



**City of Portsmouth
Housing Blue Ribbon Committee
MEETING MINUTES
October 16, 2025**

For the Zoom recording: <https://youtu.be/komgK9hQ0xU>

Meeting Called to Order at 5:30 pm.

I. Roll Call

Attending: Councilor John Tabor, co-chair (excused: Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley-Adams, co-chair); Councilor Beth Moreau, John O'Leary, Tracy Kozak, Jennifer Stebbins Thomas, Mary Loane, Dagan Migirditch, Andrew Samonas, Erik Anderson, Byron Matto, Megan Corsetti. Staff: Planning and Sustainability Dept. Peter Britz, Peter Stith.

- II. **Minutes:** September 11, 2025 minutes approved (Tracy abstained because she participated via zoom) don a motion by Jenn Stebbins Thomas seconded by Beth. Comment by John O'Leary about notification that PHA was not attending the October meeting. Chair Tabor noted that PHA reported they would have no update on their NH Housing tax credit application until November, so postponed. Also noted that the committee had agreed to spend the next meetings focused on the mission and future opportunities to fulfill the goal of 500 affordable units rather than revisiting projects that had been advanced to the City Manager. Erik Anderson also noted that co-chair Kelley-Adams' report to the City Council said the committee had interviewed developers when just the three Councilors had. Clr Moreau clarified that the committee developed the idea of interviewing developers and the questions they wanted asked of them.

- III. **Conversation with Ryan Pope, Senior Director, NH Housing Multifamily Development & Finance** – Ryan was Housing Navigator for the City of Dover and also serves as Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast board chair, on the Fair Tide (Kittery) board and in leadership at Home For All. He addressed three topics:

a. **Application of the NH 79E statute in Dover**

- i. Dover approve two 79E projects, each freezing the property tax at the undeveloped rate for 7 years with a 21 year requirement for the City benefits: the conversion of the abandoned Orpheum theater and parking lot into a luxury commercial/housing development in Dover's core and the conversion of the old Strafford County Courthouse into 58 housing units including 20% at workforce (deed restriction in perpetuity for rent at 80% of HUD income qualification). Rather than evaluating and

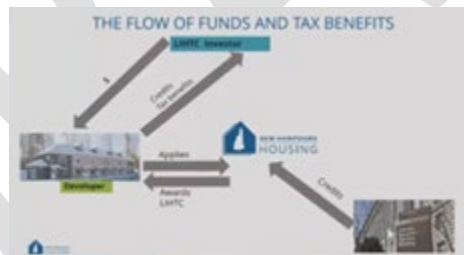
monitoring income levels Dover chose to rely on NH Housing/HUD percent of AMI calculations alone, to allow for more flexibility in resident mix (eg allowing the ‘overhoused’ to downsize affordably.)

- ii. Portsmouth has not yet adopted 79E and Ryan advised that the ordinance should define its goals e.g Dover’s balance of lost tax revenue over long-term tax revenue and core downtown revitalization. 79E requires that the municipality specifically target areas where it applies, that projects engage a dialogue between the City and the developer, and that projects must be approved by the Planning Board (aligning with the Master Plan) and then City Council.
- iii. Discussion: City Council sent committee’s recommendation to draft a 79E ordinance to Planning Department staff who asked for more clarification: what does the committee want included? Council is holding a 79E Work Session in December to discuss definition of zones, coastal resiliency opportunity zones, gateway, etc.

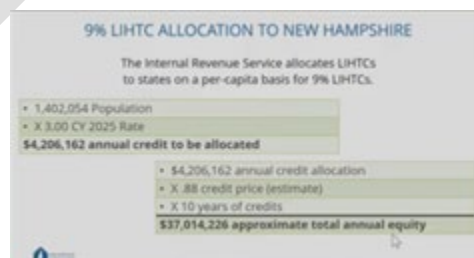
b. Transfer of Development Rights

- i. Dover updated its ordinance in 2018 to allow developers to pay a fee going to the Conservation Commission to purchase conservation land rather than donating a developer’s land for conservation. The sliding scale fee means housing that rents at the HUD Fair Market rate pay \$0 fee. Cottage Project is a prime example of this where residents with mixed needs and circumstances have created a vibrant, affordable community mix. This “transfer” approach has netted \$3 million for conservation.
- ii. In later discussion, Byron Matto suggested the fees might be more effective being collected in the Housing Trust Fund.

c. LIHTC funding



- i. Funding comes from the State budget. 2024-25 = \$35 million; 2026-27 = \$10 million.
- ii. Although the formula (below) is based on the NH population and will increase 12%, so have costs, so the number of projects funded will probably remain at 4-5 per year.



- iii. Developers who earn LIHTC funding can sell IRS tax credits to investors. Credit is a dollar-for-dollar deduction for 10 years.
- iv. There are 2 levels of funding (note: PHA has applied for both for Sherburne project):

1. 9% (70% subsidy for rehabilitation or new construction), highly competitive with 9 applicants but just 4-5 awards. This works best for projects with 35-40 units.
2. 3% (30% subsidy, generally in conjunction with a bank or syndicator of a pool of investors. Unlimited but contingent on tax-exempt bonding, only for construction, not operations. This works best for projects with 40 units or less.
- v. NH Housing revises the Qualified Allocation Plan each year and welcomes comments and suggestions for the 2026 plan. Link to current QAP: https://www.nhhfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2025-2026-Qualified-Allocation-Plan_Amended-June-2025.pdf
- vi. NH Housing also supports Supportive Housing & Opiate Use Disorder Housing using Sackler settlement disbursement; and the Federal Affordable Housing Fund disbursement for extra low income (voucher) residents.
- vii. NH Housing is concerned about the cost and supply chain impacts on the Build AmErika, Buy AmErika restrictions.

IV. Update on 1% Loan Fund

- a. Chair Tabor met with Lighthouse Credit and learned they are pursuing the idea of a collaborative effort to create a Seacoast housing fund. Subcommittee meets monthly. Clr Tabor invited committee members to consider being the representative to that group.

V. Recommendations Advanced to the Council for implementation by City Manager

- a. 79E referred to Planning and work session
- b. Planning Department review of 10.812 ordinance to remove the January 1, 1980 date and review the density requirements in SRA and SRB.
- c. Incorporating parking requirements in the Site Plan Review step.
- d. Expanding gateway zoning to Heritage and Constitution Avenues

VI. Public Comment

- a. Gerry Duffy (428 Pleasant Street) asked if those who might take advantage of the new allowances for ADU, etc. know about them and offered to create a Portsmouth Housing Opportunities toolkit for presentation to the committee. Has put up a Progress Portsmouth housing page, for example, reducing the 30 page ADU guidelines to a 1-page checklist.

Meeting adjourned at 6:52 pm.

Next meeting: November 20, 2025 at 5:30 pm.