



The Chairman's Corner

by

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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Affordable housing. Let's keep in mind that a guide to understanding what that might mean boils down to essentially one thing: By definition, housing that is affordable should not exceed 30 percent of household income.

Over the past several years, a number of factors – the COVID-19 pandemic, for one example -- have contributed to the current situation, in which cost of buying a home or renting has risen dramatically, while wages have not kept pace.

From 2021 through 2021, the price of a single-family home in the county rose from \$239,000 to \$379,000, a 54.7 percent increase. The situation with rents hasn't been any better.

On the one hand, I am indeed happy to hear that folks find Columbia County a desirable place in which to live, however, the effect of the housing situation means that many of those who work in the county cannot afford to make their home here. That then creates a disconnect by which it becomes increasingly difficult for businesses to successfully attract a desirable workforce.

In many ways, Columbia County is not unlike other upstate counties primarily of a rural nature, in that in many regards it lacks the types of public utility infrastructure that helps contribute to the development of affordable housing. While acknowledging these and other obstacles, nonetheless, we are prepared to address these challenges.

To that end, in September the Board of Supervisors authorized a three-year contract with the Columbia Economic Development Corporation to further the development of affordable housing. The county will deploy some of the American Rescue Plan Act funding it has received.

Earlier in the year, the county Board of Supervisors and the CEDC conducted a virtual forum to discuss the Columbia County Housing Brief, created by the Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress. At the Wednesday, November 9 meeting of the Columbia County Board of Supervisors, I announced the formation of the Affordable Housing Task Force and the Advisory Resource Committee.

The Affordable Housing Task Force is comprised of the following:

Town of Stuyvesant Supervisor Ron Knott, co-chair; Town of Canaan Supervisor Brenda Adams, co-chair; Dan Barufaldi, Ghent Planning Board; Robert Gibson, County Commissioner of the Department of Social Services; Bill Hughes, community leader; Meredith Kane, Roe Jan Housing Task Force; Kirk Kneller, Kneller Insurance; Brandon Mullins, building code inspector; Rob Perry, City of Hudson Public Works; Tim Stalker, county planning board; Kelly Sweet, Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation; and Dennis Wedlick, BarlisWedlick Architects LLC.

The Advisory Resource Committee: William Gerlach, Columbia County Chamber of Commerce; William Fischer, Columbia County Fair Housing Officer; Al Bellenchia, Columbia County Habitat for Humanity; Lisa Gallina, Columbia Greene Cornell Cooperative Extension; Claire Cousin, Hudson/Catskill Housing Coalition; Christopher Nardone, Columbia-Greene Workforce New York; Michelle Tullo, City of Hudson Housing Justice Director; Board Representative, Columbia Greene Association of Realtors; Adam Bosch, Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress; and Michael Borges, NYS Rural Housing Coalition.

Next week, I'll back up and revisit the steps that brought us to this point and what might be expected moving forward.

This is part one of a two-part series.