

1 **MINUTES**

2
3 **HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING**

4
5 **8:30 AM**

6
7 **JULY 15, 2016**

8 **SCHOOL BOARD CONFERENCE ROOM**
9 **MUNICIPAL COMPLEX, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE**
10 **PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

11 MEMBERS PRESENT: Rebecca Perkins, City Councilor (Chair); Chris Dwyer, City Councilor;
12 Eric Spear, City Councilor; David Witham, Former Chair, Zoning Board
13 of Adjustment; Mike Kennedy, Commissioner, Portsmouth Housing
14 Authority; Nancy Colbert Puff, Deputy City Manager; Rick Taintor,
15 Planning Director;

16
17 MEMBERS ABSENT: John Ricci, Chair, Planning Board; Jessa Berna, Planner I;
18

19
20 **I. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER**

21
22 Councilor Perkins provided a brief background of the committee’s efforts to date. She highlighted that
23 the main focus of the meeting was to digest the information received from the public input session and
24 begin to formulate recommendations.
25

26
27
28 **II. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS**

- 29 a. Adding one additional meeting in September for developer input

30
31
32 After the last meeting, it was agreed that a focused discussion with developers could be helpful. The
33 committee reached consensus to have the developer input session in August and another committee
34 meeting in September. Councilor Dwyer suggested that the August 10th meeting be tentative based on
35 the number of confirmed attendees.
36

- 37 b. Proposed meeting schedule and topics going forward

38
39 Based on the tentative August 10th meeting, another listening session would be held and then the last
40 meeting would be focused on reviewing suggested recommendations.
41

42
43
44 **III. DISCUSSION OF PUBLIC INPUT SESSION**

45
46 The committee discussed their overall feedback from the public input session as follows.

47

48 Mr. Witham thought the public input session had sparked several other viable topics for discussion. He
49 asked whether or not that changes the original main objectives of the committee. Councilor Dwyer
50 suggested that the three main objectives developed and presented by the committee could serve as
51 broad principles that are applied elsewhere. She noted how the online submissions also presented ideas
52 that differed from the public input session. Thus, it may be beneficial to delineate the three
53 recommendations that address the committee's main objectives aside from the other topics and ideas
54 that were discussed. Councilor Perkins echoed that statement.

55

56 Councilor Dwyer added how practical strategies could be formulated, which would respond to the
57 public concerns raised. Mr. Kennedy felt that there was a great deal of contradiction amongst the
58 public comments that presents a major challenge for the committee. Councilor Perkins emphasized that
59 one to three specific recommendations created by the committee will be the most effective way at
60 covering the main objectives.

61

62 Mr. Witham mentioned that the recommendations should carry enough weight to hold direction once
63 the public begins to implement the changes into future development. Education should be provided for
64 all land use boards, according to Councilor Dwyer, since that collaboration would provide an
65 opportunity to help communicate the larger goals in their respective decision making process.

66

67 Mr. Taintor thought that the Zoning Board of Adjustment should not be in a position of granting
68 variances for affordable housing because zoning communicates the wrong message. He thought the
69 committee should consider rezoning of particular areas and define characteristic standards and
70 conditions.

71

72 Councilor Dwyer questioned whether the ADU ordinance will make it difficult or help the process. Mr.
73 Taintor noted that the Planning Board is reviewing a proposed ordinance in an upcoming work session
74 and holding a public hearing regarding ADUs. The information of potential options is available on the
75 City website.

76

77 Councilor Spear summarized that the collaboration will be crucial to ensuring that unified goals are
78 adopted and provide more long term benefits. Councilor Perkins wondered whether a joint work
79 session with the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment could help to define the
80 recommendations. Councilor Dwyer encouraged that every board be educated on the overarching
81 principles even after it is adopted.

82

83 Mr. Kennedy suggested that the committee develop a statement that indicates whether the City should
84 strive to close all the raised issues. Councilor Dwyer thought it would be important to provide
85 justification for all the recommendations. Ms. Colbert Puff was enthused by the approach of addressing
86 ADUs in that it speaks to a broader policy tailored for the City as a whole. She thought that could be
87 used as a model in developing recommendations for the committee. Councilor Perkins suggested it be
88 left up to the Council to decide how bold and detailed of any action is right for the City. Councilor
89 Spear felt presenting options may be less than ideal and it would be best to provide specific
90 conclusions from the committee. Councilor Perkins mentioned that the recommendations could be
91 constructed broad enough to allow for flexibility in practice.

92

93 Councilor Dwyer felt concerned about isolation, which arose in a separate discussion about micro
94 apartments. She thought that the notion of designing to avoid isolation ran through many comments.
95 Other comments were centered around the accelerating pace of change, which not necessarily everyone
96 agrees with. She questioned how that concern can be captured since often rezoning is misguidedly
97 perceived and subject to concerns for spot zoning. Councilor Spear responded that rezoning could be
98 framed as somewhat a corrective measure unlike the intent of spot zoning. Mr. Taintor echoed that
99 statement and thought it could be helpful to refer back to the zoning of the 1960s. He noted that with
100 the new character-based districts, zoning has transitioned from a focus on uses to a focus on what the
101 development should look like, which has increased development costs and further impacted affordable
102 housing plans.

- 103
- 104 a. Location input
 - 105 b. Elements input
 - 106 c. Putting elements and location together
- 107

108 The committee agreed to discuss all three questions posed to the public together as follows.

109

110 Councilor Perkins agreed that a general consensus was reached to add residential into existing
111 commercial areas rather than commercial into existing residential areas. Mr. Kennedy added to that
112 statement indicating consideration for density should be taken into account per the public input. He
113 thought the least contentious areas were those discussed in the previous meeting.

