

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
HOUSING BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE



MEETING MINUTES

March 7, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

School Board Conference Room, City Hall, 1 Junkins Ave. Portsmouth, NH

Attendees: Co-Chairs Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley and Councilor John Tabor, Councilor Beth Moreau, School Board representative Byron Matto, Erik Anderson, Megan Corsetti (via Zoom), Tracy Kozak, Mary Loane, Dagan Migirditch, John O’Leary, Jennifer Stebbins Thomas, City Manager Karen Conard, Planning & Sustainability Director Peter Britz, Planning Manager Peter Stith and Housing Navigator Howard Snyder

Absent: None

Guests: Several members of the public, including Peter Whelan (via Zoom), Patricia Robinson (via Zoom), Gerry Duffy, Robert White, Peter Somssich, Bill Bowen, Ben VanCamp, Jim Smalley and John Logan. There were residents in attendance, both in the room and on Zoom, whose names I did not capture.

- I. The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Kelley at 5:31 pm.
- II. Co-Chairs Kelley and Tabor welcomed the members and guests to the first meeting of the newly established Committee. After brief introductory statements from each Co-Chair, the members introduced themselves and offered items of interest or expertise as a means to share with the entire group. As part of the Committee’s work, it is anticipated that there will be additional resources, speakers and experts on the subject of housing to be invited to join in the conversation – examples include the Rockingham Planning Commission, Seacoast Housing Coalition, Portsmouth Housing Authority and its development arm, and others.
- III. There was a discussion about items to consider for inclusion in the Committee Workplan, including recognizing the redevelopment of the Sherburne School property as a priority site for new housing units with an affordability component, establishment and funding of a Housing Trust, creating a payment in lieu mechanism, and zoning incentives which allow for greater density to provide housing units of all types for all income levels with a priority for affordable and workforce units. A general conversation ensued, with many of the members participating.
- IV. As provided for in the eight-page slidedeck, the Co-Chairs walked through some baseline information relative to the creation of housing units since 2015, recognition of the percentage of affordable units out of that number created, what has worked and what we as a community are still learning, testimonials from residents about the current state of housing in the community, and the definition of “affordable” units as legally defined by state and federal guidance. The members wrapped the discussion with

consideration of goal setting – how many below-market units (both for sale and for rent) to be permitted or in process by December 2025. A general conversation ensued, with all members participating. Co-Chair Kelley recommended that “homework” for the members to prepare and bring to the next meeting would be to articulate their goal of new units to be attained.

- V. The Co-Chairs closed the meeting by discussing a robust meeting schedule initially, meeting every other week for roughly the first 2 months and then switching to meeting monthly. The next Committee Meeting is set for Thursday, March 21 at 5:30 pm. Byron Matto agreed to provide minutes using Zoom AI feature.
- VI. During the Public Comment Section, the following individuals spoke: Gerry Duffy, Jim Smalley, Peter Somssich, John Logan and Ben VanCamp.
- VII. The meeting adjourned at 7:08 pm.