

THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION, COMMISSION FOR SENIOR SERVICES, and COMMISSION ON PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES

JOINT SPECIAL MEETING ON HOUSING

Westport Town Hall  
Room 201

Tuesday, Sept 12, 2023 at 1 pm

Attendance:

**Human Services Commission**

Bass, Beth  
Bollert, Lee  
Johnson, Diane (CPD & HSC)  
Klein, Karen  
Klein, Teri (CSS & HSC)  
Senturia, Yvonne  
Tolan, Abby

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**Commission for Senior Services**

Adair, Sarah  
Coplen, Claudia  
Klein, Terry (CSS & HSC)  
~~Kleros, Diana~~  
~~Levinson, Doris~~  
Spiegel, Merle

**Commission on People with Disabilities**

~~Anastasi, Joe~~  
Curran, Stacie  
Johnson, Diane

~~Rifkin, Doug~~  
~~Ross, Jim~~  
Mahesh, Sharuna  
Daniel Maya

**Human Services Staff**

Elaine Daignault  
Kristen Witt  
Sibel Yorulmaz  
Margaret Pinheiro  
Annette D'Augelli  
Ryan Balis  
Wendy Petty

**Other guests:**

Helen McAlinden, Homes with Hope  
Carol Martin, Westport Housing Authority  
Amanda Sayegh, Westport Housing Authority  
Gloria Gouveir  
Alessia Beill, Fair Housing Officer  
Harris Falk, RTM  
Ellen Lautenberg, RTM  
Andrea Moore, Second Selectwoman  
Jen Tooker, First Selectwoman

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## MINUTES

Three (3) Westport Human Services Commissions met jointly to discuss Human Services housing inquiries, Fairfield County housing insecurity, and Westport's [Affordable Housing Plan](#). The goal is to allow Commissioners to ask questions and discuss ways to advocate for the needs of the populations they represent.

### Welcome and Introductions

#### Human Services Report - Elaine Daignault, Director of Human Services

Elaine provided an overview of common Human Services calls and issues, stating that housing is the number one reason for calls to DHS. She noted that calls vary from Notice to Quit/Evictions, rent increases/looking for more affordable housing, one-time financial assistance for rent/mortgages, complaints of landlord/complaints from landlords, homeless/transient looking for housing resources, and people wishing to move to Westport.

- 21-22: 106 calls from Westport residents on housing (65 unique callers)
  - Plus, approximately 30 – 40 calls from non-residents
  - DHS Provided RENTAL ASSISTANCE: \$10,165.36
  - CT Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) Application Assistance: \$186,120 for 218 Households
  - DHS provided additional Financial Assistance for Family programs, Westport Warm-up, and food totaling \$130,180
  
- 22-23: 215 calls from Westport residents on housing (90 unique callers)
  - Plus, approximately 51 calls from non-residents
  - 38% increase in calls on housing
  - DHS Provided RENTAL ASSISTANCE: \$15,471.69 (52% increase from last year due to reduced state/federal ARPA dollars that had helped in the previous year.)
  - CT Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) Application Assistance: \$135,900 for 179 households (Fewer people qualified under SMI, and the benefit decreased due to less available State/Fed ARPA funds, thus increasing the need for Town Warm Up funds to bridge the gap.)
  - DHS provided additional Financial Assistance for Family programs (back to school, camperships, afterschool childcare, holiday programs), Westport Warm-up, and food: \$156,279. (Westport Financial Aid Programs are in higher demand to augment previous funding from state/federal ARPA and using local Warm up Guidelines more in line with local AMI requirements.)

The increase of 35% in calls for housing and the need for Town Financial Assistance is directly correlated to the State and Federal ARPA Unite CT Program parameters and funding, which dried up in 2022. Since last year – Increased need, Cost of living increases (housing, food, gas, etc.), less federal/state funding available, SNAP decreases, and higher rents = increased financial assistance requests to maintain stable housing and meet basic needs. Affordable Housing options are limited both in Fairfield County and Westport.

#### How does Human Services handle inquiries?

- Meet with residents for various reasons (mental health, financial insecurity, application assistance), hear their stories, provide short-term counseling and referrals, and connect them to information and resources.
- Financial and bio/psycho-social assessments

- Partner with WHA, HWH, and other organizations (schools, DCF, SWCAA), including the Westport Women's Club, to support all residents facing food, housing, and childcare concerns, particularly financially insecure households.
- Mental health is often a factor - whether it is causal or a result of chronic stress of a situation.

#### Guest Speakers - Westport Planning & Zoning Department ([see PowerPoint for details](#))

- Michelle Perillie, Deputy Director of Westport Planning & Zoning
- Crystal Berry, Westport Housing Specialist

Michelle Perillie provided an overview of Westport's Affordable Housing Plan adopted in June 2022 as required by CGS §8-30j (The plan spans 5 years, 2022-2027), moratorium points, and relevant zoning regulations that have been enacted or are under consideration.

