

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**Durham Housing Task Force**

**June 10, 2024**

10:00 am – Council Chambers

**Housing Task Force members present**

Sally Tobias, chair

Heather Grant, Council rep.

Eileen Murphy

Michael Saputo (“Michael S”)

Michael Mulhern (“Michael M”) – on Zoom

*Paul Rasmussen – joins at 11:30am*

**Others Present**

Michael Behrendt, Town Planner (“Michael B”)

Nick Taylor advisor, Workforce Housing Coalition

Taylor Cray advisor, Workforce Housing Coalition

**Members of Public**

none

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Call to order 10:01am

Not enough members present for quorum. No votes will be taken. A quorum is established later in the meeting when Paul Rasmussen arrives. Therefore, most of the meeting is for discussion only.

*10:05 Mike Mulhern joins on Zoom.*

**Approve Agenda**

n/a

**Public Comments**

none

**Approve Minutes**

n/a

**Reports from Committee Members and Advisors:**

**Town Council (Heather):** PB submitted new definitions to the Council. Definition of student housing was added. Town Council approved updated goals – a couple related to climate change. Goals for housing: by 2025 develop modifications that

allow for a variety of housing types. West Edge PUD is mentioned. Workforce housing is specifically mentioned. Town Council has 24 goals – it feels like a lot. Addition of 4 new Council members led to lively debate about the goals of the Council.

**State** (Nick Taylor): WFHC Tuesday morning Coastal Resilience and Housing event in Hampton. Exploring smart land use planning and housing. (8:30-10:30 – tickets still available.)

ADU and duplexes legislation did not pass

HB 1400- parking provisions for residential developments reduced – particularly impactful for affordable and workforce developments.

Other bills still out there:

- Office to residential conversions.
- Process for allowing selectboard to vote on zoning changes in towns without Town Councils.

Bills went to committees of conference – all received full support there. They move to a full up or down vote Thursday, then on to the governor if they pass.

**Upcoming Charette in Portsmouth** (Nick): June 20-21 Charette with Mike and Service Credit Union in Portsmouth. 2-day visioning process asking what we want to see on a specific property. Includes many stakeholders. Aims to incorporate a wide range of feedback. Thursday night: public info listening session. Friday: all-day work session – teams of volunteers come up with various schemes. Friday night: presentation to the public of what the teams came up with. A book is produced that helps inform decision making.

Mike M: this is an effort of the Credit Union to include the community in their thought process. Property address: 126 Lang Road and Longmeadow Road.

Taylor: We can send the RSVP link to the Housing Task Force.

Michael B: any idea of the number of units?

Mike M: Currently thinking 182 units total (could be up to 200-250), 27 market rate townhouses. Credit Union senior management would like 100% affordable/workforce units.

Michael B: are there other examples of Credit Unions developing housing?

Mike M: There are. Nick: other corporations are doing this too.

Mike M: Re-zoning was critical to this project. The City of Portsmouth made changes that dramatically improved the possibility of developing affordable housing on this lot. This process has also made it very clear that zoning can be discriminatory and Durhams zoning code is discriminatory.

Sally: It would be interesting to do a charette in Durham with Durham-owned and federally-owned properties (U.S. Fish & Game and the Post Office building).

Heather: has there been any request for Michael B to look into developing the second level of the P.O.?

Michael B: This was explored with the P.O. They said as long as they use the back of the building for their trucks, this isn't possible.

### **Other News and Updates:**

Nick: there's a possibility of offering HOP grants again. Like the one Durham received last year.

Sally: do we have updates on RKG's needs assessment? (A product of our HOP grant).

Michael B: RKG is planning to present at the Town Council meeting, and will be paid extra to present again. Tentatively this will be at the June 24 Council meeting. Remaining \$5000 from HOP for the Community forum expires at the end of July. We may not be able to use this.

Nick: was that solely for a community forum?

Michael B: will look into it. It just needs to be encumbered by 7/31.

Sally: Could it be used for printing visuals? Support materials for outreach?

Sally: attended a walking tour of Exeter as part of the Housing Academy. Exeter has been very proactive about working with developers to make affordable/workforce housing possible. The development site they toured is 144 units, 20-25% workforce.

Sally: Affordable housing conference Friday 6/7: most affordable housing type is garden style – a multi-unit building with one entrance and stairs to individual apartments indoors.

Interesting fact: in NH, it's more economically feasible to rent than to own.

Michael B: Workforce housing isn't always beneficial as a for-purchase model. The idea is that the value of the property only increases at the rate of inflation, so it's not meant to be an investment in the way general homeownership can be.

Heather: these stats and data would be helpful for the planning board.

