

DRAFT MINUTES
Durham Housing Task Force

July 7, 2024

10:00 am – Council Chambers

Housing Task Force Members Present

Sally Tobias, chair

Heather Grant

Al Howland

Mike Mulhern (Zoom; “Michael M”)

Eileen Murphy

Paul Rasmussen

Judith Spang (joins on Zoom at 10:22)

Others Present

Michael Behrendt, Town Planner (“Michael B”)

Taylor Cray, Workforce Housing Coalition

Members of the Public

None

Call to Order 10:00am

Approval of Agenda

Al makes a motion

Eileen seconds

Roll call: all yes

Approval of Minutes from 5/13/24 and 6/10/24

Heather makes a motion to approve 5/13/24 minutes

Paul seconds

Roll call: Eileen abstains; all others yes

Eileen makes a motion to approve 6/10/24 minutes

Heather seconds

Roll call: Al abstains; all others yes

Reports from Committee Members and Advisors

Planning Board (Paul): deep discussions on zoning ordinance revisions are occurring. It’s taking a long time to decide whether this change will primarily serve the lot in question, or whether it should be more comprehensive.

State Legislature (Al Howland): some parking language ended up going through, 79E from the Home-nibus bill also went through. Next round of HOP grants have come out. Watch HOP grant update recording. It's helpful to note that most other towns using the HOP grant are SB2 and their timeline is focused around town meeting in March. Some of them have been more productive than we have because we have the luxury of debating things indefinitely. The HOP grants and Invest grants will be looking for zoning ordinance changes and projects going in the ground. Durham is moving relatively slowly.

Town Council (Heather): RKG presentation was made at last meeting – recommends listening to the DCAT. There didn't see to be significant changes to the RKG report, so it should be accepted at this point. Town Council had 10-15 comments on the zoning definitions. Decision was made to send the comments back to the Planning Board.

Michael B: The HTF has accomplished a lot. Firstly the major revisions to the zoning ordinance were proposed and while it was not well received, we learned a lot. The RKG assessment was significant. Outreach to individuals and businesses was valuable. And bringing the workforce housing ordinance to the Planning Board has been a huge step. The current outreach initiatives that aim to increase information throughout the community are going to be a springboard for community support of future potential zoning changes.

Al: We have made some progress, but it has been slow.

Judith Spang joins at 10:22

Workforce Housing Charette @ Service Credit Union in Portsmouth (Michael M): There's a clean energy component to the plan, and community involvement has been part of their mission. 242 abutters were invited, 2 articles in the newspaper, company newsletter invited employees and stakeholders. Goal was to put together 2 conceptual designs by the end of the charette. Parking proved to be a big issue. One design has 275 units, one has about 400 units. The experience overall helped push the timeline and got the mission of Service Credit Union out to the public. In June of 2025 they hope to submit an application for tax credits, goal is to start building in 2026. A "pre-charette" could be a possibility for Durham? It increases transparency and gets to the heart of what our mission/goals are.

Al: Beyond parking were there any other concerns?

Michael M: Concerns were minimal:

- Speed of traffic that goes down an adjacent road.
- The character of the design – neighbors don't want it to look like big boxes.

Michael M: Workforce/affordable housing credits are minimal, but plan to use energy tax credits to increase the number of workforce units. One goal is to support disabled veterans and they don't meet the 60-80% AMI. Some developers are offsetting 20% AMI

rental units with a certain number of 100% AMI units. There will also be a commercial component and there are tentative talks about child care with support from United Way.

Heather: An article about the development at Christmas Tree Shoppes pointed out that the timeline to develop a project in Portsmouth can be hugely detrimental to a project. The Town of Durham is trying to be conscientious and to create a predictable timeline for developers so the town review doesn't derail a project – especially a workforce housing project.

Taylor: a summary of the design charette will be posted to the Workforce Housing Coalition website by the end of July.

Al: Recommends looking at the Gateway Project in Exeter - most of the funding came from Invest New Hampshire.

Planning for the Current Outreach Initiative

Sally: Step 1: visit various committees. This will reach a lot of people. Need to decide what topics to focus on, which topics are not our focus.

Sally shares a sample of a PowerPoint that could be used for committee presentations.
Feedback is provided.

The intent is to reach out to a variety of community members by way of the committee presentations. We're not trying to sell them on our solutions, we're asking what they think about the possibilities. Their feedback can help us shape our recommendations.

Next steps: Michael B can reach out to eight committees/boards and ask to get on their agendas in July, August, September. After the first couple presentations we can evaluate the kinds of conversations we're starting and revise the presentation as needed.

Al makes a motion to adjourn

Paul seconds

Roll call: all yes

Respectfully submitted.

Eileen Murphy