

# Franklin development board looks for in-law apartment solution

By Alison McCall/Daily News staff

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FRANKLIN - Rebound children moving back in with their parents are among those causing headaches for the Economic Development Committee.

Members met yesterday morning to talk about making rules that would regulate in-law apartments in town.

“(The system) is obviously broken,” Committee member and Town Councilor Matthew Kelly told his colleagues yesterday. “If you don’t (reform) it, you’re just going to get more illegal apartments.”

In-law apartments are extra dwellings converted from, or added to, existing homes. They can often become a quagmire for illegal renting situations after their original purpose has lapsed.

Committee members noted that, more and more, grown children, complete with significant others or families, are moving back in with their parents, or parents are moving in with their children to save money.

The town does not have clear definitions for how to deal with that type of situation, except for turning a single-family home into a two-family home. Little prevents the owners from later renting the extra space.

“There’s no standard — that’s the issue,” Town Administrator Jeffrey Nutting said of how the Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning Board address the requests. “It’s case by case by case.”

Planning Board Chairman Anthony Padula said he thinks leaving the interpretation up to the boards is a good idea. He said he is worried regulation will encourage people to trick the system.

“It’s up to the Zoning Board of Appeals, it’s up to the building commissioner. Why add this?” Padula asked. “Everybody’s broke right now. They’re probably looking to make a few bucks. This just opens the store.”

Members were also worried that adding regulations could result in a surge in two-family homes that look like duplexes, but Planning Department staff assured them that the bylaw could be written to make combination in-law apartment and single-family homes still look like single-family houses.

“I think there’s a serious need for it,” Building Commissioner David Roche said. “I think people are just going to do it anyway. Give them a process in order to do it.”

“Personally, I don’t see that every house in town is going to become a two-family,” Kelly said. “Will it increase? Yes, but at least we’ll have some control factors.”

The committee asked the Planning Department to come back with a clarified bylaw.

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