

MINUTES

WORKFORCE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

JUNE 6, 2023

The Town Council acting in its capacity as the Workforce and Affordable Housing Committee convened for a meeting at 9:00 a.m. in the Ridgway Community Center at 201 N. Railroad Street. The meeting was held both in person and via Zoom Meeting, a virtual meeting portal, pursuant to the Town's Electronic Participation Policy.

In attendance were Kevin Grambley, Beth Lakin, Terry Schuyler, JT Thomas, Russ Meyer and John Clark. Polly Kroger was absent.

Town Clerk's Notice of Meeting dated May 26, 2023.

The Committee received two written reports from Ross Valdez, with Impact Development Services, acting as the third party administrator of the Ridgway Wetterhorn Homes affordable housing lottery and deed restriction process. The reports dated June 5, 2023 presented requests for consideration of an exception to Ridgway Wetterhorn Homes Affordable Housing Regulations and Guidelines 3.1.1.1 Qualified Employee and 3.1.1.2.a Qualified Individual with a Disability.

Through a PowerPoint presentation Mr. Valdez presented an overview of the process and explained the goal of the Wetterhorn Homes Affordable Housing Project is to provide high quality homes at affordable prices for working residents and their families, who make a living primarily from employment in the Ridgway (R-2) School District boundaries; whose income and assets are below certain targeted limits; and who choose to be a part of the local community. The household income is limited to a maximum of 60, 80 and 120 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) as designated at the initial sale. AMI is a statistical number based on household size and income for residents of Ouray County and used in guidelines as a basis for the Income Eligibility Tiers applied to specific Housing Units. The AMI is updated annually by Housing and Urban Development based upon an analysis of the best available data for county household incomes. Two homes have been designated at 60% AMI, one at 80% and the remainder at 120%, he reported.

The total household earned income must be at least 75% of the total household income, and unearned income cannot exceed 25% of the total. The AMI is based on household size, not the housing unit size. At least one member of the household must work in the Ridgway R-2 School District boundaries for a minimum of 1,200 hours over twelve months, and work at least 8 months per 12 at a minimum of 40 hours per month on a rolling basis. Applicants are allowed to apply for exceptions for most criteria when they believe there exists a legitimate and compelling reason why they should be excused from such criteria or allowed a modification, however he noted, the AMI and asset limits are firm. He explained there are 17 completed application, with six requesting exemption, five of them related to the minimum work standard.

There were questions from the committee.

Mr. Valdez noted the Workforce and Affordable Housing Committee hearing is a quasi-judicial proceeding. The Committee has powers and procedures resembling those of a court of law or judge, and are obliged to objectively determine facts, draw a conclusion and provide action.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Request for exception from Ridgway Wetterhorn Homes Affordable Housing Regulations and Guidelines §3.1.1.1 Qualified Employee from Dalton Carver

Mr. Valdez presented an exception request from Dalton Carver, explaining he has lived in Town for eight years and has demonstrated commitment, is a member of the volunteer fire department and a wildland fire fighter. He has worked the majority of the time in Ridgway, and now works for the US Forest Service based in Montrose. Though the service area does reach portions of the R-2 School District he does not currently possess physical presence to qualify for 40 hours a month.

There were comments from the committee members.

Beth Lakin moved to approve the exception request for Dalton Carver under 3.1.1.1. qualified employee based on finding the applicant has a long term commitment to residency, employment and community involvement within the County. Kevin Grambley seconded and the motion carried on a roll call vote.

2. Request for exception from Ridgway Wetterhorn Homes Affordable Housing Regulations and Guidelines §3.1.1.1 Qualified Employee from Erin Dashner

Mr. Valdez presented a request from Erin Dashner. He explained she has lived in Telluride for 20 years, with 19 of those as a teacher in their school district. She wishes to become “a part of the Ridgway community” and will continue to work in Telluride, and is not qualified due to lack of presence.

The applicant addressed the committee and explained she “spends most of the time on weekends in Ridgway” and due to a “housing crisis in Telluride” is seeking to purchase a home.

