

**WARREN TOWNSHIP**

**46 MOUNTAIN BOULEVARD, WARREN, NEW JERSEY 07059**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**TO:** Echoes Sentinel, Courier News, Star Ledger, Independent Press, Warren Township Committee, Warren Cablevision, Warren Webmaster, Recorder Newspapers, Alternative Press, Renna Media, Warren Patch, Warren Showcase, Warren-Watchung Connection, Greater Media NJ, NJN Publishing, Town Square Media, NJ Press Media, WKXW 101.5, WMGQ 98.3, WMTR 1250 AM

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Warren Township Moves Forward with Affordable Housing Plan**

On Wednesday morning, October 10, 2018, the Warren Township Committee approved an Affordable Housing settlement agreement with Fair Share Housing Center, the advocacy group that negotiates for the State. The agreement establishes a definite number of affordable and market-rate housing units the Township will be obliged to provide for by 2025.

The potential results of *not* settling the Affordable Housing litigation would be:

- The Court could strip the Township of its immunity from “builder’s remedy” claims — meaning that the developers create their own density.
- Developers could control the location, density, and other design features of developments, effectively removing all control from the Township and the Planning Board.
- Additional developers could be permitted to join in the case, thereby expanding the areas to be developed from those areas identified in the proposed settlement.
- Developers could be able to provide a lower percentage of affordable housing in each development than they have agreed to provide in the settlement, which would increase the number of market rate units and the overall units being developed in the Township.
- There is a risk that the obligation could be significantly increased, potentially adding well over 1,500 units, in addition to those provided for in the settlement.
- The Court may impose restrictions on sewer availability for any other development in various areas of the Township pending a resolution of the litigation.

More than 100 residents were on hand to hear the Committee vote 4:1 in favor of the settlement.

Deputy Mayor Gary DiNardo, Committeemen George Lazo and Mick Marion, and Committeewoman Carolann Garafola voted to approve the settlement. Mayor Victor Sordillo cast the sole vote against it.

Before casting her vote, Committeewoman Garafola said, “I think this is the best settlement we can get. The only way we can change this (outcome) is to go to the Supreme Court. This is the best deal in New Jersey.”

The favorable vote means the Township agrees to a compromise with Fair Share Housing Center to provide for (but not necessarily build) 362 affordable units and 616 market-rate units by 2025. That ratio, approximately 2:1, significantly minimizes the impact new development will have on the character of the Township over the next seven years.

Fair Share Housing initially sought to have the Township provide for a significantly higher number of affordable housing units and a 4:1 ratio of market-rate to affordable units. That would have called for the potential development of 6,650 total units, practically doubling Warren's current housing stock.

Had the Committee rejected the agreement, it would have had to fight the imposition of the higher number in court, which would open the Township to expensive litigation that might result in an even greater number of units and possibly a much more negative impact on the town.

Committeewoman Garafola and Committeeman Marion formed the Township subcommittee that negotiated the proposed settlement with Fair Share Housing Center over the course of three-and-a-half years. "At the end of the day," Committeeman Marion told the audience he considered the process a "sham," adding, "we did not decide where these places go or where they would be developed at all. We did as much as we could to fight that."

Committeeman Lazo agreed. "Our fight was a brutal fight," he said. "It was a sham. This was determined by the Supreme Court... the power was taken away from elected officials. And all we can do as elected officials is negotiate the best darn deal that we could. And I believe we did," he said, after "hours and hours and hours of arguing and negotiating."

Committeeman DiNardo, who participated in the meeting by phone, said a retired New Jersey Supreme Court judge told him the Committee shouldn't fight it in Court. "We'll be stuck with more than the original number," he said.

"My colleagues are 100% correct," the Mayor said. "We have a low probability of success," he said, with a likelihood of a high cost.

But, the Mayor said, "I do not accept those in power — Fair Share Housing, The State House and the Courts — telling us what our community should look like. It's absolutely wrong." He said he could not in good conscience support something that is being forced upon the Township.

"I'd rather fight and lose than not fight at all," the Mayor said before voting No.

Committeewoman Garafola said after the meeting, "Mick Marion and I have been on the subcommittee for three-and-a-half years, and I personally lived through Rounds One and Two of the Affordable Housing movement. This brought us Rolling Hills, Whispering Hills with a 3:1 ratio (of market rate units to Affordable units) in the center of town and Greenwood Meadows, at the western end of town, with a 13:1 ratio! We have done much better on this agreement and those projects brought in wonderful people who have made Warren a richer community."

"We took all of your thoughts into consideration," Committeeman Lazo told the audience, calling the settlement, "second to none in the State of New Jersey."

During a public comment period preceding the Committee's discussion of the resolution and the vote, more than a dozen residents expressed disapproval of the proposed settlement, chiefly because of

concerns regarding individual developments and their locations in the Township. Some residents were also frustrated that details of the plan had not been made fully public ahead of the vote.

Several members of the Committee addressed those comments and pointedly expressed similar frustration, including Committeeman Lazo, who said, “we couldn’t share all the information because (the settlement) was in litigation.”

Committeeman Marion expressed his own frustration with the process, saying he cast his Yes vote, “reluctantly and unwillingly.”

Mayor Sordillo said his major concerns, for the 1,048 new housing units to be built in Warren, were the concentration of the developments, the increase in traffic, the impact to our schools and public services, and damage to the environment.

Township Committee members have worked diligently and to the best of their abilities to minimize the impact of Warren’s Affordable Housing obligation on the community.

Residents can find maps and other details of the proposed developments on the [Affordable Housing page](#) of the Township website.

  
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