

Dr. Richard S. Williams
133 Hnath Rd.
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Subject: Testimony Against All Proposed Bills that Infringe upon Home Rule of Local Zoning - 6611; 6612; 6613, 1024; 1026; 1027; 6107 and any other similar bills that may be proposed in the future

I have been a resident of Connecticut for 45 years and have lived in Ashford for 23 years. Since I retired, I have been active in serving my Town. Presently I am the Vice Chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC); Chair of the Economic Development Commission (EDC); Chairman of the Committee that wrote the 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD); and a founding member of Ashford Our Town – Our Future, a group seeking to involve residents in serving their Town. In short, I am invested in and care deeply about what happens to our Town and the State of Connecticut.

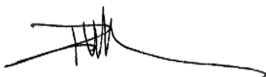
Other than a brief time in Ohio, I have lived all of my life in New England. The hallmark of New England is local governance. This is especially so for the 169 towns and cities in Connecticut. I know every elected official, appointees, and Town employees by their first name. It is common for me to get a call or an email asking for my input on an inquiry or issue. This kind of close association would be impossible if the management and ruling were done at a State level. I feel it is imperative that we preserve Home Rule.

The 2015 POCD, which I helped write, specifically addresses expanding affordable housing in Ashford. The PZC, of which I am Vice Chair, is presently developing an affordable housing plan for the Town. Our affordable housing stock is similar to the surrounding towns and we are primarily a bedroom community with the largest employer UConn. Also, a number of our apartments are occupied by UConn students. I am presently leading the effort to update the PZC Land Use Regulations. We have reduced the minimum residential lot size and have approved accessory apartments in residential zones, both of which will significantly improve affordability.

The PZC is known for its willingness to work with residents and developers to find ways for them to succeed. I recently worked with a resident that wanted to add a large in-law apartment to their primary residence that was larger than currently permitted. We instead allowed them to succeed by turning the property into a duplex dwelling. I am also working with our lake districts to allow responsible development while preserving the water quality of the lakes. Before Covid closed the Town Offices, we met every Wednesday evening to answer questions about building proposals and how it can be accommodated within the existing regulations. All of the efforts of the PZC are volunteer without any pay. We serve because we care about the citizens and our Town. Centralizing planning and zoning at the state level will kill local planning zoning and the support we give our citizens.

As Chair of the EDC, we are actively seeking commercial and industrial development in specifically identified zones. It is about generating local jobs. People do not look at affordable housing first. It is jobs first, then they look at the schools, then it is transportation, and lastly it is housing. No one will move to Ashford just because there is affordable housing! State control of zoning will not create jobs!

I strongly recommend that all of these bills be rejected and shelved. Ashford has prospered for over 300 years with home rule and local control of zoning. Our POCD and Land Use Regulations promote responsible development while preserving our rural character. State centralized zoning would destroy our Town. Please respect our sovereignty.



Richard S. Williams