

## **Shandaken Housing Smart Committee Meeting Minutes - April 28, 2025**

Attended by committee members: Deb Dolan, Sara Bayer, Philip Mones and Vickie Starr

Minutes taken by Vickie Starr

### **Guests:**

Kai Lord-Farmer, Senior Planner, Ulster County Planning Department

Kai's intern Anna

This month's meeting was devoted to Kai and Anna presenting their findings on the Housing Site Mapping project, a feasibility study to identify Shandake land parcels that have the potential capacity to accommodate more housing.

Projecting their findings on the big screen, Anna explained that using GSI, she mapped all of the parcels of Shandaken, eliminating parcels with environmental constraints such as slope gradient, wetlands, or being located in a flood zone.

Kai brought up the issue of Shandaken's zoning laws, and the fact that our zoning does not actually reflect the reality of how our town was built. For example, there are approx. 4000 parcels in the R 1.5 districts, but many of those actually conform to what the zoning requires. This underscores the need for the town to upgrade our zoning laws, ideally to reflect the reality of how our town is currently designed.

Sara asked what the remedy would be for bringing properties into alignment with the zoning code, and it determined that it would be easier to bring the zoning code into alignment with how the town was built, such as allowing homes to be built in certain areas on parcels smaller than 1.5 acres, and on other non-conforming lots. Another idea is moving some of the R3 parcels into R1.5, allowing more housing to be built on these parcels. Kai also used the example of Woodstock, where if you own a non-conforming lot, you are still allowed to build a single-family home "by right" provided it conforms to certain other zoning requirements, such as set-backs, etc..

The conversation also touched on the complexities of tax foreclosures, and what the process is for the potentially acquiring foreclosed properties.

Kai then identified the next steps:

- He will refine the list of potential sites, and will then identify 5-10 sites he feels could have the most potential for housing development, and present these findings to the town via a special meeting open to the general public.
- Once the town agrees to move forward with an effort to develop one of the sites, he will help us begin the process of engaging with potential funding partners and developers.

We closed the meeting discussing the possibility of introducing a Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT) for the town of Shandaken, using the funds collected to create a Housing Fund that could be used to help finance housing development. This would require filing a “Home Rule Request” with the state, and if that’s approved, having the town vote on a referendum to approve the new tax. We discussed the implications, including the fact that a RETT would cause the selling price on homes to increase. But Kai pointed out that a RETT could be designed in such a way that it’s only applied to homes being sold for over a certain price – for example, houses being listed for sale at a price that is more than the median home sale price in our town. Kai also pointed out that if the RETT can be used to fund local rehab grants, first-time homebuyer assistance, and ADU grants it would have more appeal to local residents.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, May 27 @ 6pm, and will feature a conversation with Mitch Hull from the Catskill Watershed Corporation. Mitch will be discussing the latest in green technologies around septic and sewer, followed by a brainstorming session for how to increase housing density while minimizing the impact on the environment caused by the increased need for waste management solutions.

8pm Vickie Starr motion to close the meeting. All were in favor, motion carried.