- P & Z has adopted approx. 30 zoning regulations to promote a variety of housing choices, including:
  - Supportive Housing, §32-1.
  - Inclusionary Two-Family and Multi-Family Dwellings, §32-12.
  - Conversion of Existing Non-Residential Building to Multi-Family Dwellings, §32-26.
  - Special Needs Housing, §32-27
  - Inclusionary Housing Zone Overlay District (IHZ), §39A.
- The Town has 10,399 housing units, and the state-wide goal for affordable housing is 10%
  - Westport currently has 393 Affordable Units, which is 3.78% of the total housing stock.
  - Each affordable unit provides moratorium points (based on the level of affordability and whether it is a rental or for purchase), which would eliminate the loophole for developers to propose high-density, non-conforming 8-30g applications.
  - Westport received its first Moratorium in 2019, which expired in March 2023
  - Westport is seeking its second Moratorium and needs 207 points. We have 30.5 points from constructed properties, with the possibility of another 207 in progress ([see PowerPoint for details](#)).
  - Municipalities earn "housing unit equivalent" points for new affordable housing that vary based on the type of housing and the affordability target. Westport is working toward a 2<sup>nd</sup> moratorium - 30.5 housing unit equivalent points have been completed in the developments shown below:
    - 793 Post Road East 6 aff @ 1.5 pts = 9 pts
    - 33 Elm Street 1 aff @ 1.5 pts – 1.5 pts
    - 4 Oakview Lane 1 aff @ 1.5 pts – 1.5 pts
    - 23 Crescent Park Road 1 aff @ 1.5 pts = 1.5 pts
    - 260-264 Riverside Ave 2 aff @ 1.5 pts = 3 pts
    - 1480 Post Road East 7 aff @1.5 pts = 10.5 pts
    - 50-52 Church Lane 2 aff @ 1.5 pts + 2 pts = 3.5 pts
  - AFFORDABLE UNITS APPROVED AND UNDER CONSTRUCTION (68 UNITS) PROVIDING VARYING INCOME LEVELS SERVED EXPANDING INVENTORY OF HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES (Units are not added to the State list until a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is issued. (See PowerPoint for details.)
    - 136 Riverside Avenue – 5 units – 100 % of all units under Special Needs Housing
    - 785 Post Road East – 3 units – 20% of all units per IHZ regulations
    - 122 Wilton Road – 6 units – 30% of all units per §8-30g
    - 124 Compo Road N – 6 units – 100% of all units under Special Needs Housing
    - Hiawatha Lane – 48 units – 30% of all units per §8-30g

- Outlined Priorities/upcoming initiatives/ordinances ([Meeting List & Calendar | Westport, CT \(westportct.gov\)](#)) to include:
  - **Real Property Fund**, approximately \$1.7M to support the acquisition of property
  - **Affordable Housing Fund** to assist the Town in implementing Affordable Housing Plan
    - would be funded by inclusionary housing fees, such as increased P & Z fees, Building COs,
    - The RTM is reviewing the proposed ordinance to create a mechanism to charge an inclusionary housing fee. Affordable housing fund – first reading at RTM was Sept 5th
  - **Affordable Housing Subcommittee** – meets regularly, open to the public
  - **Amendment #835 Cluster Housing on Town-owned property to provide "missing middle" housing types that offer smaller units with shared parking and common open areas**, P & Z to discuss at the next P & Z meeting ([details here.](#))
  - **Amendment #827 Eliminate Zoning Barriers to create affordable housing** "General Development Plan" and modify §39A, Inclusionary Housing Overlay District, to remove zoning obstacles for multi-family Development. A copy of the text amendment is available online at [www.westportct.gov](http://www.westportct.gov) on the Planning & Zoning Office web page under "P&Z Pending Applications & Recent Approvals."

Crystal Berry reviewed the Town's responsibilities of ensuring that new developments with an affordable component comply with creating Affordability Plans and certifying renters in those units. It is suggested by the DOH that resident spend approximately 30% of their income on housing costs.

- Reviewed the difference between State Median Income (SMI - \$119,000) and Area Median Income (AMI \$171,300) with specific calculations depending on the number of people in the household ([see income guidelines here](#))
- Landlords must submit a plan, including how they will inform of availability, maintain the recommended rental rates based on annual adjustment in April, and certify that the renter is eligible for an affordable unit annually. Zoning violations are possible if they do not comply.
- Part of the plan includes notifying the Town of new availability, and Crystal shares that information with DHS, HR, and other interested parties.
- Crystal's position was created several years ago with the administrative funding Westport received for the Dept of Housing's Public Service grant for Homelessness Diversionary Specialists, administered by Westport Human Services on behalf of Fairfield County's [CT Coordinated Access Network](#).

## Q & A/Discussion

- Commissioner Claudia Coplen (Commission for Senior Services, Co-Chair) inquired:
  - Can the Real Property Funds be directed to Affordable Housing?
    - Michelle will get back to her with a response.
  - With the limited number of units and Human Services' statement that housing calls are coming from residents and many from out of Town, can the Town prioritize specific populations?
    - Answer: Due to Fair Housing regulations, prioritization is not possible.
    - Elaine mentioned that many of those experiencing housing insecurity are WEstporters and wish to stay in their communities where they have natural support systems. The Town does not offer housing, nor can we prioritize people based on prior residency.
    - Carol Martin, Executive Director of the Westport Housing Authority, addressed a question about waitlists and demand for housing. Carol stated that the Westport Housing Authority had opened their waitlists for about a month this summer, resulting



**Adjourn** – Elaine Daignault thanked our speakers, esteemed guests, and commissioners for attending the meeting. She stated that the various commissions will determine the next steps in advocating affordable housing at future meetings. She also directed the group to the Human Services webpages at [www.westportct.gov/humanservices](http://www.westportct.gov/humanservices) to look at the Housing Options on the site. Additional data on homelessness can be found below.

### Data points for Joint Commission Meeting on Sept 12

Report shows homelessness in CT rises for second straight year: 'We need resources'  
<https://www.ctinsider.com/news/article/ct-point-in-time-homeless-count-18276764.php>

<https://www.aids-ct.org/hic-pit-2023.html>

<https://ctcandata.org/>

<https://opendoorsct.org/the-realities-of-homelessness/>

<https://nlihc.org/oor/state/ct>

[AffordCT Housing Database \(affordablehousing.tools\)](#)

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