



## **MEETING MINUTES**

### **City of Portsmouth Housing Blue Ribbon Committee Conference Room A at City Hall\***

**Thursday, May 2, 2024  
5:30 p.m.**

#### **I. Meeting Called to Order by Co-Chairperson Joanna Kelley at 5:31p.m.**

Co-Chair Kelley calls roll call:

Attending: Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley, Councilor John Tabor, Councilor Beth Moreau, School Board Representative Byron Matto, Erik Anderson, Megan Corsetti, Mary Loane, Dagan Migirditch, John O'Leary, Jennifer Stebbins Thomas, Planning and Sustainability Director Peter Britz, Planning Manager Peter Stith and Housing Navigator Howard Snyder

Absent: Tracey Kozak, Karen Conard

#### **II. Approval of 4/18/2024 Meeting Minutes**

Co-Chair Kelley: Motion to approve minutes.

John O'Leary: So moved for discussion.

Erik Anderson: Second

John O'Leary: Specify "Newton, Massachusetts," not "Newton, New Hampshire." This correction was agreed upon to ensure accuracy.

Co-Chair Joanna Kelley calls vote.

In favor: All.

Opposed: None.

Motion approved unanimously.

#### **III. Chairperson's Update on Sherburne School Property Disposition Process**

Co-Chair Tabor: The property is currently under the administrative jurisdiction of the city manager as per the city charter. The city manager is initiating an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) process to identify qualified developers for the project. The specifics of the RFQ process, including how it will be publicized and the timeline for submission and review, were discussed. Anticipate a robust response.



Megan Corsetti: How does this RFQ get noticed to the public?

Director Peter Britz: The RFQ aims to attract developers interested in developing the property into below-market-rate housing. The process includes a public phase where developers can submit their qualifications and proposals for the project. The city council has emphasized community involvement and the importance of ensuring that development meets the needs of the community. Will be on the city website.

Megan Corsetti: Window of RFQ process?

Director Peter Britz: The planning department reiterated the city's commitment to transparency and community engagement throughout the development process.

Erik Anderson: Will it come back to this committee for review?

Co-Chair Kelley: We can ask the council for the housing committee to have a role: We are not policy making entity.

Erik Anderson: Expectations that they would come in and present to this committee and we have a role in reviewing.

Co-Chair Kelley: City Manager will provide the RFQ, will be out and following a very public process. Director Peter Britz: Describes differences between RFP vs RFQ.

Megan Corsetti: When will there be outreach with Pannaway residents?

Director Peter Britz: Planning department will continue to oversee the project, ensuring that all procedures are followed, and that community feedback is considered.

Co-Chair Kellye: This committee is a conduit into the process.

Erik Anderson: Need engagement out in Sherburne neighborhood when the plans are starting to develop. Co-

Chair Kelley: Start asking questions and answers, responses will be given to the committee from staff.

Megan Corsetti: RFQ process and the public decision process be open as much as you can share within the law.

#### **IV. Discussion of Goal Statement**

- a. Sample motion *“Identify, recommend, and refer to both the appropriate land use board and City Council for consideration, changes that will facilitate the creation within the next two years, by public and private sectors, of at least 500 permitted, affordable housing options and that promote a sustainable, long-term housing market.”*

The meeting resumed with a focus on revising and finalizing the goal statement concerning affordable housing targets. The original motion on the table aimed to recommend policy changes that would facilitate the creation of at least 500 affordable housing units over the next two years.

Co-Chair Kelley: Asks if there are any adjustments to the goal statement?



Erik Anderson: Concern with using number 500. Is this a goal with a particular timeframe? Soften the statement. What about measuring as there are no percentages. What are the expectations between the two sectors? Too hard and fast.

The statement was discussed with suggestions which would include both public and private sector contributions. Concerns were raised about the specific wording, emphasizing a preference for it to reflect an aspirational target rather than a hard mandate.

Dagan Migirditch: Modify the language to make it less of a mandate and more of a goal. We are not a policy committee. Pushback on the 500 being removed.

Byron Matto: Goal is aspirational, measure is important. Number is aspirational and not a mandate. Not materially different. Took out public and private, not a huge difference. Focusing identifying those working at the lower income levels.

Mary Loane: Conversation around 500, not arbitrary. Have a conversation around the why.

Co-Chair Tabor: Important to have a quantitative goal, measured gets. We are an advisory committee not setting policy. The 500 is important, don't want to make it a maybe.

