to satisfy affordable housing income requirements determines if an accessory unit can be claimed as affordable. State incentivizes towns to be proactive in developing multi-family housing, be it for seniors, younger persons, etc. State would like towns to be in control of the location, architectural look and number of units that comprise affordable housing stock. where and how the affordable housing looks like, be it multi-family senior or something else.

Q: What about the impoverished households? That is, households living at the poverty level, the poor, where do they go?

A: Middle market pressure makes units unavailable for lower income families, who have nowhere else to go. Affordable housing is not just for downsizing seniors and millennials. The market pressure creates an unstable living situation for low income individuals.

Q: Are the lower income people leaving CT because of this affordable housing shortage?

A: Some of them are, like those who move down south to be able to afford housing for half the price as in CT.

Comment: Don't hear much about the people who are really poor, except from the non-profits.

Response: There is a really robust non-profit development industry that is incentivized by CT to allocate housing for those most in need. Those most in need are part of the affordable housing developments. One non-profit developer in the Town of Stonington will have a mix of housing that is market and affordable. Units will be for people with 25% of that area's median income to market.

Comment: What about people who are living on less than \$10,000 per year?

Response: One in three CT families is struggling to meet the CT survival budget. PSC hears from that constituency every day. The PSC is involved with the Reaching Home Campaign which is dedicated to charting solutions to homelessness. Housing units can be built for people to exit homelessness but if they're not stable or affordable housing they're going to fall back into homelessness. Need to development apartments that meet those needs, and that's where state subsidies are most helpful. With the Incentive Housing Zone program the premise is that we need the density to spread out the cost over the units so those kinds of projects can be internally subsidized and don't require state subsidy.

Comment: So you're not about mixing Section 8 units?

Response: Depends on the state program, whether it is tax credit based, or mixed income project. State incentivizes economic integration. Past programs have not been successful because poverty has been concentrated.



Q: What are the rents in the private market in the areas of Hartford, Bridgeport, Waterbury?

A: In the interest of the meeting agenda, the Chairperson closed the discussion. Katy Schafer is available for more conversation – please contact her with your specific questions.

3. Update: Route 8 & Waterbury Branch Line Corridor Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) & Alternate Transit Modes Assessment Project

- Origins of project: A few years ago VCOG received OPM QED pilot program, focusing mostly on Derby, Shelton, Ansonia, Seymour, supplement with FTA grant to study alternative transit modes. Study is essentially looking at changes transit system within the Naugatuck Valley corridor, with a final report as the deliverable.
- Three main tasks to the study are to identify:
 1. Bicycle-pedestrian connections
 2. Zoning regulations and tools to accommodate TOD, with end product a toolkit of options so any community can pick and choose what works in their community, can do sustainable types of dev to enhance town centers or a niche for redevelopment and mixed use, doesn't have to be related to a train station, could be any transit mode like a connection to CTfastrak, encourage more people to live in town center and have the transit available to get to Hartford.
 3. Improvements to Rt. 8 Waterbury branch rail line to make transit more attractive and accommodating (rail service enhancements, signal improvements, more frequent service)
- Study will consider opportunities for bus rapid transit service; existing bus service does not accommodate commuters.
- Consultant is being hired for the study – interviews underway, selection in next couple months.
- RPC role in study: sounding board for study and final report, part of the dialogue with the public, NVCOG asking RPC representatives to bring report to municipal commissions for review and comment, review deliverables from consultant, vet the draft report,
- NVCOG will provide draft copy of the report to RPC members for comment a couple weeks prior to the next full RPC meeting.

4. RPC Operating Procedures – review and discussion, recommendation to Council – (Motion)

Discussion of amendments followed. Consensus that each representative of a Member has the ability to object to an action of the Executive Committee, and that that objection brings the action to the full RPC for consideration. Review of amendments and edits by Nancy Clark. No other amendments proposed.

Motion to accept, as amended, and recommend to NVCOG Council to approve the NVCOG RPC Operating Policy.



Motion made by Gary Giordano, seconded by Jeremy Leifert

VOTE: Unanimous,

5. Water Use Subcommittee formation – nominations and appointments

Executive Committee discussed the formation of a Water Use Subcommittee whose work is based on the belief that water is not local, it is regional and there is an inter-regional need to make sure water resources are protected. Subcommittee would address the issues of regionalization of water sources for residential, commercial and industrial uses, share information about water resources, and inform any regional plans interconnecting communities regarding water use. Goals of the subcommittee include: outreach to water providers to learn what discussions and agreements have transpired, provide input to their plans, raise awareness of water use with CEO's, understand state plans, and suggest recommendations to include in the Regional POCD. First step is to gather information via a forum sponsored by RPC. Forum would be for information sharing with water companies, private and municipal, and learning about their plans for region, including addressing Transit Oriented Development issues. Aquifer protection areas should be considered at a future date.

