

DRAFT MINUTES
Durham Housing Task Force
September 9, 2024
10:00 am – Council Chambers

Housing Task Force members present

Sally Tobias, chair
Al Howland
Eileen Murphy
Paul Rasmussen
Judith Spang

Others Present

Michael Behrendt, Town Planner
Taylor Cray advisor, Workforce Housing Coalition

Members of Public

none

Call to order 10:02 am

Approval of Agenda

Al makes a motion
Paul seconds
All yes

Approval of Minutes

Al makes a motion to approve July minutes
Eileen seconds
All yes

Public Comments

none

Reports from Committee Members and Advisors:

Feedback from Parks & Rec Committee (Al): large portion of meeting was about housing. 2 main points: (1) Parks & Rec is making an effort to fit recreational spaces into large developments. They don't have many of their own spaces to use for recreation throughout town. (2) Question of who we are looking to attract to Durham – what is our objective?

NH Workforce Housing Coalition (Taylor): tour at Sophie and Banner Drive, Dover (gentle density) was a success. 31 units are being built on a lot where standard zoning would have only allowed for 9. Mix of for-purchase and rental homes. 8 units are currently affordable, 5 are deed-restricted as affordable. Developer is a wealth of knowledge.

AI: Conservation was also a huge part of this development. \$2M were put into conservation because of TDR (transferable of development rights), which helps maintain conservation land.

Discussion about current amount of conservation land in Durham. We have a conservation fund that is used to maintain the land. Unsure what amount from our general fund is dedicated to maintaining conservation land, but there is a significant cost associated with maintenance and there's a loss of revenue from minimal taxes being collected on conservation land.

Michael: TDR is extremely complicated and it only works in developments with high numbers of units. It's very unlikely that it will be implemented in Durham.

Taylor: Stay tuned for walking tour in Newmarket regarding use of 79E.

Outreach Initiative:

Discussion of current initiative to Town boards (Sally):

- Thoughts on zoning: general openness to cottage clusters, pocket developments, duplexes, town homes/row houses, multi-family
- Thoughts on ADU rules: detached allowed by right, second allowed by special exception, perhaps second ADU is required to have a smaller footprint than the first?
- Increased density ideas: encourage infill, create smaller lot sizes in residential districts, repurpose existing homes, encourage smaller homes, denser neighborhoods, Rural and RC already have smaller lots than they are currently zoned for, so why not allow smaller lots?
- Other ideas: Pocket developments on large tracts (similar to conservation subdivisions); continue to use overlays; create village centers in developments farther from town; encourage development downtown
- Infrastructure considerations: build where there is infrastructure; innovate where no infrastructure exists (group septic and water); denser development brings in people to pay for infrastructure; downtown infrastructure needs to be addressed.
- Thoughts related to housing: we need missing middle options; we need economic diversity; current situation is not sustainable; creating housing is a moral imperative; balance housing with conservation; consider how schools will be impacted; housing should reduce our carbon footprint; what things look like matters; what do we build and where; how is affordability achieved;

maintain our quality of life; keeping our rural feel and pastoral views; aesthetics are emphasized over conservation in current zoning; what is the impact on taxes?

- What about: climate change, infrastructure, conservation, wildlife corridors, natural resources, UNH enrollment, aging population

Taylor: there will be a report coming out on the impact of zoning on school enrollment – probably in the next few weeks.

Al: the elementary schools are where the enrollment changes hit hardest. This year we saw in ORCSD that the elementary schools were challenged when trying to accommodate kindergarteners. It resulted in a vibrant discussion at school board meetings and a decision to increase the sizes of kindergarten classrooms at Moharimet.

Judith: Was there much negative feedback from the outreach presentations?

Sally: there was a strong opinion that downtown should be developed before workforce housing is developed on outskirts of town.

Opinions on multifamily housing are intertwined with the opposition to student housing. There's a fear that multifamily will be overrun with students, but we do have a provision in the overlay district proposal that should limit students in workforce developments.

Building heights also seem contentious. In the workforce housing overlay the limit is 3 stories, currently downtown the limit is also 3 stories. To increase density downtown we'd need to increase that height limit.

Al: ADU changes are bound to happen at the state level. Potentially attached and/or detached will be allowed by right. The biggest stumbling block in the past was the senate. Some complexities exist with municipal control of site plans and how that impacts the legality of a detached ADU. Legislation next year will clarify site plans.

Continued outreach: who else should we try to reach? Send Sally ideas.

Eileen: can we have a presentation to the Task Force from the Conservation Commission, or some conservation expert to help us respond to natural waterways and wildlife corridors more clearly?

Sally: this wouldn't be needed downtown. Maybe it would be relevant when it comes time to revise zoning in the rural zones?

Michael: this isn't really the relevant to the next steps for the Housing Task Force.

Eileen: There are waterways downtown, so it is relevant to the any changes we make downtown.

Judith: Stormwater management is a significant consideration for downtown spaces.

Proposed Workforce Housing Ordinance

This ordinance is not a one and done zoning code change – it's a baby step and the first step in a number of changes to the zoning code. Sticking with rental-only developments is a good move at this point. Rentals are what is needed, and other types of housing can be incorporated into changes down the road. In addition, single family homes are allowed throughout all of Durham. We're not restricting the development options, we're broadening them.

Discussion about cost averaging built into the ordinance.

Can the frequently asked questions be adapted for Durham Friday Updates?
Discussion of which questions would be meaningful. There's a need to first provide an update on the progress of the Workforce Housing Overlay ordinance. We can send a link to the FAQ's in the Durham Friday Updates.

Judith: Reiterates that conservation is a major concern that has yet to be addressed in our zoning code.

Housing Downtown

Judith: The group that moves forward with considering downtown should include business owners.

Sally: There is a plan in the works to form a working group to consider changes to downtown zoning. It will be Heather from the Planning Board and members of the Housing Task Force who want to participate can.

AI: We're currently missing infrastructure analysis for downtown – this group will need to do that kind of analysis. Our infrastructure was a barrier to each recent development that has been proposed or carried out downtown in recent years.

Current stormwater system cannot handle anymore development downtown, so change is needed. Suggestion to have Rich Reine from Public Works speak to the Housing Task Force during the next meeting.

Proposal to have an overview of the downtown zoning code presented at an upcoming Task Force meeting.

Discussion of the purpose of the Housing Task Force in contrast to the intent of the downtown working group/committee. Based on our outreach efforts, the Task Force may want to propose a change to the ADU permissions in the zoning code. The Task Force can also look at Rural Zone code changes. The Task Force will wrap up by

April according to the Town Council declaration from earlier this year, so it would be timely to lay out what we hope to accomplish before then.

Adjournment 12:00pm

Al makes a motion

Judith seconds

All yes.

Respectfully submitted.

Eileen Murphy