

MINUTES (approved March 3, 2025)
Durham Housing Task Force
January 13, 2025
10:00 am – Council Chambers

Housing Task Force members present

Sally Tobias, chair
Heather Grant
Al Howland
Mike Mulhern on ZOOM
Paul Rasmussen, Planning Board Representative
Judith Spang

Michael Behrendt, Town Planner
Mimi Kell on Zoom
Emily Hamm, Workforce Housing Coalition, Advisory to Task Force
Taylor Cray, Workforce Housing Coalition, Advisor to Task Force

Call to Order. Sally called the meeting to order at 10:02 am.

Reports from Committee Members and Advisors. Paul discussed the student rental ordinance being reviewed by the Planning Board. Heather gave an update on the Town Council.

Mike is talking with the Portsmouth Housing Authority about the Service Credit Union project. Phase 1 will have 30 market rate townhouses. Phases 2 will include affordable units set at 60% of area median income (AMI). Phase 3 will have 70 units set at 100% of AMI. This is a tax credit project. There will be a maximum of 290 units.

Paul said that John Randolph had spoken with the Planning Board about the difficulty of using the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. You need staff to manage it. Emily said that Ryan Pope is knowledgeable about the tax credit and could present a primer.

Al said there are lots of proposed bills in Concord. The bill about 3 unrelated is coming back. He thinks it would blow up Hanover's ordinance. They define family differently.

Mimi said the market is slow. There have been a few meetings of the Durham Landlords Association. The lower demand has affected occupancy. Shared bedrooms are being converted to singles. Golden Goose has reduced its density by 10-15%. The occupancy rate is now 70%. It was 90-95%. Rents are reduced by around 1%. It costs \$2,000 for a two-bedroom unit including heat and hot water. She believes that the Cottages and the Lodges have started to lease some to the regular market.

Downtown Zoning Subcommittee. Initiatives discussed by the Subcommittee. The initiatives will be presented to the Town Council on March 3.

Potential Zoning Changes. Review of Table of Uses and Table of Dimensions.

The task force started the discussion about the changes that were proposed by the task force in August 2022 but not supported when they came to the Planning Board. Mike said we might consider requiring that 10% of the units be affordable. Exeter does this. We could do a study to see if the market would support this. Portland increased the percentage required from 10 % to 20% and it had a negative effect.

Conservation Subdivisions. Discussion about potential changes.

Paul discussed some changes that he proposes to the Conservation Subdivision ordinance. He suggested within a designated developable area to not limit the number of allowed units, as we are allowing for a high density in the Attainable Housing Ordinance for the developable area.

Judith said that we do not want development in the rural areas. Sally said there have been only two conservation subdivisions since she has been on the board.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Behrendt