



**City of Portsmouth
Housing Blue Ribbon Committee
MEETING MINUTES
December 11, 2025**

For the Zoom recording: <https://youtu.be/pVnVR7RpozY>

Meeting Called to Order at 5:30 pm.

I. Roll Call

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

II. **Minutes:** October 16, 2025 minutes approved on a motion by John O’Leary.

III. **Year-End Review and Future Discussion** (draft report to present to City Council Dec 22: <https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/agendas/2025/Housing%20Committee/Housing%20Committee%20year%20end%20report.pdf>)

- Sherburne School
- City properties
- GNOD and Housing Trust Fund
- Zoning changes and immediate opportunities
- 1 Percent Loan Fund
- Achievements toward goal of 500 units

Discussion of definitions for Approved – Commerce Way project in process with determination of the specific property in short order. Committee asked that the slide be revised with number of units gained toward goal of 500 units: sort in order of approved and pending and adjust co-living number (125 people/occupancy not units; JJ Newbury = 80 units. Plus 8 units on Pleasant Street—now shifted back to apartments). Committee thanked staff for the work to prepare the report. Service Credit Union creating a nonprofit to own and manage; number of units TBD (200?)

John O’Leary commented on the prospects for housing on the Pease Community College campus and asked if the City could be included in that subcommittee review. Any decision would come

to the Pease Development Authority board on which the City Manager sits and then go to Planning Board process. Could suggest a letter of support from the Mayor to the NH Congressional delegation.

Peter Britz suggested adding the ADUs permitted/pending to provide a benchmark to measure future accomplishment and whether the changes made (and now changed through State law) in zoning to allow for ADUs.

Chair Tabor provided a brief update on the 1% loan idea – Lighthouse Financial is putting together a committee of private sector and State participation and is on its way to achieving \$7-10 million in funding. Committee asked if there is an opportunity to connect with the Housing Trust Fund. Too soon to know Committee role. Right now pitched to employers.

Chair Tabor invited member(s) of the Committee to be present for Dec 22 City Council presentation.

Still working on adjusting the incentives program. Given the constraints on tax credits, these accomplishments are note-worthy.

IV. Update on City Council referrals to Planning Board

- Rezoning gateway back to City Council in Jan
- Parking in site review – staff is working
- Conversation of individual residences to multi-family – part of Master Plan
- 79E zones – Planning Board asked for City Council work session
- ADU (by-right not conditional use) and parking (1 per dwelling) adjustments because of legislation – coming back to Planning Board and then City Council

V. Update on HOP 2.0 Grant

- RKG coordinated with Resilience Planning & Design – look at zoning ordinance and draft amendments on sections for workforce housing.
- Once finalized, RKG would return for a public meeting and then follow-up with Planning Board and City Council.
- Revise to require 10 percent of additional units (vs. 10 percent of all units).
- Tool in toolbox not immediate route to affordable units.

VI. Residential allowed in commercial zones – July 2026 TBD

- Simplify Portsmouth zoning rather than adding category
- Requires water/sewer infrastructure in place

VII. Portsmouth Housing Authority Update on Sherburne School Project – Craig Welch reported on:

Scope and phasing – Due to financing and materials fluctuations, the project is being advanced in two phases. The original proposal always delineated two phases: new building and the school adaptation. PHA is advancing Phase 1 – the new building that delivers the most cost-effective/most units (90 of the overall 127) the soonest.

The plans evolved from the proposed:



To a Phase 2 option that demolished the rear portion of the school and added a middle building:



Phase 2 may evolve as PHA explores a different design that retains all of the school except for the gym/cafeteria at the center.

Funding: PHA has just received notice that the NH Housing Authority Multi-family Working Group is recommending the Sherburne project for 2026 tax credits. Final decision will be approved the week of December 15. Noted that the City's contribution of the property was a significant element in the overall scoring. PHA is now 3:3 in securing tax credits for projects. PHA reported the following funding realities:

- The State funded just \$5 million of the requested \$30 million for the trust fund.
- InvestNH 2.0 – there are 40 applicants (including PHA) for the \$7 million in residual funds to be announced by the end of December.
- Community Development Financing tax credits give businesses a chance to participate in funding; 31 will raise \$200,000 in 2026 and PHA welcomes investors of any size between \$1,000 and \$100,000.
- PHA itself has contributed \$530,000 in design and permitting expense; not including PHA staff time on the Sherburne project since 2022.

