

*To:* CT General Assembly Planning & Development Committee

*From:* Mary Close Oppenheimer, Lakeville, CT

*Re:* SB 1024, An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications Of Certain Land Use Officials And Certain Sewage Disposal Systems

*Date:* March 14, 2021

Chairman Cassano, Chairwoman McCarthy Vahey, Vice Chairman Needleman, Vice Chairwoman Goupil, Ranking Member Senator Hwang, Ranking Member Zullo, and Members of the Committee:

As a resident of Lakeville, CT, and a member of the Salisbury Affordable Housing Commission, I fully supported and encouraged the process that our local Planning and Zoning Commission undertook to revise the Salisbury Zoning Regulations in order to permit denser housing in village locations, with a bonus density extended toward projects qualifying as Affordable Housing.

While these changes are to be applauded, there still exists an onerous Special Permit requirement for many situations that effectively gives a small group of commissioners the power to approve or deny an application for whatever rationale they see fit to apply. In addition, the Special Permit public hearing requirement has led to a small number of (NIMBY) residents doing everything in their power to prevent our town from having the diversity of housing that we so desperately need. Their opposition has included the spreading of false information and the hiring of lawyers and special consultants, all focused delaying the approval process, racking up legal fees for the town and swaying the opinions of the public and Commission members in Special Permit situations.

In order to avoid such showdowns, I wholeheartedly support zoning reform that removes the Special Permit tool, and clearly defines the as-of-right regulations that will help CT move forward in providing housing to the multitudes that need and deserve it. I believe that SB 1024 is the way to build a better and more equitable CT.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Mary Close Oppenheimer