

SALISBURY AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING - WEBINAR

FEBRUARY 4, 2021 - 7:30 – 9:30PM (VIA ZOOM)

Present: Jennifer Kronholm Clark, Chairperson; Abeth Slotnick, Vice-Chairperson; Jim Dresser, Mary Close Oppenheimer and Ethan Watt (later joined by Pom Shillingford and Pat Hackett)

1 Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 7:32pm by J. Kronholm Clark, Chairperson. She
2 announced that the meeting was being recorded and will be available on the Town website:
3 (www.salisburyct.us) and the SAHC Facebook page. She explained how the webinar format
4 works. The purpose of the meeting is to describe the new design of Holley Place (Block); an
5 application being brought forward by the Salisbury Housing Committee. The meeting would
6 begin with a quick review of the Salisbury Affordable Housing Plan of 2018 (available on the
7 Town website.) The second part of the meeting would be to explain the changes to the design
8 of Holley Place. A question and answer period would follow, with questions to be submitted via
9 “chat.” J. Kronholm Clark asked all commenters to identify themselves by name and explained
10 that all comments would be limited to 3 minutes. She described the various housing
11 organizations in the Town: Salisbury Affordable Housing Commission, Salisbury Housing
12 Committee, Salisbury Housing Trust and Habitat for Humanity (all descriptions available on the
13 Town website Affordable Housing page.)

14 M. Close Oppenheimer began by commending the Salisbury Planning & Zoning Commission on the
15 new zoning regulations which allow higher density in town centers. She explained how Area
16 Median Income (AMI) is defined. The goal of the Salisbury Affordable Housing Plan (2018) is to
17 create 75 Affordable Housing units over a 10 year period. The information is available at:
18 (www.salisburycthousing.org).

19 J. Dresser explained that providing Affordable Housing requires public support, ample funding and
20 town-owned or privately donated properties. Due to the intense competition for funds, larger
21 developments are favored, due to their economies of scale. He pointed out that there are not
22 50 Town-owned properties suitable for Affordable Housing. Private land could be used, if
23 donated to the local housing organizations. He referred to the 2 community workshops held in
24 2017. Seven of the properties most favored were included in the Town Housing Plan in 2018
25 which was adopted by the Selectmen. All of the minimum numbers of units proposed at the 7
26 sites are needed to meeting the goal of creating 75 units of affordable housing. He noted that
27 all of the needed units cannot be built on the Pope property alone. He asked that other
28 properties, if any, be brought to the attention of the SAHC.

29 Jocelyn Ayer, Board Member, Salisbury Housing Committee, described the new Holley Place design
30 and the former design. The new design is a smaller mass and has setback wings. It is now in a

31 “Federal” style and symmetrical. It has been reduced from 13 to 12 units and parking has been
32 reduced by 2 spaces. All 12 units will be Affordable Housing, using the 80% AMI guidelines. This
33 location was approved by Town vote, 236 to 65. Holley Place is in the Salisbury Housing Plan,
34 meeting the 12-18 units suggested. The proposal needs to be competitive for State funding.
35 She recognized Pom Shillingford’s work on traffic data, in addition to the professional traffic
36 study that was done. Ms. Ayer indicated that the Aquifer Protection area will be protected.
37 Multi-family residential use is not prohibited. Stormwater runoff from this site will not enter the
38 nearby lake. Building on this site in the village is more environmentally friendly and less impact.
39 This site’s inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places does not preclude building on the
40 site. The final design will be submitted to the State Historic Preservation office. She added that
41 they are looking at how to incorporate the stone wall and sitting area into the new design.
42 Regarding funding, the SHC currently has a pre-development loan of \$257,000 from the CT Dept.
43 of Housing. Once special permit approvals for the project are obtained, they will apply to the
44 State and other grant sources for construction and permanent financing. The Town has agreed
45 to lease the land for this project and will not be asked for construction or permanent financing.
46 The SHC works with a professional housing development consulting team.

