

**SUFFIELD PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING**  
**July 6, 2021**

**Present:** Mark Winne, Chairman  
Donald Rawling, Vice Chairman  
Ginny Bromage, Secretary  
Brendan Malone  
Erin Golombiewski  
Jeff Girard  
Leon Litvak

**Also Present:** Melissa Mack - First Selectwoman, Kathie Harrington - Board of Selectmen, Dave Colangelo - Suffield Community Aid Board of Directors, Kevin Goff - Suffield Community Aid Board of Directors, Kerry O'Brien - Housing Authority Executive Director, Sue Thorner - Economic Development Commission, John McGuire - Economic Development Commission, Jack Henrie - Economic Development Commission, Glenn Chalder - Planimetrics, Bill Hawkins - Director of Planning & Development

*The proceedings of this hybrid in-person, video/teleconference meeting were recorded and made available on the Town website.*

## **I. ROLL CALL**

Chairman Winne called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM as a hybrid in-person and Zoom video/teleconference meeting and took the roll call of commission members and others present that comprise the working group.

## **II. AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN DISCUSSION**

Chairman Winne stated that the main goal of the meeting is to review Briefing Booklet #2, which has information related to housing conditions and trends for Suffield. The information was put together by Glenn Chalder, AICP, of Planimetrics and was sent to the group prior to the meeting. Mr. Chalder led the discussion regarding the demographics of the town including population, age composition, household size & income, and race and ethnicity statistics for the town. Discussion about the projected increase in population took place given that it is likely additional housing units would be needed to accommodate such growth.

The towns housing inventory including housing types, mix, tenure, value, and gross rent were discussed. The data indicates that Suffield has approximately 5,601 housing units and about 83 percent are single-family detached units with another 6 percent single-family attached units (townhouses). Mr. Chalder explained that these numbers indicate Suffield has a higher share of single-family detached and attached units on a percentage basis when compared to Hartford

County and the State. Also, it was explained that about 87% of the occupied housing in Suffield are owner-occupied and about 13% are renter occupied.

House values were discussed including the median sales price of \$293,300 in 2019 which was compared to neighboring communities, county, and State. Median gross rent was also discussed in relation to nearby towns, the county and State.

Housing affordability in terms of what is considered an affordable rent or sales price was discussed. Page 11 of the briefing booklet describes the formula that the State Department of Housing (DOH) uses to determine affordable prices. According to the DOH, housing is considered affordable if the occupants spend less than 30 percent of their income on it. Most housing related programs look at affordability for households earning 80 percent or less of the area median income (AMI), which for Suffield is the Hartford metropolitan region. For example, the maximum sales price for a 4-person, 3-bedroom house at the 80 percent AMI would be \$247,358.

Mr. Chalder then explained what the data shows for naturally occurring affordable housing. These are housing units that would sell or rent at affordable prices but are not recognized by the State, as they do not meet their criteria. To be considered affordable by the State, the house needs to be assisted housing, receive rental or mortgage assistance, or be deed-restricted to sell or rent at affordable prices. Discussion took place regarding the Suffield Housing Authority units on Bridge Street and whether there was capacity to expand the facility.

Suffield has 367 housing units, which meet State criteria representing 6.7 percent of the town housing stock. Mr. Chalder explained that some of the deed restricted units in the Suffield Meadow West development will be expiring this year meaning that they could be sold at market rates. There was also discussion regarding the certificate of affordable housing completion the town was able to achieve which makes Suffield exempt from the State's affordable housing appeals procedure for four years and expires in December 2023.

It was pointed out that the information contained in the briefing booklet was prepared before the 2020 Census data are released. As a result, the briefing booklet used data from the American Community Survey, which estimates socio-economic data based on a sampling of the population over a 5-year period. This sampling technique results in a "margin of error" and even some basic information (such as the number of housing units in Suffield) may be imprecise. Nonetheless, the American Community Survey was the best information available at the time the booklet was prepared.

The briefing booklet will be revised based upon comments from the group and posted on the town website. The next meeting will be held on August 3, 2021 to cover two more briefing booklets related to the towns zoning regulations, Plan of Conservation and Development, and a recap of recent legislative proposals related to housing. Also, the affordable housing survey will close on July 11<sup>th</sup> and the results will also be discussed at the next meeting.

### III. ADJOURNMENT

With nothing further, a motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Bromage, seconded by Mr. Malone and approved unanimously at 8:25 PM.

Submitted,

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Ginny Bromage, Secretary

cc: Assessor, Building Official, Conservation Commission, Selectmen, Town Clerk, Town Engineer, Zoning Enforcement Officer, Commission Counsel