Extensive water/wastewater/stormwater work must be done, at an estimated \$500,000. PHA looks for the ability to offset that expense with fee reductions or possibly a City contribution.

Maintenance: PHA has an option on the project through December 2027 (would have preferred 2030) and will be responsible for maintaining the school building once the financing closes and the ground lease is signed. School is eligible for National Register listing but that would severely limit the project flexibility with Dept of the Interior restrictions on what happens to the interior or exterior. PHA is investigating LCHIP funding for the cupola restoration -- \$50,000 estimated for analysis and design. In the meantime, Sherburne building is watertight and solid structurally.

Timing: If all stays on track, Phase 1 shovels in the ground in summer 2026; Phase 2 in summer 2027 and occupancy in 2028.

Sherburne School Workforce Housing Key Dates Chart

Target Date	Actual Date	Action
30 Jun 22		PHA agrees to Mayor's request to study the feasibility of housing at Sherburne School
1 Aug 22		School Board Vote to move Little Academy
6 Jan 23		Presentation to Economic Development Commission
13 Jan 23		City Council Work Session on Sherburne School
21 Jan 23		City's Community Meeting at Sherburne School
1 Jun 23		PHA Preliminary Report and Timeline Presented to City Council
16 Feb 24		Mayor Appoints Blue Ribbon Housing Committee
21 Mar 24		PHA Presentation to Blue Ribbon Housing Committee
8 Apr 24		Blue Ribbon Housing Committee Vote to Solicit Qualifications from Developer Partners
16 Apr 24		City Council Meeting Vote to Solicit Request for Qualifications from Developer Partners
1 May 24		Deadline for Responding to RFP
15 May 24		Housing Committee Reviews Eight Responses to Requests for Qualifications
30 May 24		City Staff Recommendation to Issue Request for Proposals from Four Finalists
30 May 24		City Staff Selection of Finalists for Interviews
5 Aug 24		City Manager Issues Recommendations for Top Firms from RFP
19 Aug 24		Council Approval of Requests for Proposals
30 Aug 24		City Staff Releases RFP
1 Sep 24		Submit CIP Requests to City
11 Oct 24		Deadline for Responses to RFP
9 Dec 24		City Council Approval of Developer Partner
6 Jan 25		Community Outreach Program Commences
30 Jan 25		Community Meetings
16 Mar 25		Planning Staff Conceptual Consultation (Peter Bell)
1 May 25		Confirm Development Goals / Master Plan
12 Dec 25		Presentation to City Blue Ribbon Housing Committee
19 Dec 25		Housing Board Vote on Staff Committee Recommendations for LHFC Reservations
20 Apr 26		Deadline to Meet NH Housing Program Phase Requirements
1 May 26		Execute Option - Sign Ground Lease - Construction Financing Closing
1 May 26		Construction Start
31 Dec 27		Project Fully Leased

VIII. Public Comment

- Petra Huda, South Street – Asked that monthly progress reports, design changes and other documents be made public on the City website. Atty McCourt explained that any changes to the approved plan would need approval by the City Manager. Minor changes might need only Planning Director review; big changes would go to Planning Board and Housing Committee and then to City Council. Peter Stith apologized that all of the reports had not yet been posted (some were verbal reports to the City Manager). Project page: <https://www.portsmouthnh.gov/planportsmouth/housing/sherburne-property>

Future of the Committee:

Councilor Tabor noted that as a Blue Ribbon Committee, its term ends with this Council and will need to be reconstituted by the Mayor in 2026. He praised the members for the cross section of interests and expertise and would like to see them return. He asked members to advise him or co-chair Kelley whether they would like to continue. He expects affordable housing to be a topic discussed at the new Council retreat in January.

Meeting adjourned at 7:06 pm.

Next meeting: TBD if the Blue Ribbon Committee is reconstituted.

DRAFT