

Connecticut River Valley Council of Elected Officials
Minutes
April 27, 2006

Attendance: Please see attached list.

I. The meeting was called to order at noon in the Chester Meeting House. Lunch was catered by the Wheatmarket.

II Guests

Speaker: David Fink - Partnership for Strong Communities

Chairman Miller introduced David Fink, a representative of Partnership for Strong Communities which is a Hartford-based family trust funded by the proceeds of the sale of the former Melville Corporation. The trust is addressing the problem of how to provide low income housing.

Mr. Fink noted that housing costs in Middlesex County are above the state average. Housing costs statewide rose 62% while wages rose 18%. The state has lost 23% of the 20 to 34 year old population. Connecticut is in 47th place in the nation for dwelling units per capita.

Mr. Fink outlined a recent change in legislation in Massachusetts that would allow for an overlay zone ¼ mile from a town center or railroad station whereby the state would reimburse the town with \$600,000 plus \$5,000 per building permit plus the cost above taxes of educating any children if 500 units of housing could be built at increased density including affordably priced units. A limited amount of equity is allowed at the time of sale.

Phil Miller asked if it would be an answer for situations like the New Haven Housing Authority purchasing property in other communities.

Tony Bondi asked what the requirements for occupancy are. He cited his daughter who is a married working mother. The family cannot afford to live in Haddam.

Mr. Fink replied that 60 to 80% of median income is usual. Some communities go to 100 to 120% of median. In Connecticut, 257,000 households earn 80% of median and have to spend more than 30% of their income on housing. The "Housing Wage" needed to afford housing is a minimum of \$19.30 per hour.

Tony Bondi asked if a Housing Authority is needed. It was agreed that municipal capacity is a factor. Many towns do not have infrastructure in place for high density building.

Mike Pace inserted that he prefers quasi-public units that can remain public over the long term.

Linda Krause related the recent history of housing policy in Connecticut. The housing boom of the eighties led to the Affordable Housing Act of 1989. The Department of Housing created Housing Partnerships in every town. In the early nineties the economy slowed, fewer workers were needed and the need became less apparent. Since 2000, the cycle has been up again.

Chairman Miller asked how a town can proceed.

Mike Pace recounted a heartwarming Town Meeting in Old Saybrook that approved the concept of working with Social Services and the schools to help provide housing. Selectman Pace noted that Old Saybrook has working families with school

children living in motels. The town is looking for its first opportunity to create “attainable” rental housing.

As Tony Bondi sought more details about the Massachusetts model, David Fink reminded the group that he is seeking input. He encouraged members to work out details that could work locally and to contact both the local legislators and the HOME Connecticut Steering Committee.

B. Secretary of State Susan Byciewicz did not arrive.

III. Business

A. Legislation

Chairman Miller distributed flyers from Rep. Simmons.

IV Old Business

A. Meeting Locations

It was agreed that the meeting hall atmosphere encouraged more interaction with the speaker. Tom Marsh offered the Meeting House as a permanent location. Brad Parker suggested that continuing to move around might encourage more people to attend. He suggested that the members who do not choose to attend might send another board member. The next meeting will in Old Lyme in a private room.

B. Workforce

Chairman Miller announced that he has learned that the most effective way to get a response from Bill Villano is to contact him through Rep. Brian O’Connor.

Respectfully submitted,

Wini Olson on behalf of
Alan Bergren, Secretary