

From the Deerfield Planning Board
Conversation on Housing Options and
Proposed Deerfield Center Village District

The Planning Board is exploring if and how to expand the availability of housing in town. There are many stories of older and younger residents, or those with life event changes such as reduced employment earnings, death, or divorce, unable to find affordable housing options in Deerfield. On Wednesday April 8th, members of the Deerfield Planning Board and local residents braved an early spring snowstorm to revisit the discussion of “workforce” and other housing options and also the proposed Deerfield Center Village District.

George Reagan, Administrator, Housing Awareness Program with the NH Housing Finance Authority, joined the group and offered insight and experiences on the State’s workforce housing law and how it has played out since the law became effective in January 2010. The process started with *Britton v Chester* in 1991 when the NH Supreme Court decided that the Town of Chester’s local land use regulation was too restrictive to allow a variety of housing in town. The Court decided that the proposed housing development could be built.

The State’s workforce housing law strongly encourages municipalities to provide “reasonable opportunities” for a variety of owner occupied housing solutions in the majority (51%) of the town. Several statewide organizations, including the NH Business and Industry Association advocated passage of the law in 2008. At present, other than single family and duplex options, Deerfield zoning allows for the conversion of residential buildings that existed prior to March 2010 to a multifamily building with up to five residential units. The Town’s ordinance also allows for accessory apartments.

The Board and those in attendance agreed an update to the Town’s 2008 housing assessment to reflect current housing types and prices was an appropriate first step. The Planning Board will continue its discussion of housing options and the proposed village center district during the next few months and invites interested citizens to attend its meetings on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 7 PM at the GBW town office building. Please join us.

For additional information, please contact a member of the Planning Board or Gerald Coogan, AICP, Planning Consultant at gicoogan@gmail.com or 748.5580

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