47 First Selectman, Curtis Rand, explained the history of the Pope family property and how the
48 agreement came about. There was no specific plan for the use of the property, pre-purchase.
49 Information was sought about the land, in addition to what was already known. He described
50 the advisory role of the Pope Committee which was formed in 2018 with members from the
51 P&Z, Recreation, Inland Wetlands, Board of Finance, Affordable Housing and Historic District
52 Commissions. He described the work of the Pope Committee. In addition to the regular
53 meetings, all open to the public, there were specific public invitations, including a site walk on
54 the property with trails. A great deal of information was gathered and has been presented to
55 the Board of Selectmen in a 92-page evaluation. (The report is available on the Town website)
56 They were not charged with making conclusions or recommendations. The Pope Report has
57 been delivered to 3 Commissions: Affordable Housing, Recreation and Inland Wetlands for
58 review. The Board of Selectmen would like to know what their level of interest is and where it is
59 on the property. The public will be made aware of those ideas and there will be public
60 meetings. Any proposed uses would go to a Town meeting. He mentioned that the parking area
61 near Factory Pond will not be paved. They would consider other ideas for parking in the area.
62 Mr. Rand indicated that he would like to try for 5% Affordable Housing units, the 75 units in the
63 SAH Plan, to try to meet the State goals locally on various sites.

64 J. Kronholm Clark opened the meeting for questions.

- 65 1) Question for Curtis Rand: How did the Holley Block location become the top ranked choice and
66 when? Answer: At the public forum held in February, 2018, it was voted on and was the most
67 popular. The results are on the Town website.
- 68 2) What financials will be available to the public such as building costs, operating model, disclosure
69 of sources of funds, investors, for profit or not for profit, and will there be local contractors?
70 Jocelyn Ayer answered: This is a completely not-for-profit venture; there will not be investors;

71 the funding will come from State grants; and the SHC has a lot of experience building and
72 managing rental housing.

73 3) There was a question about how many people were attending this meeting; the answer was
74 159, including the 10 panelists.

75 4) Will the rental rates remain as Affordable Housing in perpetuity? Answer: yes.

76 5) What will the limits be on investor groups? Answer: there will be no investor groups. The units
77 will be deed-restricted, monitored and affordable in perpetuity.

78 6) Is there an option to construct and sell units as affordable units instead of rental? Answer: No

79 7) What expert has reviewed the financial plans and has certified that both the building model and
80 the operating model are valid, defensible and achievable? Answer: They have a professional
81 housing development team, Housing Enterprises, who work with non-profits and all will be
82 reviewed by the State or other public funding source.

83 8) What is the issue with the Salmon Kill property, why not now, why later on? J. Kronholm Clark
84 answered that the need is to build on multiple parcels of land to meet the town's goals and not
85 count on one location. J. Dresser answered that the Pope property is an unknown, that it
86 sounds good because no one has spoken up against it yet and there are other competing uses
87 for it. J. Ayer answered that based on the support for Holley Block through the public forums in
88 2017 and 2018; the SHC has taken out a big pre-development loan to develop this project and
89 can't just move it to another site.

90 9) Is there a rendering of the rear of the building? J. Ayer answered no, not tonight. The
91 architecture team is working on it. It will be presented during the Planning & Zoning hearings
92 and concerns will be addressed.

93 10) Why is Holley Block superior to Salmon Kill? J. Kronholm Clark answered that it is not superior;
94 they need to do both. J. Dresser answered that they are at totally different stages of
95 investigation; units at both sites are needed.

96 11) What will happen when there is construction at 8 Holley Place? J. Kronholm Clark answered
97 that there is no information known about that as it is privately owned.

98 12) If the rents are not market rate, how will they be sufficient to operate and maintain the
99 building? J. Ayer answered that the rents will be structured to cover the operating costs.

100 13) What is the floor plan and what is the process for selecting materials? J. Ayer answered that
101 they have a professional architecture team and they are working with the State Historic
102 Preservation office to make sure materials are durable and appropriate.

103 14) Given the fiscal state of Connecticut, is this project feasible now? J. Ayer answered that
104 Affordable Housing programs are usually bond-funded programs, but they won't know until they
105 get through the special permit process and apply.

106 15) Are there any plans for affordable housing with private landowner development? J. Dresser
107 answered that the SAHC is always looking for donated land and to please come to the SAHC with
108 those ideas.

