

City of Torrington
Housing Plan Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes
October 26, 2021

Present: Jocelyn Ayer, Community and Economic Development Director
Northwest Connecticut Council of Governments (NWCOCG)
Martin Connor, Torrington City Planner
Jeremy Leifert, Torrington Asst. City Planner
Starley Arias, Torrington Planning and Zoning Commissioner
Claudia Sweeney, Director, Torrington Housing Authority
Rista Malanca, Torrington Economic Development Director
Sharon Waagner, Torrington City Councilor

Jocelyn Ayer called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom on line

1. Review and discuss initial housing needs data analysis:

Jocelyn Ayer screen shared her slides, including demographic trends in Torrington. Torrington has had a decline of 870 people, with children making up 14 percent of the decline, while adults increased by one percent. Twenty-two percent of households in Torrington have children.

Martin Connor brought up the point that COVID may have changed the population in the area, due to people moving to the Torrington area from New York City. The numbers being presented from the census numbers may not accurately reflect the current population and that particular change. J. Ayer noted since the census questions were answered, the growth in Torrington may be flat.

Discussion followed

J. Ayer stated Torrington has a range of housing options compared to neighboring towns. 30% of housing in Torrington are rental units. 52% of the Torrington housing has three plus bedrooms. An area of focus may be to encourage one to two bedroom units.

M. Connor noted the old Libby Furniture building which has been completely rehabbed with 15 apartment units, which are all fully occupied. There is a need for upgraded one to two bedroom housing in Torrington.

Sharon Waagner asked for copies of the slides to pass along to Steve Temkin. Ms. Ayer will send her slide presentation via email to all Committee members.

J. Ayer noted there is a decline in new construction housing units. The following topics were discussed by the Committee:

- a. Household income and housing cost burden.
- b. Current stock of affordable housing.
- c. Preservation of existing affordable housing.
- d. Waiting list for affordable housing. Claudia Sweeney provided details and statistics surrounding waiting lists.

J. Ayer reviewed the summary of housing data.

2. Discuss possible resident and/or worker survey about housing needs.

It was the consensus of Committee members to use the model survey discussed from Barkhamsted. J. Ayer screen shared the survey questions, referring to the sample from Barkhamsted. J. Ayer will take suggestions and send the questionnaire around.

Starley Arias inquired how the Barkhamsted survey was administered. J. Ayer responded the town selectperson sent out the questionnaire via survey monkey, and communications from the town with the survey attached.

J. Ayer noted the most efficient way to administer the survey is on line, but we want to have paper copies available for those who do not have availability to answer the questionnaire via the internet, which does involve labor afterwards to input the survey responses.

Committee members went through the sample survey, reviewing each question. J. Ayer stated a survey for those non-residents who work in Torrington will be discussed at the next meeting.

3. Next steps and next meeting date:

Committee members agreed upon the following meeting dates for the remainder of the year:

Monday, November 15, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

Tuesday, December 14, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

S. Arias suggesting including on the questionnaire an inquiry regarding heating, oil, electric or gas, as that may affect the affordability of a unit. J. Leifert suggested including whether utilities are included or not in the rental price.

Adjournment at 5:01 p.m.