There were comments from the committee; questions to the applicant; discussion by the committee members.

Terry Schuyler moved to approve the exemption based on 11.1.3.2.b. JT Thomas seconded the motion. On a call for the vote Kevin Grambley, Beth Lakin and Russ Meyer voted no and John Clark, JT Thomas and Terry Schuyler voted yes. Based on the split vote the Town Attorney recommended the request be addressed at the end of the meeting.

Speaking from the audience Jennifer Cram stated she is concerned with setting a precedence by allowing an exception to an applicant that does not work in Town.

3. Request for exception from Ridgway Wetterhorn Homes Affordable Housing Regulations and Guidelines §3.1.1.1 Qualified Employee from Candice Dupont

Mr. Valdez presented the request from Candice Dupont who lives in Telluride and is requesting an exemption based on the challenge of finding housing in the region. He noted there is currently lack of physical presence.

There were comments from the committee; questions to Mr. Ross.

Speaking from the audience Terrace Seal stated she is opposed to “allowing residents from out of the county” explaining “you should allow Ouray County residents first” and “get them” into this housing.

Kristen Arnold stated she feels “it is important to focus on our community first” “prior to expanding to other communities”.

Beth Lakin moved to deny Candice Dupont an exception based on the fact she does not meet the General Policy Goal of providing high quality homes for working residents who make a living primarily in the R-2 District. Kevin Grambley seconded the motion which carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

4. Request for exception from Ridgway Wetterhorn Homes Affordable Housing Regulations and Guidelines §3.1.1.1 Qualified Employee from Maria Valadez

Mr. Valdez presented an exception request from Maria Valadez who has been employed since 2021 by Tri-County Health Network as a family support partner for families in Ridgway, Ouray County and San Miguel County. She currently lives in Montrose and is not qualified due to lack of physical presence of employment in the school district, although Ridgway is part of the Tri-County coverage area.

There were comments by the committee.

Russ Meyer moved to grant exception to Guidelines 3.1.1.1 Qualified Employee based on the finding the applicant has a long term commitment to employment pursuant to 11.1.3.2 b, Beth Lakin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Request for exception from Ridgway Wetterhorn Homes Affordable Housing Regulations and Guidelines §3.1.1.2.a Qualified Individual with a Disability from Mikael Madsen

John Clark recused himself from the discussion and vote, stating he has a personal relationship with the applicant.

Mr. Valdez presented a request from Mikael Madsen, a single father who has been a member of the community for the past seven years. He explained the Wetterhorn homes offers an opportunity to acquire a home on a fixed income related to a disability and Mr. Madsen is seeking this exception. The Department of Veteran Affairs considered him one hundred percent disabled in September of 2021. He does not meet the minimum work standard, having worked only five years out of the past seven.

Committee member Lakin moved to agree to the exemption request for Mikael Madsen under Guideline 3.1.1.1 based on the finding that the applicant meets the requirements of Guideline 3.1 Household Initial Qualification due to life circumstances that arose beyond the reasonable control of the household pursuant to 11.1.3.2.f. Kevin Grambley seconded and the motion carried unanimously

John Clark resumed sitting with the committee.

6. Continuation of exception request from Ridgway Wetterhorn Homes Affordable Housing Regulations and Guidelines §3.1.1.1 Qualified Employee from Erin Dashner

The applicant addressed the committee and stated she is a “local” with full time employment in Telluride and “considers this whole region as my home”. She reported she has “been in the same housing in Telluride for 15 years” and that “situation is no longer stable”.

Speaking from the audience Kristen Arnold stated she “recognizes housing in the region is hard to come by” but the committee should “prioritize local first and if it can’t be filled reach out to others”.

There were comments by committee members.

Beth Lakin moved, Russ Meyer seconded, to deny the exception request from Erin Dashner as she does not meet the General Policy Goal for working residents who make a living primarily from employment in the R-2 School District. The motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pam Kraft, MMC
Town Clerk