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S MINUTES
ZONING COMMISSION – SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, April 15, 2024 at 6:00 P.M.
Simsbury Public Library - FSPL Room
725 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070

I. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Elliott called this meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Present: Zoning Chairman, Bruce Elliott; Zoning Commission Vice Chairman, Tony Braz; Zoning Commissioners, Kate Beal, Shannon Leary, Diane Madigan, Tucker Salls; Zoning Commission Alternate Members: Jackie Battos, Joshua Michelson; Planning and Community Development Director, George McGregor; Assistant Town Planner, Brittany MacGilpin.

Local Stakeholders Present:

Cheryl Cook, Co-Chair of the Simsbury Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council
Tony Giorgio, Developer The Keystone Companies
Peter Harrison, CT Director Regional Plan Association
Chris Nelson, President Nelson Construction

Absent: Zoning Commission Alternate Member, David Moore

II. WORK SESSION

Application ZC #24-06 of the Town of Simsbury Zoning Commission, Applicant, for a text amendment to create inclusionary zoning regulations. The amendment introduces new language requiring a minimum percentage of affordable dwelling units for inclusion in residential developments. The following Zoning Regulation standards are introduced and/or affected: Simsbury Zoning Regulations – Section 8.7, Inclusionary Housing, Simsbury Center Code – Section 6.7, Inclusionary Housing, Hartford-Simsbury Form-Based Code – Section 7.0, B.x.i Inclusionary Housing.

- Local stakeholders introduced themselves to the Commission.
- Mr. McGregor addressed the stakeholders explaining that the Zoning Commission and Town Staff are requesting their feedback on the draft regulation language presented. To begin the discussion, he asked the stakeholders whether there is a best practice or preferred methodology to determine what percentage of area median income (“AMI”) should be in a community like Simsbury?
- Mr. Nelson explained that housing costs and interest rates have significantly increased which have put financial pressure on developers, even for market rate properties. An affordable housing regulation would further increase that burden, making it not feasible for developers to engage in new construction within the town.

42 There are Federal programs available, including the Built for CT Program, which
43 will provide subsidies for affordable housing.

- 44 • Mr. Nelson commented that the town needs to work with developers to offer
45 incentives if the goal is to increase affordable housing in town. He referenced a
46 report which showed that an increase in affordable housing resulted in a decrease in
47 construction.
- 48 • Ms. Cook also suggested that zoning districts be more flexible to allow for the
49 possibility for small developments or rehabbing current stock into more affordable
50 housing with an increase in density. She also noted that home ownership needs to
51 be considered as a means to build wealth and that inclusionary zoning needs to also
52 address accessibility issues.
- 53 • Mr. Harrison noted that the land-use patterns need to be reviewed and changed to
54 make affordability work. He commented that the financial loss resulting from
55 offering affordable housing units should be offset by a corresponding increase to
56 the price of unrestricted units.
- 57 • Mr. Nelson refuted that comment, noting that banks will reduce the financing for
58 affordable housing, as the unrestricted market rates will decrease because of the
59 community perception around affordable housing.
- 60 • Mr. Giorgio commented that the town, the Zoning and Planning Commissions, the
61 developers, and the banks need to cooperate and determine a path forward if the
62 goal is to increase affordable housing. He does not believe starting with a zoning
63 regulation is the appropriate first step.
- 64 • Discussion ensued around various incentives that could be provided including tax
65 abatements, density bonuses, and smoother approval processes.
- 66 • Commissioner Leary inquired if rehabbing an existing building with special needs
67 units would count for more points than a similar development without special needs
68 and only affordable housing. Mr. Harrison confirmed that state regulations have a
69 different point system for housing and disability housing. However, ultimately this
70 does not necessarily meet the goal of providing more affordable housing.
71 Commissioner Leary noted that there is limited disability housing in this area and
72 that needs to be addressed as part of this discussion.
- 73 • Mr. Gorgio and Mr. Nelson commented that if this text amendment is approved, it
74 may be beneficial for a developer to come in with a proposal under 8-30g, as it
75 removes many density, height, and parking restrictions and the burden is shifted to
76 the town.
- 77 • Mr. McGregor inquired if there is a specific AMI percentage that the stakeholders
78 recommend. Mr. Nelson noted that 80% is feasible if there is participation by the
79 town and state. Mr. Nelson and Mr. Gorgio agree 60% is not feasible.

- 80 • Mr. Harrison confirmed that 60% is not feasible for mid-tier local developers and
81 that there are large developers that focus on affordable housing that may be able to
82 meet the 60% AMI threshold.
- 83 • Mr. McGregor inquired about whether these requirements should be applied to
84 different types of housing projects, including single family housing. Mr. Gorgio
85 noted there is a way to refurbish single family homes, but it would need to be a
86 PUD. Mr. Nelson commented that he does not believe developers would be able to
87 afford to build single-family homes under this text amendment.
- 88 • Commissioner Battos recommended reviewing Pond Place in Avon as a potential
89 model to consider.

90

91 **III. ADJOURNMENT**

92

93 **MOTION:** Vice Chair Braz moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Madigan
94 seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. (6-0-0)

95

96 The meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M.

97

98 Respectfully Submitted,

99

100 Cara Blackaby
101 Commission Clerk