Co-Chair Kelley: Reviews proposed changes to goal statement: ***“Recommend policy changes that would secure permits for at least 500 units of diverse, affordable housing over the next two years, while promoting market conditions to ensure long-term affordability and accessibility for all income levels”***

Erik Anderson: Important part of the statement is how the public and private sectors are involved. Conceded to leaving 500 in.

Beth Moreau: Motion to approve the goal statement.

Co-Chair Tabor: Second:

Co-Chair Kelley: Amendments?

Erik Anderson: Amendments to add private and sector after diverse.

Beth Moreau: Second.

Mary Loane: friendly amendment: phrasing

Erik Anderson: rescind motion to add as just described:

Beth Moreau: Reads motion: “Recommend policy changes that would secure permits for at least 500 units of diverse, affordable housing by the private and public sector over the next two years, while promoting market conditions to ensure long-term affordability and accessibility for all income levels”.



Beth Moreau: Motion to approve goal statement with amendments.

Jen Stebbins: Second

In favor: All

Opposed: None

Motion approved unanimously.

Co-Chair Tabor: Staff will keep track of other requests for work.

Erik Anderson: Asks about other sites for housing.

Co-Chair Kelley: Work plan will organize.

#### **V. Housing Navigator Presentation on Places to Live Study Circle Dialogue.**

Howard Snyder: Presents summary report, highlighting the "Places to Live" study circle proves and emphasizing the importance of the community's willingness to accept changes and how this forms an important input for planning.

The presentation highlighted the economic feasibility of achieving 10% affordable housing at 80%, noting that community sentiment and acceptance are crucial inputs for successful policy implementation.

Byron Matto: Discusses actionable steps like changing zoning regulations to facilitate accomplishments in housing developments. There was a consensus on the need to understand current barriers presented by existing zoning laws and to explore how they could be amended to facilitate housing projects.

Further discussion revolved around developing a work plan to guide the committee's efforts in addressing housing issues. The plan would include examining city land for potential development, identifying impactful zoning changes, and exploring private solutions like community nonprofits for affordable housing.

Co-Chair Kelley: Development of work plan, workflow and priority. The importance of a systematic approach to gathering input, such as through key informant interviews and ensuring comprehensive community engagement, was highlighted.

Members expressed the need for more detailed information from the planning board and insights into the barriers faced by previous plans due to current zoning. There was also a call for expert presentations from entities like the Seacoast Workforce Housing Coalition to ensure all committee members have a uniform understanding of the issues.



## VI. Public Comment

Howard Snyder: Participants in the Places to Live Study Circle dialogue effort were invited to this meeting to talk about their experience in the dialogue effort and provide their thoughts on housing.

Peter Somssich @34 Swett Avenue: (Group G): Employer responsibility especially Pease, transportation – connecting neighborhood transportation outside connection as well. Link, other issues neighborhood protection: How much can we grow? Where is the limit and capacity? There are limits to what we can do. Definitions that need to be resolved. Affordable is not really a defined term. Are we building for local needs and who is benefiting?

Petra Huda @ 280 South Street: (Group J): Raised questions about the RFQ (Request for Qualifications) and RFP (Request for Proposals) processes, expressing confusion over how proposals can be solicited without clear plans and designs Differences of knowledge bases. Portsmouth 400 report. Goal number 6 – will be hard to do. Historic district – what does it mean to this city.

Jim Smalley @ 352 Kearsarge Way: Talked about out the need for context and historical background in housing discussions. He criticized city-imposed requirements that drive up housing costs and advocated for reconsidering zoning regulations to make housing more affordable. Weaknesses in the data without context – root cause of housing expenses – what are you willing to give up – height restriction, sparking, min. lot sizes. Far, FAR – how serious are you about making housing affordable for all.

Manny Garganta @ 471 Colonial Drive: asked about the city's ability to negotiate with developers for workforce housing contributions and questioned the impact of recent zoning changes on new developments.

Committee members clarified that while the city can incentivize workforce housing, it cannot mandate it. They also explained that recent zoning changes would not affect projects already in the pipeline before the new rules were adopted.

The open discussion session concluded with a reminder about the upcoming charette process by Service Credit Union and the need for continued communication and collaboration with surrounding communities on housing issues. The meeting adjourned with a request for forwarding any further questions or comments to the committee chairs to ensure all information is shared and addressed appropriately.

Beth Moreau: Motion to adjourn.

John O'Leary: Second.

In favor: All

Opposed: None

Motion approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:16p.m.