



Warren Township Committee Holds Special Meeting Regarding Proposed Affordable Housing Settlement Plan

More than 75 township residents attended Monday night's meeting to hear about — and comment on — a proposed agreement regarding Affordable Housing between Fair Share Housing Center and Warren Township. The agreement, if approved by the Township Committee on October 10, would set the number of affordable and market-rate housing units the Township would have to accommodate by 2025, the statutory end of the Third Round of the State mandated program.

The agreement would require the municipality to provide for (but not necessarily see built) 362 Affordable Housing (AH) units and 616 market-rate units over the next seven years.

Members of the Township Committee, other officials, and several individuals who spoke at the meeting, consider the proposed settlement to be one of the best, if not the best, in the region. Fair Share Housing Center, which advocates for AH on behalf of the State, initially sought 1,330 affordable units, compared with the 362 this proposed agreement calls for.

Township Planner John Chadwick pointed out that state guidelines propose a 4:1 ratio of market-rate units to affordable units. Which, at Fair Share Housing Center's original number, might have led to 6,650 new housing units in town, nearly doubling our current population.

The number of newly constructed homes called for in the proposed agreement, 1,048, is closer to a 2:1 ratio of market rate to AH units, significantly minimizing the impact these developments would have on the character of the Township.

Of the residents who spoke at last night's meeting, opinions on the proposed settlement was mixed, though nearly all thanked Township officials for their hard work over the past three years and expressed frustration with the State for unfairly pressuring municipalities into such agreements.

Mayor Victor Sordillo told the audience that his inclination was to reject the settlement and fight it out in court, even though the probability of success is low and the fight would be costly. He quoted Winston Churchill's opinion that lost

causes are the ones worth fighting for and settling could empower the State and Courts to impose future burdens of this nature on the Town.

After the meeting, Committeewoman Carolann Garafola said, “As a member of the subcommittee on Affordable Housing for over three years, and after sitting on both the Warren Township Sewerage Authority and serving as the chair of the Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority, coming to an agreement on providing affordable housing has been a tedious, frustrating, and rewarding experience.”

“During this three-year-plus process we have looked at all the angles,” said Committeeman Mick Marion, who serves on the Township Committee’s Affordable Housing subcommittee with Garafola. “Our goal has always been to comply with the law while minimizing its impact on our community. We have reduced overall new construction with Township sponsored projects that don’t require a market-value component, for example, and we have spent considerable time working on the locations of these projects to minimize disruption of local neighborhoods, siting them throughout the Township to not subject any one area to overdevelopment”.

The Township Committee will vote on whether to accept the proposed agreement at an 8 a.m. meeting on Wednesday, October 10, in the Susie B. Boyce Meeting Room. The meeting is open to the public.

“Warren Township elected officials have taken this planning seriously. There have been significant challenges in this process and any decision we make on October 10 reflects those formidable challenges,” Garafola said.

Township Attorney Jeffrey Lehrer's Outline of the History of Affordable Housing in the Township and a general discussion of the numbers to be contained in the proposed settlement is posted on the [Affordable Housing page](#) of the Warren Township website. A [video of the meeting](#) has been posted on the Township website and minutes of the meeting will be posted after the Committee votes to approve them at its November 14 meeting or earlier.

46 Mountain Boulevard | Warren, NJ 07059 | warrennj.org

Follow us on

