

Mtn. Lakes Affordable Housing Advisory Committee Meeting

February 13, 2026

Members present: Borough Attorney Robert Oostdyk, Sandy Batty, Steve Castellucci, Sueanne Sylvester; Cynthia Korman, Ron Schornstein, Council Members Lauren Barnett and Tom Menard

January Minutes – Ron offered a correction that the committee voted to recommend him as a member, and added that a few members will go to the next Council meeting where 49 Bloomfield will be discussed. Minutes approved as corrected.

Mountain Lakes' 4th Round Affordable Housing Plan Status

Bob reported on the Feb. 9 Council meeting. The Council had four ordinances on the agenda. One dealt with developer fees and a second amended our land use ordinance to include rules on sales, pricing etc. to reflect changes in state law. A third ordinance amended the existing overlay zone to change density from 14 to 16. These three ordinances were passed on first reading.

The fourth ordinance regarding 49 Bloomfield Ave. was held. The Council has worked with property owner on this ordinance. Just before the meeting, the owner expressed concerns but so far, hasn't given specifics. If we don't hear, it will be introduced at the next Council meeting because of the State deadline. However, the State has indicated there might be some leeway to enable us to extend the time if necessary.

Affordable Housing Trust Fund Cynthia mentioned the change in the developer fee ordinance, increasing to 2.5% on commercial development. Bob said fees are calculated when CO is issued. The ordinance also covers how the trust fund can be spent. Cynthia will look at ordinance and brief the committee on allowed spending. Liz Laney has drafted general spending plan in accordance with State law for the Council to adopt. Some towns have decided to use their funds for nonprofit support, giving 100% support for group homes and other housing. We are permitted to use some of it to cover administrative costs. The Highlands Council awarded Mountain Lakes \$18,000 to create our housing plan, so this might free up trust fund money to use in other ways. In the past, we had planned to use it on accessory apartments. We had offered a \$20,000 incentive to homeowners to renovate apartments, and later raised it to be potentially \$50,000. No one applied for the incentive because of the 10-year deed restriction on affordable apartments and the lack of landlord control over tenant selection.

No changes were made to the 4th Round plan from what was submitted.

Members reported on the discussion at January 26 Council meeting. Most of the discussion centered on the appearance, which might look like apartments because of stacked housing and double doors. Ordinance will not govern exterior appearance details and the Planning Board cannot regulate appearance. The Planning Board will evaluate traffic and site design. If it were designated a redevelopment project, this would give us say over the appearance and construction details. However, this is not something to do now because we are not sure who the developer will be. Borough is talking to property owner, not developer. Tom, Steve and Sueanne will send pictures of stacked townhomes in other towns.

Next Meeting Friday March 13