

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



THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2026, 5:30 pm
City Hall Conference Room A
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH

Zoom recording: <https://www.youtube.com/live/0g-dWslEiJ0?si=DSek7dq-3amTW5yu>

MEETING NOTES

Meeting Called to Order at 5:30 pm.

Roll Call and Welcome

Attending: Councilor John Tabor, Mary Loane, Andrew Samonas, Councilor Beth Moreau, Jennifer Stebbins Thomas, Eric Weinrieb. Staff: Planning and Sustainability Dept. Peter Britz, Stefanie Casella, Izak Gilbo.

Members Excused: Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley, co-chair, Caitlin McGrath-Levesque, Dagan Migirditch, Erik Anderson, Byron Matto, Angus McDonald, Oliver Chag.

No quorum.

1. **Approval of May 21, 2026 minutes** – Held for next meeting.
2. **Housing Action Plan Priorities** – The Committee addressed the top ten priorities selected at the May 21 meeting and reclassified in the Planning Department document. Planning made notes for revisions in that document (attached). The top priority is to draft a Portsmouth ordinance adopting zoning changes that enable RSA 79E as applicable to encourage more below-market-rate housing in Portsmouth. The three criteria to be encouraged via ordinance are:
 - Creating a housing opportunity zone overlay. Later discussion determined that this should be city-wide. Weinrieb commented that a case-by-case consideration would be too complicated
 - Allow housing conversion in Office zones offering the ability to add housing to strip mall properties e.g. McKinnon's/Cinemagic
 - Rehabilitation of older buildings for housing

Public Comment – Before further review of the individual action plan items, the Committee members agreed to hear public comment from Gerry Duffy, Progress Portsmouth. He commented:

- He has been working on the topic and following the Committee's work for some time and really appreciates that work.
- From the outside, he sees a narrative forming around 79E as a strong driver of all possibilities for housing, from ADUs to single-family conversions, to large multi-

family projects like Griffin Place. Whatever the project is has to make financial sense.

- He has spoken to some young developers who are interested and have funds to invest in housing, particularly small, multi-family projects, and are committed to helping with the City's solutions to the housing crisis, feel a civic obligation
- Parts of 79E could be supported by citywide opportunity zone, there is precedent. Is there anything to lose? Committee needs to put together zoning changes in the ordinance to make that possible.
- Committee could present a tight package with relatively few actions, built around 79E tax relief.
- Recommended that without clear goals, with objectives, people responsible and measures of progress, plans 'die on the vine.' Concrete goals are needed:
 - increase ADU's by 100%,
 - 5/year conversions to multi-family.
 - Most, PHA affordable housing is the hardest given the complexities but pursuing identified city-owned sites and other potential that might open up eg Walmart property.
- City can't make affordable housing happen but can create an investment environment with zoning and tax relief that initiates 2-3 large scale projects over next 18 months of the committee's term.
- Seems a doable proposition and hopes the Committee gives that some thought.

Housing Action Plan Priorities (continued)

There was discussion about the coastal resilience criterion but the committee felt further specificity was needed. For example Osprey might receive tax incentives to make improvements while keeping rents affordable.

Ultimately, each project is decided by City Council on a case-by-case basis. The market decides where it will work.

The proposed motion that could not advance without a quorum was "To request staff to work on a draft zoning ordinance to apply RSA 79E to a citywide housing opportunity zone and housing in Office/Commercial areas.

Several other items in the top-ten list are zoning issues that will be updated following the Master Plan (ETA late 2026). The City will hire a zoning consultant, possibly Rockingham Planning Commission to draft that update.

Adjourned at 7:04 pm.

Next meeting: Thursday, July 9, 2026