

Monday, March 15, 2021

**CT General Assembly
Planning and Development Committee
Public Hearing**

**HIRAM W. PECK III, AICP, CFM
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
TOWN OF AVON, CT**

Dear Committee Chairs, Vice Chairs and members:

The following is submitted in Support of:

- **H.B. No. 6107 'AN ACT CONCERNING THE REORGANIZATION OF THE ZONING ENABLING ACT AND THE PROMOTION OF MUNICIPAL COMPLIANCE'**
- **H.B. No. 6613 'AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESSORY APARTMENTS, MIDDLE HOUSING AND MULTIFAMILY HOUSING'**

In addition I wish to also Support with Amendments

- **S.B. No. 1026 'AN ACT CONCERNING TRAINING FOR CERTAIN PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICIALS'**

Senator Cassano, Representative McCarthy Vahey, Senator Hwang, Representative Zullo, and distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today on **H.B. No. 6107, H.B. No. 6613, and S.B. No. 1026** to support efforts to increase housing opportunity in Connecticut. My name is Hiram Peck and I am a resident of Woodbury CT. I am the Director of Planning and Community Development for Avon, CT at this time.

I am a member of the statewide HOMEConnecticut Campaign to expand housing opportunity in Connecticut and am a professional planner with certification for over 25 years. We build our agenda using a consensus process and it represents a wide variety of bipartisan partners. We, alongside many other partners in the state, know that safe, affordable housing is critical for our state's residents and our economy. When our state's residents have stable housing, their economic and health outcomes improve. These improvements and benefits are passed along to the communities in which we all live.

We respectfully request that the committee:

- **Support H.B. No. 6107 An Act Concerning the Reorganization of the Zoning Enabling Act and the Promotion of Municipal Compliance.** H.B. 6107 promotes the state's policy

- goal of encouraging all municipalities to plan for multi-family housing and housing affordable to low- and moderate-income families. Further, it requires zoning regulations affirmatively further the purposes of the federal Fair Housing Act and removes the highly subjective “character of the district” consideration, which has been used as the basis of discriminatory zoning decisions. All reasonable aspects of “character” are fully covered by other sections of § 8-2, including considerations of historic preservation, environmental impact, density, scale, location, and the suitability of uses.

These amendments are essentially as were viewed favorably during the last session of the Legislature. We hope the revisions are agreed upon once again as the difficult land use issue that existed last year are even more pressing at this time.

- **Support H.B. 6613 An Act Concerning Accessory Apartments, Middle Housing and Multifamily Housing** Permitting ADUs and small multifamily housing more broadly and without undue restrictions will promote the incremental growth of our lower cost housing supply, bringing new residents to town centers and transit station areas while continuing to allow municipalities to control the physical and site characteristics of their community through their zoning ordinance, the health code, building code, and other regulations.

A simple review of how existing regulations require significant time and expense provided instructive facts in this matter. Well drafted regulations, such as a form based code could provide would allow for the less expensive and still well constructed, safe dwelling units for those residents in our towns.

- **Support with amendments S.B. 1026 An Act Concerning Training for Certain Planning and Zoning Officials.** S. B. 1026 allows municipalities to require members of planning and zoning commissions to complete four (4) hours of training annually, at least two of which must include training on housing alternatives or affordable housing. ***We recommend this bill be amended to increase the minimum hours of training to five (5) hours annually and require all members of planning and zoning commissions in Connecticut meet this minimum standard. We recommend the bill be amended to direct the state to develop such a training curriculum, to be administered in-person and online.***

While efforts from the CT Bar Association have been well received in the past it is clear by the significantly increased attendance at the 2021 CBA session that additional resources are needed to serve the many commissioners who did not or were not interested in attending. Estimates based on most recent figures indicate that only about 11% of local commissioners attend these sessions which are held every 2 years. The significant need for far more commissioners to receive training, especially along the lines of safe affordable housing are badly needed from my professional perspective.

Please vote to approve this amended bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Hiram W. Peck III

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Avon, CT