114

115 The committee had further deliberation regarding specific potential locations as follows:

- 116 • Southern end of Route 1 – The public suggested areas located south of the presented locations,
117 such as Maple Haven or Ocean Road. Mr. Taintor noted that the southern portion of Route 1
118 becomes more an industrial area that does not serve many retail amenities, which would
119 challenge the argument of isolation but also provide an opportunity for new development.
- 120 • Office Districts – Mr. Taintor mentioned the notion of adding residential to office areas has not
121 been contemplated as much as adding residential to commercial areas. Examples of that are at
122 Commerce Way, the Pease Tradeport, or the area between Islington Street and Borthwick
123 Avenue. As heard from the Planning Board, if the zoning were appropriate they would accept a
124 residential use, rather than commercial use. Areas zoned for office or used for office could be
125 considered as well.
- 126 • Mirona Road – Mirona Road was strongly suggested by the public.
- 127 • Route 1 Bypass – The Route 1 Bypass area between the traffic circle and the bridge is a mixed
128 industrial area and potentially advantageous.
- 129 • Stokel Property – Online comments referenced the Stokel property. Mr. Taintor explained that
130 there is no project plan for that property. As part of the court settlement, the Planning Board
131 granted a waiver to the 500-foot cul-de-sac requirement. Developers have expressed interest in
132 the site, but have had a difficult time communicating with the owners of the property. He
133 explained that the property is located off Peverly Hill Road and south of the cemetery. It is a
134 large, long, and narrow parcel that contains several wetlands in one portion, which under the
135 existing zoning could house potentially twenty units.
- 136 • Cate/Bartlett Streets – Online comments referenced the Cate Street and Bartlett Street areas that
137 could provide smaller opportunities for affordable housing.

- Frank Jones Property – Mr. Taintor explained recent plans for affordable housing near the Frank Jones property, which could be developed in concert with Cate Street and Bartlett Street.

Councilor Perkins noted that interesting feedback was received regarding micro apartments. Another key takeaway from the public was to encourage mixed age, mixed income, mixed types of housing, and mixing uses, which eludes to what older zoning ordinances addressed. Mr. Kennedy thought it may be difficult to entirely address that plea.

Councilor Dwyer noted how consideration should be had for the aging demographic of the NH Seacoast area.

Mr. Taintor mentioned that outside the downtown area and gateway districts, there is no mechanism to allow for apartment building developments. He explained that a presentation, called the Missing Middle, is available on the website and explains the size buildings that are lacking or in abundance of. With that, he suggested a sensible model should be defined to help identify potential higher density locations.

.....

IV. FORMAT FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

(Discussed under III)

.....

V. PUBLIC INPUT

Rick Becksted, 1395 Islington Street

Mr. Becksted asked if the online submissions could be presented on the website. He requested that the videos of the previous meetings be posted on the Housing Committee page.

He referenced the proposed development for affordable housing along the Spaulding Turnpike. He suggested that the neighborhoods should have the opportunity to be educated and made aware of potential changes, which would help to deflect reactionary issues. He did not feel comfortable with the use of the phrase ‘not in my backyard.’ The specific project along the Spaulding Turnpike will present an entrance in and out of Echo Avenue. He expressed various concerns for the project to include addressing the increased traffic and enhancing pedestrian street access.

Mr. Becksted asked if the principles would act as requirements to make development easier. He also addressed the land between Islington St. and Borthwick Ave. The main objection to the current office proposal is joining commercial development to residential areas. The zoning in this area should not be changed to residential, because there is a shortage of office-zoned land.

Carrie Hogan, near Frank Jones property

Ms. Hogan understood from her own experience what forms of workforce housing are and thought that transportation is a key factor. She hoped and expected that if workforce housing is introduced near the Frank Jones property area, the street signaling should be enhanced since it is already a high traffic area.

183 She thought that any property owner that leaves their land undeveloped when it could better serve the
184 community with development, should be taxed based on that seeming value.

185
186 Councilor Dwyer clarified that the committee does not plan to override any existing requirements
187 relating to traffic or wetlands.

188
189 Christopher Davies, Developer, Great Bridge Properties

190 Ms. Davies complimented the efforts of the Housing Committee and explained that his company has
191 been building workforce housing properties for twenty years. He made the committee aware the status
192 of the plans for the 80-unit workforce housing project on a vacant land bordered by Echo Avenue.

193
194 Mr. Kennedy asked what the minimum size feasible is to build workforce housing. Mr. Davies
195 believed around a 30-unit range depending on the size of the lot. Mr. Witham encouraged Mr. Davies'
196 team to present their own information to the next developer input session regarding what a developer
197 requires to make possible workforce housing.

198
199 Dan Rawlins

200 Mr. Rawlins encouraged the important suggestion to provide education. From his understanding, that is
201 a common failure in educating all about the need for workforce housing. He also noted that in order to
202 build village centers and communities, there is a critical mass needed in terms of density, especially to
203 achieve affordability.

204
205 Doug Roberts, 247 Richards Avenue

206 Ms. Roberts referenced the comment regarding amenities and transportation quarters. He thought that
207 public transportation needs to be enhanced if the City looks to increase workforce housing.

208
209

210 **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

211
212 The Housing Committee meeting of July 15, 2016 adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

213
214

215
216 Respectfully submitted,

217
218
219
220
221 Marissa Day
222 Acting Secretary for the Housing Committee