

HOUSING COMMISSION

TOWN OF ESSEX HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES Wednesday, November 17, 2021

Housing Commission (HC): Katie Ballard, Chair; Gabrielle Smith, Vice Chair; Mark Redmond; Michelle Teegarden, Alison Levy, Emily Taylor

Administration and Staff: Owiso Makuku, Essex Community Development Director; Darren Schibler, Town Planner.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND AGENDA ADDITIONS / CHANGES

Ballard called the meeting to order at 3:04 PM.

Ballard made a motion to change the order of the agenda items, Redmond seconded. Approved 5-0.

2. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

There were no members of the public present.

3. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Approval of Minutes

Ballard made a motion, seconded by Taylor to approve the minutes from November 3, 2021.

Levy brought up a change to remove the word “questionable” from the minutes, noting it may not be appropriate for use in the context. Smith said the meeting minutes accurately portray the intent of her comments. Taylor joined the meeting. Ballard brought the motion to a vote. 5-0 against passing the amendment to delete the word. Changes to members present - corrected spelling of Alison Levy’s first name and deleted Smith’s name listed twice.

Ballard motioned to approve the minutes with the corrections to the members names. Smith seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

b. Town Center Development application

Staff provided a recap of the application they are bringing to staff. Working with the developer to address how the application is not in full compliance with the regulations in place. That has come to an impasse. Thus, staff is recommending denial to the Planning Commission. Issues include livability issues such as first floor residences that are not aligned with the ETC Next and Master Plan.

Discussion among commissioners and staff. Are these the type of units that strengthen our community and provide for lasting livable housing? Are they meeting the standards of our community and of our housing goals? Two separate, connected

issues: The Commission supports the staff concerns to the planning commission for the most recent proposal from the developer for Town Center. Second issue, substandard existing housing development in Essex with outstanding livability issues that the developer is not addressing. How can the Commission bring forward the concern about accepting proposals from developers who have demonstrated a history and current issues with providing reasonably livable housing?

The Commission agreed to write a letter to the Town Planning Commission and Ballard will present it to the Planning Commission at their November 18, 2021 meeting.

Ballard made a motion authorizing herself as Chair and staff to write a letter on behalf of the Housing Commission outlining its concerns on the existing proposal and the developer's other Essex housing development. Levy seconded. No discussion on the motion. Motion passes 6-0.

Commission discussed the content for the letter:

- Residential units on the first floor on a commercial street do not allow for privacy and the issues of lights coming into the first floor units.
- It is a mixed use commercial zone, specifically dedicating the first floor to commercial use. The Housing Commission believes that the proposal must make this change to comply with the zoning.
- If the exception is allowed, developers would have to revise their proposal with a redesign that includes proven mitigation strategies for first floor units in mixed use commercially zoned development.
- The Commission oppose the requested density bonus to allow for existing development units to bear on for the proposed development.
- Livability and dignity in housing is a core belief of the Housing Commission.

Teegarden made a motion, seconded by Ballard, that the letter would include the five bulleted contents listed above.

Discussion followed. Levy expressed concern that providing guidance to the possible exception (if first floor housing would be allowed), is giving an "out." **Motion passed 5-1. Smith, Ballard, Teegarden, Redmond, and Taylor in favor, Levy opposed.**

Ballard noted the short turnaround to complete the letter. She will work with staff and get a draft out to all commissioners. Final version will be presented to the Planning Commission on November 18th.

c. Commissioner Profile: Emily Taylor

Not discussed due to lack of time.

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74 **d. Work Group Updates**

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76 Not discussed due to lack of time.

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78 **e. Community Outreach**

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80 Not discussed due to lack of time.

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82 **f. Other Business**

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84 Taylor volunteered to take meeting minutes at the next Commission meeting.

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86 **4. Adjourn**

87 **Ballard called meeting to close at 4:33 PM.**

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89 Minutes prepared by Gabrielle Smith, Vice Chair and reviewed and submitted by Mia
90 Watson, Clerk. Minutes approved December 1, 2021.