109 16) Are there any solar energy considerations? J. Ayer and A. Slotnick answered that there are
110 provisions for solar panels on the roof.

111 17) How do you legally limit the units to just the residents of Salisbury? J. Ayer answered that they
112 don't; their experience is that people hear about these units when they become available by

113 word-of-mouth, driving by or calling the Town. Legally, they can't limit the units to just
114 residents of Salisbury.

115 18) Has there been any exploratory checking for contaminants, as there was demolition at one
116 time? J. Dresser answered he did not know.

117 19) What will it take to move this project forward? J. Ayer answered that the next step is the
118 Planning & Zoning Special Permit process, public hearings and then applying for the funding
119 needed.

120 20) Is it possible for a percentage of rents paid to be held in escrow for a down payment on a future
121 home purchase? J. Ayer answered that it is probably not feasible. She mentioned the Salisbury
122 Housing Trust which deals with affordable home ownership, if any tenants would be interested.

123 21) What is the timeline for the project, if approved, to be completed? J. Ayer indicated there is no
124 good answer for that because of the processes involved.

125 22) Is there an option to extend the lease? Curtis Rand answered yes, for 75 years at \$1 per year.

126 23) Does both rental and home ownership count towards the 10% Affordable Housing goal? J. Ayer
127 explained that the units can be both rental and ownership; they must be deed-restricted or
128 monitored for income eligibility. The Town Affordable Housing Plan has both types in the goal.

129 24) What is the distinction between Affordable Housing at the 10% State level and at 5%, which has
130 been discussed elsewhere? J. Dresser mentioned possible different outcomes, such as private
131 development without affordable housing being built.

132 25) If a private person decides to build something affordable, does that count towards the 10%
133 goal? J. Ayer answered yes, if deed-restricted.

134 26) Was the vote at the 2018 meeting for the lease option to the SHC or for the size of the Holley
135 Block building? J. Dresser answered that the construction of 12 to 18 units was specified.

136 27) What was the difference in the votes for Holley Block versus the Pope property? J. Ayer did not
137 have those numbers available for this meeting.

138 28) Would it make sense to update the community forum data from 3 years ago for any changes? J.
139 Ayer answered that these projects take time to develop and this one has taken 2 years to plan.
140 J. Dresser mentioned that future community forums could be held for any new properties.

141 29) What is the name of the housing consultant? Answer: Housing Enterprises.

142 30) Does the Northwest Hills Council of Governments have a role in the project now or in the
143 future? Answer: No, they are not involved.

144 31) What other restrictions come with State funding? J. Ayer answered that the funding would be
145 the same as it was for Sarum Village.

146 32) When does the Committee expect to present the plan to P&Z? J. Ayer answered that the Special
147 Permit application was submitted today.

148 33) Does the existing 2% affordable housing include the private schools? Answer: No.

149 J. Kronholm Clark switched from questions to comments, at this time.

150 1) Janet Andre Block expressed her gratitude for the work done and is 100% in favor of the
151 project. She suggested that people do their homework and read more about the project.

