

**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
HOUSING COMMITTEE**



**THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2026, 5:30 pm  
City Hall Council Chambers  
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH**

Zoom recording: <https://www.youtube.com/live/iUUyGVTFT88?si=X3kxmlvbtuuYLyLT>

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**MINUTES**

**Meeting Called to Order at 5:30 pm.**

I. Roll Call and Welcome

Attending: Councilor John Tabor, co-chair; Councilor Beth Moreau, Jennifer Stebbins Thomas, Dagan Migirditch, Erik Anderson, Byron Matto, Angus McDonald, Oliver Chag, Eric Weinrieb. Staff: Planning and Sustainability Dept. Peter Britz, Stefanie Casella, Izak Gilbo.

**Members Excused:** Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley, co-chair; Mary Loane, Andrew Samonas, Caitlin McGrath-Levesque.

New members McDonald, Chag and Weinrieb joined the returning members in expressing their interest in the topic of housing to ensure new residents, especially Portsmouth's workforce, the same advantages they have enjoyed as long-term residents. All expressed awareness that without workforce housing, the workforce that sustains Portsmouth's vibrant economy will no longer be able to afford to live and work here. It takes a diverse range of housing for a diverse community to keep Portsmouth vibrant.

1. **Last Year's Action Items and Accomplishments – Councilor Tabor, committee chair**
  - **Sherburne School** – the Committee spent 20 meetings dedicated to providing public input to the City Manager and helping craft an RFP for redevelopment of the school as housing, resulting in the choice of Portsmouth Housing Authority for the project.
  - **City Property** – The Committee walked and reviewed City property to try to identify parcels that might support housing, and continues to consider that list and additional opportunities to partner with PHA properties.
  - **Housing Trust Fund** – The Committee championed and created a Housing Trust Fund that has a balance of \$500,000
  - **Gateway Neighborhood Overlay District** – First GNOD created off Commerce Way, with 1 acre parcel for development
  - **Further Zoning** – Advancing the prior Land Use Board chaired by Councilor Moreau, which rezoned Commercial zone areas to allow Mixed Use the Committee is working on how zoning can be reimagined to allow more residential use, especially multi-family
2. **Housing Action Plan**

- Councilor Cook made the successful motion at the February 17, 2026 City Council meeting that the City adopt Progress Portsmouth's Housing Action Plan: [https://www.progressportsmouth.com/hubfs/portsmouth\\_housing\\_action\\_narrative\\_reviewed.html](https://www.progressportsmouth.com/hubfs/portsmouth_housing_action_narrative_reviewed.html)
- Rather than act opportunistically, the goal is to have a systematic plan and for the Housing Committee, working with staff, to present that plan by July 2026. The Housing Committee is charged with setting the priorities, with every member's voice included in determining the most important actions, near- and long-term, that are feasible.
- Chair Tabor identified five key issues the Housing Action Plan should address:
  - Permitting to relieve land use board friction
  - Incentives and financial tools to fund the Housing Trust
  - City-owned land opportunities, eg City Hall lower lot
  - Partnerships and capacity
  - Education and outreach with data collection to identify best practices around the country Portsmouth could use as examples to make developing workforce housing easier (Housing New Hampshire)
- The Committee discussed at length what opportunities the new 79E RSA might offer. While providing a tax freeze for a set period of time on historic properties that are adapted for reuse as housing, and could have coastal resilience project opportunities, 79E does not apply to older properties that might be kept as workforce housing with an incentive to do so. The Committee suggested a work session to create an income-restricted structure to present to Council. Next step would be to discuss with Legal and Tax Assessor.

3. **Housing Action Plan Priorities** –he Committee discussed alternatives for reviewing all 147 Progress Portsmouth recommendations to identify a practical plan. First Peter Britz, Director of Planning and Sustainability presented the rationale his staff Planning team of four (Peter Britz, Stefanie Casella, Izak Gilbo and himself) used in selecting 26 feasible actions for near- and long-term action. Then the Committee agreed to bring their 'top 3' and "top 10" from that list and any they think should also be prioritized from the original plan for discussion at the May meeting.

