

Majority Leaders' Affordable Housing Roundtable

MEETING MINUTES

Monday July 31, 2023, 10:00

10:00 AM in Room 2B of the LOB and Zoom and YouTube Live

The meeting was called to order at 10:06 AM by Chairman, Rep. Rojas, 009.

The following committee members were present:

Rep. Rojas (009), Sen. Duff (25), Rep. Luxenberg (012), Sen. Moore (22) , Sen. Rahman (04), Rep. Kavros DeGraw (017), Rep. Scott (112), Rep. Fazio (36), Comm. Mosquera-Bruno (Department of Housing), Dept. Comm. Laoise King (Department of Transportation), Dept. Comm. Darren Hobbs (Department of Administrative Services), First Selectman Rudy Marconi (Ridgefield), Nandini Natarajan (Chief Executive Officer CHFA), Rebecca Augur Responsible Growth Coordinator), Jessica Vonashek (Norwalk Chief of Community and Economic Development), David McCarthy (President Heritage Housing Inc.), Neil Griffin Jr. (Executive Director Glastonbury Housing Authority), Francis Pickering (Executive Director Western CT Council of Government), Brian O'Connor (Director of Public Policy ~ CT Conference of Municipalities), Cindy Butts (Chief Executive Officer CT Association of REALTORS)

Rep. Rojas welcomed all who were present. He discussed the importance of the committee and how great it was to have such a diverse group of individuals. All members of the committee in attendance introduced themselves and then the meeting was turned back over to Rep. Rojas. Rep. Rojas then asked for any of the committee members to define what they thought the problem facing the housing community was. The following discussion took place:

- First Selectman Marconi indicated it is not a "one size fits all" situation and that many communities need to be looked at individually. He also noted that transportation challenges exist ~ we need transportation where jobs are going to be.

- Betsy Gara spoke about water and wastewater capacity. We need details of water and wastewater capacity.
- Francis Pickering made several comments and discussed the 5 L's ~ labor, lots, laws, lending, and lumber. He also noted the changes in the cost to maintain a home in our state. He spoke of the many great assets in Connecticut but we have critical affordability gaps.
- Nandini Natarajan discussed the lack of supply of affordable homes for first-time buyers in the market. She also noted that Connecticut's housing inventory is 25% of what it was pre-pandemic. We need a more sustained solution to create small first-time investors in homes.
- Cindy Butts noted that since the housing market has gotten so competitive many homes are being sold for cash and without inspections. Additionally, she noted that many homeowners are not looking to move and that there is a new dynamic due to remote work. She also observed that it is hard for people to relocate in many parts of the state for a new job due to there being no place to live.
- Brian O'Connor discussed the state's hypothetical financial commitment. Zoning reforms need to be discussed and he pointed out that the Air B and B model has taken many rentals off the market.
- Rebecca Augur spoke of the need for a state comprehensive plan for housing and other services.
- Neil Griffin Jr. indicated that many builders are having a difficult time expanding their portfolios due to the affordability of property.
- Laoise King discussed surface parking lots being available for long term housing construction. Additionally, she pointed out how important people's housing is to their everyday life.
- Comm. Mosquera-Bruno noted that single-family homes are being purchased by investors, further reducing inventory.
- Sen. Fazio said that we need to increase the number of jobs and that we are still recovering from the recession of 2008. The income of our citizens has remained stagnant.
- Jessica Vonashek noted there are zoning and use trend challenges that housing has faced in many communities.
- Sen. Rahman indicated that people want to work in many areas of the state but cannot find affordable housing.
- Sen. Duff noted that our state can only grow if there is housing. The private sector jobs continue to grow which adds to the housing crunch. Additionally, we have more residents living longer in their homes which is an additional factor in the lack of housing inventory and turnover. He commented that we may have fewer cranes in the air than other states.
- David McCarthy spoke of the need to identify transitory issues vs. chronic issues. The issues need different strategies. He also spoke of the regulatory issues vs. economic issues.

Rep. Rojas thanked everyone for their thoughts on the housing issue and noted that it is an incredibly complex situation. The discussion now is where do we start and what strategic direction do we take?

- First Selectman Marconi commented on the need for modernization as well as new technology.
- Sen. Duff made note that in one municipality there were 3,000 applicants for four affordable units. The demand is there for housing.
- Brian O'Connor spoke about data collection and how important that is at this time. We need to know where the jobs are (i.e., Electric Boat, etc.).
- Rep. Rojas discussed the need to understand the age of the housing stock and how well it has been maintained or under-maintained).
- Comm. Mosquera-Bruno discussed the need for some of the housing to be recapitalized and updated. She also indicated that there have been some housing assessments performed in the state. She stated that we should review existing policies ~ the state has programs with many different links on the existing website. She said a future presentation by DOH to the committee about housing programs and other vehicles maybe a benefit.
- Betsy Gara spoke about there being competing demands and a reluctance to address certain items at times at times.
- Sen. Duff spoke about cases where developers want to pay for housing units and the towns have opposed it.
- Nandini Natarajan noted that some other states have done surveys that should be reviewed.

The committee noted that this will be an ongoing effort with many different areas to cover. Rep. Rojas thanked everyone for their participation and indicated there will not be a meeting in August but there will be one set up for September. The meeting was adjourned at 11:31 a.m.

September 6, 2023
Date

Richard O'Neil
Committee Clerk