



Adopted August 28, 2008

**Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Housing
7:30 a.m. – July 31, 2008
City Hall/City Manager's Conference Room**

Present: Councilor Christine Dwyer, Chairperson; Mayor Thomas Ferrini, Councilors Laura Pantelakos, Dick Ingram, Jane James, William Gladhill, Joe Couture, Cindy Hayden Deputy, City Manager (Ex-Officio), David Moore, Asst. Community Development Director (Ex-Officio)

Also present were Maria Stowell, Manager, Engineering and David Mullen, Interim Executive Director, Pease Development Authority.

Absent: Kay Maneen and Councilor Ken Smith

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- 1. Call to Order** - Chairperson Dwyer called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 a.m.
 - 2. Consideration of Minutes from July 10, 2008 Meeting** - Councilor Pantelakos made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 10, 2008 Housing Committee meeting. The motion was seconded by Dick Ingram; all voted in favor.
 - 3. Exploration of Pease as a Site for Affordable Developments** – Chairperson Dwyer introduced David Mullen, Interim Executive Director of the Pease Development Authority and Maria Stowell from the Engineering Division. Ms. Dwyer thanked them for attending and explained that the Committee is looking into several potential approaches to the affordable housing issue, including the exploration of housing at Pease Tradeport. She indicated Pease is mentioned in public discussions and many people inquire about why the City does not have housing at Pease particularly since increasingly people are aware of the amount of jobs which have been created there. She asked the representatives to discuss the background of the housing issue at Pease, the rules governing the land uses, and other examples of housing at redeveloped bases.

Mr. Mullen began by presenting Committee members with a package, which included a land use map of Pease and a map indicating undeveloped sites. He said there is a perception that Pease has an immense amount of land, but that only 60 of the 4,100 acres are left as undeveloped. He explained some of the various development projects taking place at Pease. He indicated that much of the undeveloped land includes wetland areas. Maria Stowell said the Air Force turned the land over to the State of New Hampshire, which created the Pease Development Authority. She said an environmental impact statement was completed and there were several land use alternatives which were reviewed for the site. The scope of the environmental impact statement was based upon proposed reuses which then included natural resource protection, industrial, business, commercial and airport uses. She explained that the emphasis of the Pease

redevelopment was on economic development and job creation to offset the regional impact of the Air Force base closure.

Chairperson Dwyer asked what the natural resource protection reuse included. Ms. Stowell stated that the natural resource protection zone is defined by a number of permitted uses, including the golf course; other types of passive uses, walking trails, and wildlife refuges; and public utilities needed to support the area.

Ms. Hayden asked about the amount of wetlands at Pease. Ms. Stowell responded that 550 acres or so of wetlands exist at Pease and most are located in the natural resource protection zone.

Mr. Mullen stated that Pease is designated as a superfund site and this land has been studied probably more than any other in the state, there are 2,400 spots that have been identified or studied.

Mr. Mullen stated that the housing which, was located at Pease, was in poor condition and was taken down. The federal government cleaned-up the closed base to certain standards to meet the planned industrial and business uses, not residential uses. Mr. Mullen added the air base was built for a single use as an air base and that has meant that there are challenges to reusing the site for anything other than what it was planned for. He indicated that, in the early 1990's, housing as a possible land use would likely have been considered, but the agency would have needed to address the same issues of environmental remediation and wetlands that the agency is dealing with today.

Chairperson Dwyer mentioned that the community is not hoping for large tract subdivisions of housing at Pease, but referred to mixed-use development with housing as a component. Mr. Mullen indicated that redevelopment of existing buildings is an expensive proposition and the lease terms are not conducive to reinvesting in buildings on leased land. Maria Stowell stated that if someone came to PDA with a proposal for an office building with housing above, the agency would refer to its zoning. Any proposal for residential use would not fit into the current zoning at Pease and require that the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be revisited with the Air Force and Federal Aviation Administration. Ms. Hayden asked if a particular site was identified, would an EIS have to be done for the whole base if considering just one site. Ms. Stowell indicated that the PDA would need to ask the Air Force and FAA those questions. She added that the PDA board would need to determine if it was interested in approaching the controlling federal authorities with these questions.

Chairperson Dwyer reminded the Committee that its goal is to fact find and to identify opportunities, which are feasible, to add to the affordable housing stock.

Cindy Hayden asked what is the current land use plan along Grafton Drive near the Pannaway neighborhood. Maria Stowell said the PDA has applied for a grant to build a bike path that would run through this section, onto Pease and possibly along 33. She said the City has a treatment plant there and a well, which requires a significant land buffer.