- 152 2) Barbara Friedman wanted clarification on the impact of the traffic feasibility study that was
153 done and gave her views on the traffic issues. Ethan Watt commented that the possible sale
154 at Pocketknife Square on Holley Place is private and plans are not known.
- 155 3) Pamela Wilson asked about construction costs on a per-square foot basis, the estimated
156 operating costs and who would pay excess costs in the future. J. Ayer answered that they
157 can't answer square foot costs now, as they are just in the permitting process. She
158 explained that they are working with experienced consultants and they also have experience
159 with Sarum Village. She also explained that AMI changes over time and the rents are
160 adjusted, not fixed.
- 161 4) C. Arthur Eddy asked if all current Affordable Housing units are rented. Answer: Yes, there
162 is a long waiting list.
- 163 5) Carole Dmytryshak commented on her years of experience with affordable housing in
164 Salisbury.
- 165 6) Brigitte Ruthman commented on the aging population here, her experience with the
166 Lakeville House Company and how this Holley Block project is essential.
- 167 7) Maurice Stucke mentioned that a letter signed by 131 neighbors outlined numerous
168 violations of the zoning regulations; he asked if the current proposal will address those
169 shortcomings. As this is a historic site, he asked if there are feasible alternatives. He asked
170 if the Town doesn't incur any significant costs then why did Sarum Village request \$20k from
171 the Board of Selectmen. With regard to the aquifer protection area, he asked what
172 percentage of the ground area will be left. J. Ayer answered that that Planning & Zoning will
173 determine if requirements are being met regarding zoning and the aquifer protection area.
174 She indicated that they are working with the State Historic Preservation office to get
175 approval to move forward. The \$20k was a grant from the Affordable Housing fund for
176 septic repair, not new construction, and was approved.
- 177 8) Cristin Gallup Rich commented that she would like to see some of the stone walls used. She
178 mentioned that more 3-bedroom apartments are needed. She recommended that they
179 should get a new lease for the project.
- 180 9) Robert LaBonne Jr. described the struggle to staff his store last year. He has been actively
181 looking for a place to buy in order to keep his people close to work. He expressed the need
182 for places for people to live in town.
- 183 10) Hannah Pouler commented that she liked to hear younger voices in the community and is
184 trying to spread awareness. She mentioned a petition in support of the Holley Block
185 proposal signed by over 350 people which will be presented at the P&Z hearings.
- 186 11) Susan Galluzzo commented on the negative impact of the Holley Block project on the
187 parking available to existing businesses and the need to support businesses that already
188 exist. She questioned the guarantee of parking spaces being available at the Holley Block
189 project. She also mentioned that the land behind 3 of the buildings is private property and
190 is not available to the Holley Block project. J. Ayer responded that they do meet the parking
191 requirements of the zoning regulations. They will present the parking study again at the
192 P&Z public hearings.
- 193 12) Will Muecke needs to understand the financial side of the project to show it is viable.

- 194 13) Roberta Willis mentioned that Affordable Housing has been worked on for 40 years. She
195 indicated that a lot of the financials would be overseen by the State. She talked about a
196 recent story in the Hartford Courant naming Salisbury as the #1 town in the State where
197 housing prices have gone up the most precipitously during Covid; sale prices have gone up
198 57%. She added that none of these projects are easy, but the need is there now and it is
199 urgent.
- 200 14) Steve Alquesta commented that from a younger person's perspective, it is hard to find a
201 place to live in the Northwest Corner. He supports the project; don't let the perfect be the
202 enemy of the good. He feels this project should be built and then move on to the other
203 sites.
- 204 15) Mr. Van Deusen is disturbed about destroying Centennial Park. He commented about the
205 parking there and he thinks the spot is dangerous. He would like to know what the total
206 costs will be for the entire project. J. Ayer answered that total costs are not completed yet.
207 Pom Shillingford talked about the traffic safety data she collected from 1995 to date. Of 21
208 accidents during that time in that area, there have only been 3 accidents there in the last 5
209 years since safety measures have been implemented and 2 of those involved parking cars.
210 Children do not have to cross the street when getting on or off the school bus. She
211 appreciates everyone's concerns, but the housing needs are apparent to make the lives of
212 children safer here.
- 213 16) Helen Ross thanked everyone for their work. She takes issue with the petition being sent
214 around on Facebook saying Holley Place is necessary to bring a certain sense of liveliness to
215 a somewhat passed over part of Lakeville. She feels the people who live in this part of
216 Lakeville do not feel it is passed over. She mentioned that part of the beauty is open spaces.
217 She thought Holley Block was going to be a small project integrated into the neighborhood.
218 She realizes that it is huge because of State funding. She suggested looking for other
219 sources of funding. She asked about the \$3.1M price for Holley Block that was used by the
220 Northwest Council of Governments. J. Ayer explained that it was an estimate used for the
221 Regional Housing Council.

222

223 Jennifer Kronholm Clark concluded the meeting. The application is now going to Planning &
224 Zoning for a Special Permit. There will be a public hearing during that process with an
225 opportunity to submit comments. Materials are available on the Town website. The SAHC
226 meets monthly on the third Wednesday of the month at 5:30 and the links are available on the
227 Town website.

228

229 A Motion to Adjourn the meeting was made by J. Dresser, seconded by E. Watt and unanimously
230 Approved. The meeting adjourned at 9:46pm.