Mike M: An interesting take on the AMI rates for workforce housing is that some codes use an *average* AMI of 60%. This creates opportunities for veterans, service industry workers, and others who make 20-30% AMI.

Michael B: Durham is using HUD Fair Market Rent in our overlay district (draft). It's much easier than basing rental rates off AMI. Encourages Service CU to look into this.

Nick Taylor: this might not be possible for developers trying to access the tax credit or certain grants.

### **Next Steps for the Task Force**

Sally: A zoning amendment is going through the Planning Board currently. This doesn't necessarily have to be the final step for the Housing Task Force. What could next steps be?

- Looking at other areas in town where changes could be considered.
- Picking up some of the legislation that was not passed at the state level (ADUs and duplexes). What changes could we make in town to increase diverse housing types?
- Outreach initiatives – some visuals and text have been created for the Friday Updates, these could be reproduced.

### **Update on Outreach**

Michael S: Have tried to compose simple answers to complicated questions to help inform the community. Next group of Q's and A's is in draft. Have talked about an outreach event at Tideline. Not sure of status of this.

One stumbling block: all our education points to the need for zoning code changes. How do we move forward before making these changes?

Visuals could be put on poster board and made for use at multiple events and locations.

Heather: regarding proposing changes to the zoning code: It could be helpful to describe the most impactful changes one at a time to the community – in digestible snippets with visuals. Then bring a package of these changes to the planning board *after* the community has had time to learn about them.

Sally: AI has been working on an idea for a walking tour starting and ending at Tideline. An opportunity to tour surrounding neighborhoods and talk about current regs and possibilities.

In addition, we need to go to various commissions, present information and listen back.

Michael B: When we received a lot of resistance to widespread changes in late 2022, we heard that we needed a broad analysis of the needs of the community, and better explanations of how our approach meets their needs. We've completed the town-wide analysis, and we're starting the outreach through Friday updates. It sounds like we may do focus groups? What else would help support this?

Eileen: I'd want to pair some light touches with the bigger one-time events. Like tabling at the Swap Shop, posters/visuals at the library.

Sally: in addition, very intentional outreach to individuals in each neighborhood or zoning district prior to each walking tour or focus group could be helpful.

Michael S: I think there are groups and pockets we haven't reached yet, and who we may not reach in passing at Tideline. Supports direct housing.

Comment (Michael S): Detached ADUs do not seem like a panacea. Building is so expensive right now, homeowners might not see the benefit/pay off in their lifetime.

Nick: There are some solutions being developed in the Seacoast that may help make ADUs easier to build. Maybe not cheaper, but possibly faster, which saves costs. We also need to keep in mind the ripple effect of an older couple selling a home to live in a family member's ADU and the way that frees up larger housing for others.

Sally: thinking about how we make this a possibility is valuable. What needs to change in the zoning code?

Michael B: So what I'm hearing is instead of a forum or survey, we would identify specific groups for outreach (committees/commissions, neighborhoods, public school employees, etc.) and put together meetings/discussions with each of these groups – a dozen people at a time.

Nick/Taylor: Nick: smaller outreach events can be effective. Taylor: In Dover Ryan Pope refers to an identified set of community goals often. The more you understand what people want to see, the more you can shape your communication to respond to them.

Michael B: We have 3 areas of focus:

- 1) Allowing detached ADU
- 2) Allowing a second ADU
- 3) Allowing duplexes

Other thoughts:

- 4) 3-4 unit townhouse/rowhouse housing types?

*11:30 Paul Rasmussen joins. There is now a quorum.*

Eileen: These all sound like solutions to the housing issue, but I think people may want to talk about what zoning is, how workforce housing happens, what the Task Force and Planning Board are, etc. We should approach forums prepared to talk about whatever people have questions about.

Heather: If we start with committees we can get a feel for the broader level of understanding and how these conversations flow. Supportive visuals could be photos of nicely done high-density developments. Email Michael B any photos you see or take.

### **Friday Updates**

Where are we with this? Keep an eye out for an email from Michael B with the text. Feedback from Karen has been to keep it shorter. Next piece of text will be broken into 2 separate updates. Paul has a spreadsheet with all the information that will be shared, then it's chunked out for each update/flyer/mailer, etc.

Informal discussion about AMI.

Next step: text and images will be shared with the group by email.

Michael B: Draft ordinance is going to the Planning Board Wednesday. We have one potential workforce housing development still in the works. The revised housing needs assessment (RKG) will be coming out soon as well.

### **Adjournment 11:56am**

Paul makes a motion

Eileen seconds

Roll call; all yes.

Respectfully submitted.

Eileen Murphy