#### 4. **Public Comment**

Gerry Duffy, Progress Portsmouth thanked the Committee for getting right into the Housing Action Plan goal and offered 2 comments. One, that Progress Portsmouth has information on its website explaining why affordable housing is so difficult to build:

<https://progressportsmouth.com/tough-to-build>

Second, he recommended getting more public input from those most affected by the workforce housing shortage. They tend not to be the ones who show up at public input meetings.

**Next meeting:** Thursday, May 21, 2026

The meeting **adjourned** at 7:12 pm on a motion by Stebbins-Thomas, seconded by McDonald

Staff Recommended Housing Action Items			Short-Term or Long-Term Action	Staff Comments	
144	GA-1	<b>HAP formal adoption and governance framework New</b>	Develop Implementation Plan.	Short-Term	Housing Action Plan- working with Committee to prepare a plan for City Council by July 2026. Planning Dept. staff of 4 as resources.
146	GA-3	<b>HAP budget alignment requirement New</b>	Require that the annual city budget process explicitly address HAP implementation funding.	Short-Term	Included in the CIP -- the budget planning starts early with the CIP. Want to make sure initiatives that could be included are and take account of any bonding needed.
115	EO-2	<b>City housing resources portal</b>	Update city's website with housing resources: programs, applications and ADU guidance.	Short-Term	Work is on-going -- the goal is to make the City website more robust and to enable small homeowner projects.
58	I-4	<b>RSA 79-E tax relief expansion</b>	Expand RSA 79-E tax relief to more areas and project types. Promote existing program.	Short-Term	More to review - adopting 79E where allowed is a high priority in the Housing Action Plan.
36	Z-36	<b>Monitor 2026 NH ADU legislation for conflicts with Portsmouth</b>	Three bills in the 2026 NH legislative session have direct implications for Portsmouth's ADU ordinance adopted February 17, 2026. Planning Department should review each bill against the adopted ordinance.	Short-Term, on-going monitoring	Work is on-going -- new ADU legislation means staff will review City ordinances to be sure they are in compliance. Staff are creating a new brochure to replace the lengthy handbook. Question about the ADU license renewal process and whether it can be simplified. The need is to ensure the rules on owner-occupied and not being used for short-term rentals. Inspections needed.
3	Z-3	<b>Residential conversion ordinance</b>	Continue to adjust zoning ordinance to comply with recent NH state law changes enabling office-to-housing conversions.	Short-Term	More to review -- a slow process to ensure compliance but need to get the language right on enabling the building of housing in formerly Commercial zones. Details: e.g. can municipalities define density? Need to get rid of leftover zoning.
9	Z-9	<b>Cottage housing / cluster development provisions</b>	Expand cottage housing cluster zoning to gateway.	Short-Term	Expand the Gateway Zone -- Look at examples in Keene where cottage also allows some infill in residential districts.
10	Z-10	<b>Develop in-lieu fee option</b>	Require or incentivize affordable units in developments above threshold size. Payment-in-lieu option funding to support the Housing Trust Fund.	Short-Term	Expand from the GNOD, more to review -- need to get the balance right on trading fees and goals such as density to allow mix of workforce rents.
1	Z-1	<b>Continue to rezone outdated O/R and GB districts</b>	Complete analysis of obsolete Office/Research and General Business zones and rezone to mixed-use Gateway or similar zoning enabling residential uses.	Long-Term	Work is on-going, more to review
5	Z-5	<b>Expand multi-family zoning</b>	According to master plan, adopt zoning to allow multi-family by-right in single-family zones with clear dimensional standards.	Long-Term	"After Master Plan update" is to reflect consideration now so recommendations can be included when plan is finalizing at the end of 2026. Staff will feed good ideas into the Master Plan. More to review --
7	Z-7	<b>Building Height Adjustment</b>	Review and selectively increase building height limits city-wide.	Long-Term	Preliminary public feedback at Apr 22 Master Plan meeting is they disliked taller buildings, but maybe on outskirts, eg Service Credit Union area on Rte 1. Height is a questions of meeting the sweet spot in expense.
8	Z-8	<b>Lot size and dimensional requirement updates</b>	According to master plan reduce minimum lot sizes, frontage requirements, and setbacks in targeted zones to encourage infill development.	Long-Term	After Master Plan update, more to review -- again, why does the City need 5 residential zones? So much of the inventory in them is non-conforming. More units could be added by making adjustments in lot coverage and setback but question of public tolerance. 65 ADUs approved since 2017.
11	Z-11	<b>Simplify form-based code</b>	Reform Portsmouth's existing form-based code to incentivize more below market-rate housing units.	Long-Term	After Master Plan update, more to review -- potential in the West End.

