

**Public Testimony of Ross Tartell to Planning and Development
Regarding S.B. 1024, S.B. 1027, H.B. 6107, H.B. 6611, H.B. 6613**

I do not support S.B. 1024, S.B. 1027, H.B. 6107, H.B. 6611, H.B. 6613

There is no question that Connecticut, as well as most of the United States, has a well-documented history of zoning as a way to create racial segregation. Those issues must be addressed if Connecticut is to fulfill its potential as a place to live for all and a state that can regain its preeminent position as a great place for business.

These bills, unfortunately, will not enable Connecticut to redress past wrongs, nor will they create a way forward to create towns that are financially viable, vibrant and great places to live.

The impact of these bills is to usurp local autonomy and quash possible collaboration between the state and local municipalities. They will create an environment of polarization that will prevent attainment of productive outcomes that resolve critical social and racial issues, and that also create economically viable towns that are attractive and have housing that is economically accessible.

In Wilton we have just completed a Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), developed by Wilton's Planning and Zoning Commission, to focus our plans for future growth and that also highlights our town's need for diversified housing. It is the basis for the next step, a town master plan, that includes strategies to enable seniors to downsize and stay in town, and help young or less affluent families find our town affordable. We envisage that the POCD, in combination with the master plan, will create a future for Wilton that has the critical population to support a vibrant business community and a stronger tax base that reduces the property tax on the individual homeowner.

These outcomes will be unattainable as those citizens are mobilized by the loss of local control that is embedded in this legislation. They will likely fight against any forces of change and all sides will "dig in" and become intransigent. If that happens, substantive change will come to a standstill.

I would like to suggest that to create an atmosphere where we can all move forward requires a different strategy.

- Create working groups to identify carrots, instead of sticks. These discussions would bring in both sides with a focus on finding common ground.
- Find ways to enable private and public partnerships between municipalities and developers so a wide range of housing can be created that meets local needs and is influenced by what will work on a regional basis.
- Create educational efforts to strengthen the skills of public officials, especially Planning and Zoning Boards, and commissions that have environmental regulatory responsibilities. Part of the educational efforts should be to train people in constructive conflict resolution skills as well as to help them build insight into local regulations and best practice. A number of State Representatives have conducted educational forums and that discussion has also been supported by Local libraries and CCM. These educational efforts need to be publicized and systematized so citizens have an opportunity to view a common set of facts, and then use those facts for making recommendations and setting strategy.

- Influence town planning processes by using institutional resources to point out approaches that create an inclusive society, yet also give citizens control over where they live. Examples of supporting organizations would be CCM, WestCog and educational institutions.
- Create a process that gradually increases the targets for each municipal entity, and that provides consequences for progress.

Connecticut, and our nation, are at a cultural crossroads. There is an emerging consensus, that the society we have had in the past is not the society we want or need going forward. That motivation can be harnessed to create a future.

S.B. 1024, S.B. 1027, H.B. 6107, H.B. 6611, H.B. 6613 are threatening, coercive and motivate the citizens of almost every municipality to fight to protect local autonomy and what they perceive are the disastrous impacts of these bills on their towns.

Connecticut must find a way to move forward. But – that path will not be found through the enactment of these bills. I do not support these bills as written.

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