

## **Lyme Planning Board Minutes October 26, 2017**

Board Members Present: John Stadler, Chair; Tim Cook, Vice Chair; Rusty Keith, Select Board Alternate; Vicki Smith, Member; David Roby, Jr., Alternate.

Board Members Absent: Eric Furstenberg, Member; Amber Boland, Alternate; C. Jay Smith, Select Board Representative.

Members of the Public Present: Max Dresser, Chris Jackson, Susan Musty, Susanne Simon, Lynore Bolton, Liz Ryan Cole.

### **Item 1: Millennial Housing Forum**

The Board welcomed Lynne LaBombard and Markell Ripps as speakers at the Forum. Lynne has been a licensed real estate broker in New Hampshire and Vermont for 30 years, having exclusively represented buyers for 25 years and now enjoys teaching real estate courses while continuing to work with buyer clients.

Markell Ripps is a real estate lawyer at Grossman & Ripps, a member of Upper Valley Young Professionals and also a member of the “millennial” generation.

Lynne said that as a buyer rep for both renters and buyers she encourages the development of housing for both groups. She discussed the low vacancy and low unemployment rate in the Upper Valley as a part of the steep challenges that millennials face. She said there is a 1-3% rental vacancy rate in the Upper Valley. 4% was mentioned as a more acceptable rate. Lynne pointed out that a millennial with an entry level job paying \$60,000 a year might qualify for a \$150,000 loan. After backing out all the numbers and expenses, she felt that a dwelling unit of from \$150,000 up to \$200,000 is in the range of what is reasonably affordable to this group and that supplying housing at that level is a big challenge.

Lynne and Markell defined a millennial as the generation that came of age roughly around the year 2000 and, perhaps more importantly, as the first generation to experience the internet age and cell phones either from early on or from the very start of their lives. As a result, millennials generally will not easily consider living anywhere without dependable super high speed internet connection or excellent cell phone service. By and large, Lyme has neither.

Members of the Board and the Public discussed various ongoing attempts to bring these services to Lyme. EC Fiber, which has a presence in Thetford, Vermont, is a program described as one where people can invest in the infrastructure as if it were a bond. While there have been and continue to be groups working on a solution for Lyme, at present the results have not yet come to fruition.

Lynne, Markell and Max Dresser, a millennial who with his family rents in Lyme, felt that this demographic is far less likely to settle in one place for too long compared to others in the past. It was suggested that the radical change in corporate stability hand in hand with the experience of the 2008 economic crash had eroded the notion of the reliability of both a single lifelong job and the idea of living in one place for a very long time. That said, Max hoped to return to live long term in Lyme after his time in the Navy was over.

Lynne pointed out a disturbing trend regarding rental units. Large “out-of-town” companies are buying already built rental buildings in the area and using technology to determine the highest rate they can charge on any given day by assessing what else is available at that exact time. This can spike prices considerably and has been a problem. It was also noted that young renters who can pay more, like those attending Tuck or Vermont Law School, tend to skew prices higher as well.

Different options were discussed for Lyme, like accessory dwelling units. Lynne told of New Hampshire’s mandate that accessory dwelling units be a right. It was noted that Lyme has long had that ordinance and that it goes beyond the State’s requirements by allowing a small detached unit as well. There are many already existing in Lyme and a few more added from time to time. For a small town like Lyme, this stock has made a difference.

Lynore Bolton discussed Vermod housing and Liz Ryan Cole talked about Apodments. Lynne felt that although Vermod units were very well made, they were also just a little too expensive for this demographic. Apodments are a living arrangement where there is a central shared kitchen and/or common room with smaller, individual living areas arranged around them.

The Board and the Public thanked Lynne and Markell for a very informative presentation and discussion.

### **Item 2: Acceptance of Minutes from October 12, 2017**

John suggested a couple of minor edits.

Tim moved to accept the minutes from October 12 as amended by John.

Rusty seconded the motion.

John called for a vote and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Item 3: Other Business**

The Board continued an earlier discussion about what resources the Town had for appropriate development that would help spread the tax burden, with a particular focus on those that are centrally located. Vicki said that the large former Tarm building and the property next to it are for sale and would be perfect for senior housing or a mixed use project. She said other places are available as well, but are not moving quickly or easily. It was recalled that the Planning and Zoning Administrator, David Robbins, had said at the last meeting that lack of dependable, high speed internet service made business venues less attractive to buyers. This was consistent with what Lynne LaBombard and Markell Ripps had discussed earlier regarding millennials. Getting that connectivity problem solved seems crucial.

John went over the list of what might go in the Town Report regarding the Planning Board’s 2017 work. Upon David Robbins return from vacation, the list would be provided to everybody to review and discuss.

John said that he had written up a draft of a Senior Housing zoning amendment as a starting point for a discussion only and not with the expectation that this would be a likely final outcome.

He planned on sending it to David Robbins to distribute to all the members upon David's return next week.

John also informed the Board that he had emailed Nils Johnson inviting him and the entire Community Development Board to come to a Planning Board meeting in the hopes that the two groups could share their thoughts constructively and work together. Sue MacKenzie replied on his behalf that they would like to come, but that they had to figure out when Nils would be available. John said that would be fine and once they picked a date, the Board would do their best to accommodate it.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:22 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
John Stadler  
Chair, Planning Board