14	Z-14	<b>Live/work unit zoning</b>	Reform live/work unit regulations to expand access and reduce restrictions. Key reforms: allow non-resident workers to be employed in live/work units (currently banned), and expand to south end district.	Long-Term	After Master Plan update, more to review -- Arts & Culture Commission push for artist live/work spaces -- funding for a consultant to explore was added to the FY27 CIP
15	Z-15	<b>Outlying neighborhood development</b>	Rezone areas to allow new residential neighborhoods:	Long-Term	After Master Plan update, more to review -- consider smaller lot sizes? add amenities such as a parking garage?
21	Z-21	<b>Comprehensive zoning audit</b>	Full audit of zoning ordinance identifying provisions that constrain housing production. Prioritize amendments. GIS analysis quantifies the compliance crisis: 69.9% of parcels in single-family zones violate current zoning requirements.	Long-Term -- short-term need as foundation for the rest of the Housing Action Plan -- but takes time	After Master Plan update, more to review
33	Z-33	<b>Single-family zone reform strategy (R, SRA, SRB) RKG</b>	Comprehensive reform of Portsmouth's three single-family-only zones, which together represent 2,276 acres — 85.8% of all residential land.	Long-Term	After Master Plan update, more to review -- bigger zones have a greater impact on SRA, would offer potential for greater density
52	P-14	<b>Pre-approved residential design template program</b>	Establish a city-maintained library of pre-approved architectural designs for common residential building types including ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, small apartment buildings (up to 8 units), and cottage housing.	Long-Term	After Master Plan update, more to review -- interesting idea for first-time to reduce engineering and architect expense. The Planning Board would be accustomed to seeing and understanding the plan. Less likely of interest where land is most expensive and housing would more likely be a custom design
66	I-12	<b>First-time homebuyer program expansion</b>	Expand down payment assistance, closing cost support, and financial literacy programs.	Long-Term	More to review -- potential use for Housing Trust Fund?
72	I-18	<b>Historic preservation + housing incentives</b>	Incentives combining historic preservation with housing production: streamlined historic review, tax credit stacking.	Long-Term	Explore recommendations based on 79-E
79	HTF-3	<b>Housing Trust Fund: deploy for gap financing</b>	Revolving loans/grants for affordable and workforce projects. Prioritize projects leveraging other sources.	Long-Term	Need to get more funds into the trust.
92	PC-5	<b>State-level housing policy advocacy by Housing Committee</b>	Organize lobbying for state-level changes: inclusionary zoning enabling, pillow tax authorization, other tools. Bring to Legislative Subcommittee if necessary.	Long-Term	After Master Plan update, more to review -- City's Legislative Subcommittee monitors and testifies on legislation including housing. Committee can review and recommend actions.
104	PA-8	<b>Homeowner emergency assistance</b>	Emergency grants/loans for homeowners facing foreclosure, major repairs, or tax delinquency. Consider using Housing Trust Fund, Grants, or CDBG.	Long-Term	After Master Plan update, more to review -- yes, as funds grow. How would CDBG apply?
106	PA-10	<b>Federally subsidized unit preservation strategy RKG</b>	Proactively engage owners of federally subsidized housing. Map existing subsidized housing owners.	Long-Term	Does PHA track expiring subsidies?

	140	PT-12	<b>Buildout modeling for zoning changes</b>	Model the housing production capacity under current zoning versus proposed zoning reforms. Analysis should show current by-right capacity vs. proposed.	Long-Term	After Master Plan Update, more to review -- <b>Matto started mapping different scenarios in GIS if zoning were to change and is willing to continue that modeling. Creates a visualization tool that makes it easier for the public to understand.</b>
	143	CS-3	<b>Flood resilience and climate adaptation</b>	Implement Coastal Resiliency Incentive Zone (CRIZ) 79-E	Long-Term	Part of 79-E, Coastal Resiliency -- need to model CRIZ incentive to adjust for flooding, similar to Portsmouth solar incentive.