



SECHA Board of Directors Meeting
January 11, 2019
8:30 AM
Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments
5 Connecticut Ave, Norwich, CT

Minutes

In attendance: Norton Wheeler (Chair), Pam Days-Luketich (Vice-Chair), Deb Monahan, Mark Oefinger, Bob Fusari, David Stanland, Virginia Sampietro, John Bolduc, Susy Hurlbert, Les King, James Butler, Amanda Kennedy, Carly Myers. Guest: Helen Rimsa, Fuss & O'Neill.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Wheeler called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM. Mr. Wheeler recognized guest Helen Rimsa of the consulting firm Fuss & O'Neill. Ms. Rimsa offered her services for SECHA's environmental needs, renovating buildings, and real estate transactions.

2. Approval of November 19, 2018 Meeting Minutes

MOTION: To approve the November 19, 2018 meeting minutes (Monahan, Bolduc). So voted unanimously.

3. Membership

Discussion of adding Geoff Taylor (Habitat for Humanity) and Julie Savin (ECHO) as new board members. The Board will be its maximum size (15) with their addition. Formal approval and voting will be held at the March meeting.

4. Strategic Plan

Discussion of minor editorial and word choice revisions to draft Strategic Plan. Discussion about whether it is appropriate to have a definition of "affordable housing" stated within the Strategic Plan, as there are multiple definitions used statutorily and in common usage. A separate working group or meeting will be held to address this definition.

MOTION: To approve the draft Strategic Plan with discussed revisions. Page 1: add "research" to mission statement, change "decent affordable housing" to quality affordable housing". Page 2: correct grammar of objective 1 last sentence. Correct SECHA URL. Remove "annual" in front of newsletters. Page 3: correct year reference to 2007. Page 4: add Mike Sheahan to board list. (Bolduc, Days-Luketich). So voted unanimously.

5. Financial Report

Ms. Kennedy presented the Treasurer's Report. Spending on staff time has been lower than projected due to a slowdown in municipal outreach. Several grants came in at the end of the last fiscal year that are not represented in this report.

MOTION: To accept the financial report (Sampietro, Bolduc). So voted unanimously.

6. Municipal Outreach

Ms. Kennedy suggested that the next municipalities to focus on for outreach be Waterford, Salem, and Montville based on need and interest. The Board concurred.

Ms. Days-Luketich reported that Stonington has recently passed a zoning amendment to allow more types of accessory dwelling units.

Mr. Wheeler discussed that Stonington also has very restrictive Floor Area Ratio (FAR) requirements. In large houses, this can affect whether or not unfinished spaces such as attics or basements can become finished living spaces (and potential bedrooms or accessory units). Mr. Oefinger said that Groton has newly instated FAR requirements, but that they do not apply to existing single family homes.

Discussion about whether FAR requirements for single-family zoning are appropriate, and how they may impact affordability. Also discussed were regulations related to septic capacity, as well as Airbnb and other short-term rentals. While short-term rentals may provide homeowners with additional income to make their housing costs more affordable, they may also negatively impact neighbors.

7. SCCOG Activities

Ms. Kennedy reported that as part of the Joint Land Use Study project, SCCOG has collected information from our member municipalities on large residential and non-residential developments in the last five years. Ms. Kennedy will provide a summary at the next SECHA meeting.

8. Fundraising

Ms. Kennedy reported on discussions with Ms. Hurlbert about ideas for a NAR Housing Opportunities Grant. SECHA will apply for funds for a public workshop about affordable housing for rural and suburban communities. Other grant opportunities through banks and foundations were also discussed.

Ms. Hurlbert suggested that SECHA create an Action Plan for 2019 for 3-5 year goals, and craft grant submissions around the Action Plan. This will be added to the next meeting's agenda for further discussion.

9. New Business

Ms. Days-Luketich announced that the CT Mortgage Bankers Association, Inc. will hold an Affordable Lending Summit on March 21. Topics will include how student loan debt affects housing affordability, lending to millennials, etc.

10. 2019 Meeting Schedule

SECHA will continue to meet on the second Friday of every other month, with the next meeting to be held March 8.

11. Adjournment

Mr. Wheeler adjourned the meeting at 9:31 AM.