

**Scarsdale League of Women Voters
Statement on the Proposed Amendment of the Zoning Code relating to the
provision of Fair and Affordable Housing October 2011**

The following was entered into the record at the October 25, 2011 meeting of the Village Trustees.

“The League of Women Voters has a longstanding position in support of measures to increase the supply of housing in Scarsdale for a wider income range than now exists and therefore supports an affordable housing zoning code amendment. There remain certain provisions of this amendment that necessitate further comment from the LWVS.

We understand the proposed amendment of the Zoning Code relating to the provision of Fair and Affordable housing has been carefully reviewed and further clarified by the Planning Board and thereafter by the Board of Trustees with special notes for further clarification of the marketing and monitoring components. We also understand that this amendment will not limit FAH to Scarsdale residents and workforce but will be marketed broadly throughout the area. Our positions have historically included provisions for Scarsdale seniors, municipal and school employees and others on whose presence every community depends. We ask the Village to also continue to encourage affordable housing opportunities for Scarsdale residents and employees.”

The following is the League’s standing position and the history of studies and statements on affordable housing.

POSITION: Support measures to increase the supply of affordable housing in Scarsdale for persons of low to moderate income, with preference given to such groups as Scarsdale seniors, municipal and school employees. The League also supports alternative types of housing.

BACKGROUND AND ACTION

Local League efforts in housing date back to 1968 with a study of fair housing ordinances, which led to membership support of a fair housing ordinance for Scarsdale to help enforce federal and state anti-discrimination laws.

In 1971 the League issued a statement urging the Village Board to give consideration to providing low or moderate income housing in the village. “The crisis in housing is so urgent that all localities should give positive consideration to the feasibility of making some housing available to lower income families.” The League also noted that we have a sizable number of village employees who are unable to afford to live here.

When the issue of disposition of the Drake Road properties came up in 1972, the League encouraged the Village Board to retain these properties for recreational use and to consider providing lower cost housing for older residents.

In 1973 the League urged the Village board to undertake a new land use study, with special attention given to planning for the few remaining large parcels in the village. The League stated that these parcels “should not be subdivided and sold to private builders for the building of high-priced single family dwellings. This land could fulfill many community needs—from recreational open space to housing for a wider income range than now exists.”

In a statement to the Village Board in 1974 the League supported the Ethical Humanist Society’s proposal to build a 49 unit subsidized housing project on Saxon Woods Road and urged the Village Board to consent to the Urban Development Corporation to assume development responsibility for the plan.

In a 1975 statement to the Village Board the League favored “a diversity of housing types to suit a diversity of needs and tastes.” The League suggested to the Village that cluster, attached and multiple housing be considered, which would keep Scarsdale “environmentally sound and socially open and might improve the tax base.”

In 1981 the Polera Building Corporation proposed a project to be built on the Freightway site. In a letter to the Village Board the League expressed several concerns about the proposal but stated that the project addressed needs which existed in the village, including the need for more apartments, particularly for senior citizens.

In 1989 the League and the Town Club (now the Town and Village Education Forum) formed a joint study group to determine the need for and feasibility of providing affordable housing in Scarsdale. The committee developed a questionnaire which was sent to all Scarsdale senior citizens and full-time village and school employees. The results of the survey were analyzed by the Housing Action Council, a private non-profit agency which advises communities interested in building affordable housing. In addition, the committee surveyed 12 Westchester and lower Connecticut communities in which affordable housing has been built and which have affordable housing policies. The committee also surveyed all Village-owned land and privately owned undeveloped parcels which were possible sites for affordable housing.

In July 1990 the League issued a statement to the Village Board recommending that the Board endorsed the principles of providing affordable housing and recommended that they appoint a citizens’ committee to study in greater depth the complex factors involved. The League also suggested the following five options for the committee to consider:

- the building of affordable, smaller size and less elaborate units within market rate apartment complexes,
- the use of undeveloped public land for affordable housing units,
- the use of density bonuses to encourage developers to provide moderately priced housing,
- the legalization of accessory buildings for housing in area zoned for single family residences and
- the continued encouragement of shared housing for seniors and public employees.

In April 1991 the League reiterated its position to the Village Board. Soon after, the Village Board appointed an affordable housing committee which the League continues to monitor.

In 1992 the League reiterated its support of accessory apartment legislation intended to increase the supply of affordable housing alternatives. In 1998 the League urged the Village Board not to stray from the goal of providing an increased supply of alternative housing in Scarsdale intended to benefit seniors, retirees, relatives of residents, singles and community related employees.

In May 1993, the League urged the Village to:

- Use clustered attached and multiple-family housing
- Adopt an accessory apartment law
- Permit density bonuses for affordable housing development
- Consider the use of suitable publicly owned, undedicated land for affordable housing

In 1995, in response to the Village effort to maintain the residential quality of our community, we commended the Board for recognizing “invisible” home occupations. We wanted to see the law enacted in a manner that restricts the rights of individuals to the smallest degree possible.

In 1998 at a public hearing, the League was pleased that the Village Board enabled the Planning Board to approve Cluster subdivisions.

In 1998 in a statement related to the Village Board’s consideration of proposed zoning legislation on accessory apartments: “we urge the Board not to stray from the goal of providing an increased supply of alternative housing in Scarsdale to benefit seniors, retirees, relatives of residents, singles and community-related employees.”