

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

REPORT FROM HOUSING COMMISSION RE: POLICY

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX
DATE: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2016

PORTSMOUTH, NH
TIME: 6:00PM

City Council Present: Mayor Blalock, Councilors Perkins, Dwyer, Lown, Pearson, Spear, Cyr and Denton

City Council Absent: Assistant Mayor Splaine

Staff Present: John P. Bohenko, City Manager; Nancy Colbert Puff, Deputy City Manager; Rick Taintor, Planning Director; Jessa Berna, Planner; and Kelli L. Barnaby, City Clerk

Mayor Blalock called the work session to order at 6:00 p.m. regarding the Housing Commission Policy.

Councilor Perkins said we are here to present the final Housing Commission Report regarding Policy. She reported that 6-7 meetings were held and the charge was limited to the high priority items. She said the Commission identified target areas and suggested that the City Council adopt a Workforce Housing Policy.

Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff reported that the Commission stayed on target and worked to identify three areas for housing. She said the locations are in the Gateway zoning district which consists of the existing zones along much of Lafayette Road and several sites along the Route 1 Bypass, and should include Woodbury Avenue from Market Street to Gosling Road, which is currently zoned General Business. She said the first step in the Master Plan, Portsmouth will try to remain diverse and look at how to take corridor areas and make them into housing areas. She addressed the cost of rentals and sales in the City. She also said they worked to gain input on what people wanted to see for housing in the future. Deputy Colbert Puff said housing must support job growth and we currently lack one bedroom rentals in the City. She spoke to the three areas of focus for housing, the gateway corridor, Mirona Road and Exit 7 area near Kearsarge Way. She stated that these are areas that are not pedestrian friendly. She indicated that Woodbury Avenue zoning currently does not allow for mixed use and gateway provides a 70/30 split for residential and commercial. In addition, Mirona Road is not a high traffic count area and maybe we should make that a separate zoning area or in walking distance from Mirona Road and the Jones Avenue recreational area which will be a multi-use area. Deputy Colbert Puff said it helps if the community is open to promoting and supporting housing. She also addressed the goal of streamlining the permit process.

Councilor Denton said he is concerned that increasing housing may not provide affordability.

Councilor Dwyer spoke on density bonuses, some sense of surety as a great deal of money is spent upfront for workforce housing. She said we need to allow density standards and change zoning as a City. She also stated we need to share the cost of infrastructure improvements. She said the City could advance the money to get the spaces for affordable housing.

Councilor Cyr asked for a different name from workforce housing policy because of the State statute using the reference workforce housing and that it could cause confusion.

Councilor Spear said he is concerned with the City Council adopting the policy this way. He said the statement that construction of homes is critical is a major approach. He said this is a partnership between taxpayers and developers.

Councilor Perkins said the goal is to be proactive and shift the status quo at the land use areas.

Councilor Lown said neighbors say they are in favor of workforce housing, just not in their neighborhoods. He said this is a response to a demand and need. He stated this is a move in a direction that people are wanting.

Councilor Dwyer said we have an aging population in the community and we need to end up with a working population to help with the aging population. She said it may mean restoring the zoning to neighborhoods that people want.

Mayor Blalock said he sees the need to go back to the former zoning maybe to create the neighborhood zoning that people liked about the City and made it what it is. He stated we need to focus on what is next and where we go from here.

Councilor Perkins said that any comments or changes we would propose are needed to bring the policy back for adoption in December.

City Manager Bohenko said we could have it for the December 19, 2016 City Council meeting. He said anyone that has comments should get them to Deputy Colbert Puff to create a red line version for the December 19th meeting.

Councilor Pearson said she would like to broaden the workforce housing because artists are fleeing the City because it is unaffordable.

At 6:50 p.m., Mayor Blalock closed the work session.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kelli L. Barnaby, MMC, CMC, CNHMC
City Clerk