RPC direction to staff: Determine the water companies in region, draft goals of forum, request information from water companies, create map of water sources.

6. Administrative Items

a. Approval of October 6, 2015 Meeting Minutes (Motion)

Approve the meeting minutes as amended from the December 1, 2015 RPC meeting.

Motion made by Ruth Parkins, seconded by Marie Chasse

ABSTENTIONS: Sue Goggin, James Sequin, Jeremy Leifert

VOTE: Unanimous

b. Correspondence

- NVision conference – Jan. 28, 2016, Palace Theater, 165 attendees, 73% participation, positive feedback
- New Hires – Karen Svetz – part-time, engineer, Ben Muller – transportation engineer
- Referrals received in January 2016 – 3, working on one referral from Dec. 2015 – Thomaston
- Status of office renovation – studs up, hoping for conference room in next month, completion by Fall 2016, construction done,
- Land use class for planning commissioners, suggest holding class every year, also offer classes at Haddam.

c. Summary of RPC Executive Committee meeting Jan 5, 2016



7. Roundtable - Points of Interest/Local Activities

Shelton – Ruth Parkins, Planning and Zoning Commission

Downtown continues to be revived, old factory converted to apartments and mixed use, Bridgeport Ave much interest in residential, public hearing to redo Central Business District zoning to make it more user-friendly.

Bethlehem – Gary Giordano, Planning Commission

Quiet, some public improvements being made.

Plymouth – Margus Laan, Town Planner

A six month moratorium on gun ranges passed. Waterbury had a similar moratorium and will send a copy of their revised gun range ordinances to Plymouth.

Waterbury – Jim Sequin, City Planner

Municipal POCD adopted. POCD work involved the Waterbury Development Corp and Economic Development department, took 1.5 years to complete, and incorporated ongoing initiatives with the downtown and greenway. As of January 2015, relatively quiet.

Thomaston – Jeremy Leifert, Land Use Administrator

Many zoning amendments being considered at once – agricultural regulations being corrected, medical marijuana production and dispensaries, non-confirming uses section being revamped, correcting language for rear-lots and lot access, public hearing opening tomorrow and expected to be open for next 4-6 months. Southern part of town manufacturer would like to extend sewer line to their operations; Town applying for STEAP money for assessments of street and how far to take extension. – Town meeting next week regarding accepting amendments to liquor and adult use regulations passed in Fall 2015. Town waiting to hear decision on state funding for greenway.

Naugatuck – Sue Goggin, Town Planner/ Zoning Enforcement Officer

Redeveloping downtown area: moving train station, adding housing. Creating new mixed use zone on Prospect St (Route 68) which was called for in Naugatuck POCD (2013). Revised zoning regulations to allow for outside seasonal dining on sidewalks (involved revising regulations concerning outdoor alcohol consumption); modeled on Torrington's regulations for outdoor dining and alcohol consumption. Zone change for restaurant to go in train station building – restaurant will occupy space of former museum and will have outdoor patio.

Southbury – Nancy Clark, Planning Commission

Quiet, theater opening projected for the fall, lot-line revision.



Woodbury – Bob Clarke, Zoning Chair

Annual land use commission meeting 2 weeks ago. Waiting for AIA group recommendations titled “Imagine Woodbury.” Land use regulation changes forthcoming.

Bristol – Marie Chasse, Planning Commission

Approve site plan in industrial for POD’s zoned as a Walmart. Downtown revitalization continues with development for multiple offices. Route 6 corridor study moving forward.

Beacon Falls – Mike Opuszynski, Conservation Commission, Wetlands Commission, Land Use Commission

CT Siting Council reviewed and evaluated Beacon Falls Energy Plant – approved plan which are available online. Court ruled in favor of residents on private road who asked for additional support for road and municipal services because the community at large was using the private road as a through route.

8. Other

Gary Giordano, Bethlehem, commented that Bethlehem satellite imagery not available. NVCOG to investigate.

9. Adjournment

On a motion by Ruth Parkins, seconded by Margus Laan, the meeting was adjourned at 7:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted by

Joanna B. Rogalski

Regional Planner, NVCOG