

March 16, 2021

To the Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, Vice Chairs and remaining members of the Planning & Development Committee:

I am Virginia Harger, a Shelton resident for 65+ years, an elected member of Shelton's Planning & Zoning Commission since 2005 and its chair since December, 2017.

As I was unable to present my comments via Zoom at the Planning & Development Committee public hearing which convened at 10 a.m. on March 15 before it was closed shortly after 10 a.m. on March 16, 2021, I am sharing them with you in written format.

My comments today concern Proposed House Bills 6611, 6612, 6613, 6107, and proposed Senate Bills 1024 and 1027, none of which I am in favor of.

After reading these particular bills, I point out the following:

In HB 6611, lines 63-73, the bill indicates that an assessment be made by the Office of Policy and Management "of the state-wide need for affordable housing to determine the regional need base for each planning region". The determination would be based on something called a data set published by HUD. The bill does not state the date of the data set, so should we assume it would be the most recently published data set and how often is the data set updated by HUD?

In HB 6612, lines 118-121, the bill indicates that "a municipal system be established for the creation of development rights and the permanent transfer of such development rights, which may include a system for the variance of density limits in connection with any such transfer". That language seems to allow a change in density if such a transfer takes place without the approval of a Planning & Zoning Commission.

In HB 6613, language in lines 95-99 indicate that accessory apartments and a building with four or more dwelling units would be permitted by right. Lines 190-193 state that an accessory apartment could be detached from a proposed or existing principal dwelling and located on the lot of the principal dwelling. To not allow abutting property owners a chance to comment is not appropriate. Who would like to be the homeowner who looks out the window or arrives home one day to see a foundation being dug for a structure he or she had no knowledge of?

In SB 1024, language in lines 368-372 and in SB 1027, lines 182-196 indicate that accessory apartments would be allowed as of right. Again, to not allow abutting property owners a chance to comment is not appropriate.

Finally, in HB 6107, language in lines 157-158 prohibits the continuation of any nonconforming use, building or structure existing at the time of the adoption of such regulation. I feel this is a broad brush stroke and each situation should be evaluated separately by the municipalities zoning commission.

While a need exists for affordable housing, if state legislators truly want to improve housing opportunities and provide for the creation of more affordable housing units, I would suggest that the 40-year deed restriction be revoked or at least reduced to a more manageable set aside, such as 10 years. If you in your personal life wanted to make an investment, would you consider a program that does not permit you to fully receive the benefits of your investment for 40 years? I do not think so. Keeping a 40-year deed restriction gives developers little or no incentive to include affordable housing in any new housing proposals.

I respectfully request that, at the proper time, members of the Planning & Development Committee vote to reject Proposed House Bills 6611, 6612, 6613, 6107, and proposed Senate Bills 1024 and 1027.

Thank you for your time and attention to my concerns.