Chairperson Dwyer asked if Pease has considered assisting in some way to alleviate pressure on the region's housing stock which Pease has contributed to through its success. She added that Pease could assist in creating affordable living opportunities outside of Pease and in surrounding communities. Mr. Mullen responded that the income derived from the tenant leases is considered airport revenue and it is to be reinvested in ways that expand and maintain airport operations.

Ms. Hayden asked if companies at Pease have concerns about the need to have employees live closer. Maria Stowell referred to Seacoast Commuter Options, an initiative PDA took to begin a transportation management association in order to speak to employers and assist employees get to

work using carpools, public transportation, and pedestrian/bike routes. There has been very little interest until a few months ago.

Chairperson Dwyer said that a tremendous housing crisis exists in the area and asked what ways the community and partners like Pease can work to solve this challenge. She asked if there was a group at Pease who was interested in this work. Mr. Mullen said the Tenants at Pease (TAP) is a group that has been in place for a long time and was originally formed as a group which had concerns with what was happening at Pease. There are 35-40 companies represented in the group.

Mayor Ferrini said Fort Devens appears to have a more mixed-use component which includes work force housing. He indicated that the model of an industrial park is an archaic land use. He said he was interested in insuring, from both a housing and recreation perspective, that Pease integrates more fully into the community. He is looking to insure Pease becomes a better property than it already is.

Mr. Mullen responded there is not much remaining land suitable for housing unless things dramatically change. He reiterated that there is a considerable amount of wetlands on this property.

Mayor Ferrini asked if there is an opportunity to make more land available by renegotiating leases which are on large lots of land and underutilized. Mr. Mullen responded that every lease is extensively reviewed by the PDA for what it brings to the Tradeport. He said the PDA does not accept projects that do not effectively use the land. He said open space requirements are established for effective stewardship of the land. Mayor Ferrini said he felt there may be opportunities to explore additional uses on existing parcels to meet community needs. He said revisiting lease terms may be a way of insuring that multiple uses and increased densities are looked at by developers.

Ms. Hayden asked if other redeveloped bases have successfully incorporated housing and if they had wetland and superfund issues to contend with. Mr. Mullen responded that Fort Devens' housing was in better condition than the housing at Pease, so they retained it.

Chairperson Dwyer said transportation and daycare issues are all part of the housing issue and all of these issues are related and why integrating mixed-use is a strategy that the community is moving towards. Ms. Stowell said bases that have housing were planned that way from the beginning and tied what they did to how the land was going to be used.

Chairperson Dwyer thanked Mr. Mullen and Ms. Stowell for the information they provided. She suggested that the Committee consider hearing from someone at the Tenant Association at Pease regarding their perspective on the housing issue.

Mayor Ferrini said he feels the dialogue should continue after the Committee's work is complete. He said getting something in front of the legislature is easy, but it is difficult to know what to ask for to affect the desired change.

Mr. Gladhill stated achieving residential uses at Pease seems to not be feasible or will be an uphill battle.

Mr. Couture felt that pursuing housing at Pease would be very time consuming with a 75% of chance of failure.

Dick Ingram stated the most apparent thing is that there is more "control" at the local level than first understood. He felt the Committee learned a lot today, but there's still more to learn.

Chairperson Dwyer said the park and ride bus terminal built by Pease is an example where the PDA Board responded to an environmental concern and utilized its natural resource protection

zone to have a beneficial environmental impact. Councilor Pantelakos and Chairperson Dwyer said they would like the Committee to pursue this in order to know what is possible out at Pease. They reasoned that there may be a developer that might want to put a design together which includes housing on top floors.

Mr. Ingram suggested this Committee follow up with the Tenants Association at Pease. After some discussion, it was agreed that Mr. Ingram would speak to a member of TAP and report back to the Committee.

Councilor Dwyer said the Committee's charge is to determine feasible solutions to the housing challenge and that information provided at this meeting helped the Committee learn more about the possibility of housing at Pease.

Cindy Hayden will have a wetlands map at the next meeting and have Peter Britz present at the next meeting. Councilor Pantelakos stated that in the State of New Hampshire you are able to exchange one wetland for another.

4. **Discussion of Topics for next meeting on August 28th** At the next meeting, Chairperson Dwyer suggested the Committee follow-up on this. In addition, it was determined that the Committee would discuss opportunities for affordable housing on City-owned land and explore partnerships to develop housing. A discussion following up on mixed uses along transportation corridors from the July 10th meeting was also agreed to. The Committee decided to devote additional time discussing a regional forum on housing issues in the fall.

The next meeting is August 28, 2008, at 7:30 a.m. in the City Managers Conference Room.

5. **Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,
Elaine E. Boucas, Recording Secretary