

**HOUSING AND FAIR RENT COMMISSION MINUTES
VIRTUAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY MAY 19, 2021**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jay Stoppelman, Chair; Sandy DeCampos, Debra Streeter, Brenda Earle, Lindsay Gengras, Linda Harris

OTHERS PRESENT: Kyle Shiel, Senior Planner
Heather Guerette, Community Development Program Manager
Joel Cox, Director of Human Services
Joe D’Ascoli, Executive Director, Manchester Housing Authority
Luke Reynolds, DesegregateCT

Mr. Stoppelman began the meeting by welcoming the new members and doing a brief round of introductions.

Adoption of November 18th, 2020 minutes

Mr. D’Ascoli moved to adopt the minutes as written. Ms. Streeter seconded. Ms. Harris abstained and all others voted in favor.

Election of Officers

Ms. Streeter moved to nominate Mr. Stoppelman as chair. Ms. DeCampos seconded. All voted in favor. Mr. Stoppelman moved to nominate Ms. DeCampos as vice-chair. Ms. Streeter seconded and all members voted in favor.

Update on housing and land use bills in legislature

Mr. Shiel said there were a number of significant number of land use and housing-related bills currently under consideration in the legislature. He said the current session featured some of the most extensive focus on zoning and housing issues that many observers had seen in some time. He said several proposals include allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) by right, allowing greater development near transit stations, and requiring municipalities to undertake a housing needs assessment. He said many of these proposals are being negotiated behind closed doors currently, so it was difficult to determine the final form of the legislation.

Brief presentation from DesegregateCT (Luke Reynolds)

Mr. Shiel introduced Luke Reynolds of DesegregateCT, an organization promoting SB 1024, a bill that incorporates numerous land use and zoning reforms as a means to promote housing choice and reduce racial and socioeconomic segregation. Mr. Shiel said the Commission was briefed on much of the substance of 1024 during their November meeting. Mr. Reynolds said

1024 was currently among the many proposals being considered by the legislature and that it seemed likely that they would eventually be rolled into a single bill. He said the primary rationale for the proposed reforms were to make zoning in Connecticut less restrictive and allow more types of housing to be built at different levels of affordability. He said DesegregateCT recently released a report highlighting the economic case for zoning reform and how it can benefit economic development efforts.

In regards to the specific proposals contained in SB 1024, Mr. Reynolds said most of the reforms would not impact Manchester, as the Town has already implemented many of the measures over the years. He said allowing ADUs by right is not something the Town currently allows in its regulations, which would likely be the most significant change for Manchester. Mr. Shiel said the Planning and Zoning Commission has been considering similar changes to the regulations. Mr. Reynolds said zoning reform has been shown to have positive impacts on property values. Mr. Reynolds said the bill also includes provisions to reduce parking mandates, adopt a model form-based building and street code, deleting the word “character” from regulations and technical changes to both sewer standards and traffic impact guidelines.

Ms. Guerette asked if there were minimum lot size requirements in this bill. Mr. Reynolds said not in this current legislation. Mr. D’Ascoli asked if SB 1024 had the same provisions as HB 6430 regarding standards and oversight of Housing Authorities. Mr. Reynolds said all provisions regarding Housing Authorities were removed from the bill early in the legislative process. Mr. Reynolds concluded by saying if individual members were supportive of the legislation, he encouraged them to contact their legislators to urge support of the bill.

Federal funding update – CDBG and CARES Act

Ms. Guerette reviewed the Town’s participation in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, saying the program has three primary goals: to benefit low to moderate income resident, prevent blight and meet urgent community development needs where no other funding exists. She said the program has income limits in order to be eligible. She reviewed the General Manager’s funding recommendations for fiscal year 2021-2022. These recommendations will be considered by the Board of Directors at their June meeting, where they will approve their draft action plan for the upcoming program year.

She then reviewed the CARES Act (CDBG-CV), which was passed by Congress last year in order to prevent, prepare for or respond to Covid-19. She said Manchester received a total of \$812,580 from this program. Mr. Stoppelman asked where the Town appropriated \$90,000 for rental assistance. Ms. Guerette said the Human Services department submitted a CDBG-CV application for \$90,000 to fund a rental assistance program. This application, along with other CDBG-CV applications received, will be considered for funding appropriation at the Board of Directors’ June meeting.

Mr. Cox said the Human Services department is assisting residents in applying for rental and utilities assistance through the State. Locally, he said in addition to the CDBG-CV application for \$90,000 for rental assistance, the Board appropriated another \$150,000 for the same purpose. Mr. Stoppelman asked if the funds would meet the need. Mr. Cox said the need has increased, as

he is seeing arrearages averaging about 3-4 months. He said the funds should be able to assist a number of households. Ms. Earle asked if the funds could be used for security deposits to help people move into new units. Mr. Cox said as currently designed, both programs would focus on arrearages but discussions are underway to explore additional flexibilities for use towards security deposits. Mr. Cox said it is sometimes difficult to use funds for security deposits. Ms. Guerette also mentioned that CDBG-CV funded rental assistance for more than 90 days triggers lead inspection requirements. She said it would likely be difficult to balance various program requirements.

Mr. Stoppelman asked Ms. Guerette to discuss any updates on Habitat for Humanity's planned development on South St. Since the last commission meeting. She explained that talks are now underway between Habitat, the 8th Utilities District water and sewer staff and town engineers. The financial burden of installing an extension of the water and sewer mains and a new fire hydrant has been placed on Habitat so they are trying to identify ways to cover these costs. Habitat submitted a CDBG application but it was determined the application for that work should have come from the Town/8th Utilities and not the nonprofit. Ms. Guerette has continued communication with Habitat and is working with them to identify other potential funding opportunities. If successful, Habitat intends to build two new Zero Energy Ready Certified single-family homes to be occupied by lower-income households.

Mr. Stoppelman said he would like the November meeting agenda to include a discussion of inclusionary zoning and any recently passed housing or zoning-related legislation from the current session.

Mr. D'Ascoli moved to adjourn. Ms. Earle seconded and all members voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:21pm.