

HINGHAM ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT MINUTES

MAY 17, 2022 @ 7:00 PM

REMOTE MEETING

ADU Members Present Remotely: Jenn Gay Smith, Chair, Gerry Allen, Matthew Curran, Diane DeNapoli, Robyn Maguire, Beth Rouleau, Tracy Shriver

Absent: Robyn Maguire

Also Present: Michael Silveira, Senior Planner and Emily Wentworth, Community Planning Director (8pm)

At 7:03 p.m., the Chair called the meeting to order and stated the following:

This meeting is being held remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022 temporarily amending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the chair at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording.

The Chair indicated that the Committee was recording the meeting. She then reviewed the Agenda.

Mr. Silveira reviewed a presentation on Demographic and Housing Considerations. There have been major increases in older residents, likely related in part to both the Baby Boomer generation and age-restricted development such as Linden Ponds. The trend is expected to continue. The University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute estimates that resident over 75 years of age will increase from 12% today to 24% in 2035 (see pie chart in upper left for visual). The proportion of children under 18 are conversely expected to decrease slightly from 26% today to 23%.

He highlighted the decreasing size of households, including those living alone, particularly among those over 65 years of age. In the table at the bottom right, you can again see a visual of the share of that household cohort that consists of a single-person. Related in part to age, but certainly not entirely, almost 8% of Hingham residents have a disability. The largest share of these residents is 75 or older.

He then presented housing needs identified in the 2021 Housing Plans. Identified needs potentially addressed by expanded opportunity to create ADUs include:

- Target the needs of the community's most vulnerable residents.

- Continue to promote greater housing diversity.
- Invest local resources to support greater numbers of households over time as rentals turnover more regularly.
- Provide more appropriately sized units for increasing numbers of smaller households.
- Offer opportunities for seniors to downsize in less isolated settings.

Finally, he reviewed the goals of the Study Committee articulated in the Town Meeting action on Article 27 of the 2021 Warrant; the Hingham Housing Plan; and the Master Plan.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee Members or the public.

Dan Power, representing Hingham Unity Council, asked about the process to date. The Chair confirmed that the group had been meeting routinely since November 2021. He suggested the presentation be added to the website. He then indicated that the presentation was consistent with what he understood about aging in place and supported more housing diversity. He said the Council looks forward to being more engaged.

Ray Estes, 92 Fort Hill Street, offered that the Committee is not really discussing affordable housing per se, but instead discussing whether detached ADUs should be allowed. He said that the Committee was reaching out to different constituents that may be helped by expanded ADU options.

The Chair responded to Mr. Estes. She said the Committee started by reviewing the current bylaw, which allows attached ADUs with certain limitations. She said the Committee's task is to consider whether detached ADUs should be allowed. The study to date largely involved municipal departments and potential impacts on public services. Since then, the group met with a representative from the Commissioner on Disabilities, and would continue to meet with others, including the Historic Districts Commission, Housing Trust, etc.

Amy Farrell, Chair of the Hingham Affordable Housing Trust, presented the potential benefits of more expanded ADU allowances. While not deed restricted affordable housing, they are likely to offer another option that would be relatively more affordable due to their smaller size. She asked that she make a more formal presentation at an upcoming meeting after soliciting feedback from the Trust in advance.

Debbie Edmundson, 55 Cottage Street, raised a concern that ADUs are only available to family members. She suggested that many people may wish to or continue to live in Hingham, but may not be able to because they don't have family. She said the restriction is quite limiting.

The Chair thanked Ms. Edmundson for raising the concern. She said the restriction was a focus of the 2018 ADU effort. She offered that the Committee could still discuss the option of lifting the restriction.

Ms. Rouleau recalled the pending legislation related to by-right ADUs for senior or households with disabilities where caregivers may be needed. The Chair noted that the bylaw defines family in a particular way to include caregivers.

Jennifer Choo, 374 East Street, asked why the Town would want to limit rentals. She thought that the landscape may have changes since the original bylaw was adopted and the Town may be more open now.

The Chair said the prior discussion suggested that there may be a difference in the nature of the relationship and impact on neighbors between unknown and known parties. She suggested that there were counterparts to those concerns. She thought the Town was just reluctant to make such a significant change and opted to take more of an incremental change.

Mr. Allen said the most important restriction is the owner-occupancy requirement and common utility metering, so that the primary property owner is invested. Discussion followed about short term rentals.

Mr. Estes said that it would be helpful for emergency responders to be able to have separate metering of utilities. He said the main impetus for the Study Committee was his Citizen's Petition. He said he has an existing cottage with separate utilities. He likes that it can be an opportunity for more affordable housing in Town and would support a larger goal of effort. He added that some in Town may not support enabling those from outside of Hingham to live her.

Brian Stack, 654 Main Street, said he sees an issue with unpoliced de facto additional dwelling units in Town. He thinks there are legal problems with the cap and potential lawsuits. He added that there are many issues to consider, particularly if a homeowner can rent to the general public or operate short term rental.

Mr. Shriver, Chair of the Historic Districts Commission, reviewed the history of the Historic Commission, created in 1966. There are currently six main historic districts in Hingham, including approximately 700 properties. An additional 800 properties are listed on the Historic Registry.

The Historic Districts Commission only has purview over the properties located with a defined district. The Historic Districts Commission identifies and protects the physical character of older buildings and their settings in historic districts and to assure that modifications will not be incompatible. The purview of the Historic Districts Commission is to ensure the functions listed above are protected from the exterior in areas that are viewed from the public realm (public street or other public area).

He stressed that the use of the project is not within the Commissions purview, so as such the Accessory Dwelling Use would not be a consideration for the Commission.

The Committee then discussed the upcoming meeting schedule. Members agreed to meet more frequently going. The Chair suggested that the later June meeting could focus on legal issues. The

group discussed the draft development process. Ms. Wentworth offered that most meetings were still held remotely, but staff could screen share language drafted in advance of the meeting. The draft could include certain decision points embedded for the Committee to consider.

The meeting was then adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Meeting Materials:

PowerPoint Presentation on Demographic and Housing Considerations