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**MINUTES**

**HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**7:00 PM**

**JUNE 21, 2016**

**SCHOOL DEPARTMENT CONFERENCE ROOM  
MUNICIPAL COMPLEX, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE  
PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rebecca Perkins, City Councilor (Chair); Chris Dwyer, City Councilor; Rick Taintor, Planning Director; Mike Kennedy, Commissioner, Portsmouth Housing Authority; Nancy Colbert Puff, Deputy City Manager;

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Eric Spear, City Councilor; John Ricci, Chair, Planning Board; David Witham, Former Chair, Zoning Board of Adjustment; Jessa Berna, Planner I.

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**I. CALL TO ORDER**

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**II. STAFF PRESENTATION**

Councilor Perkins highlighted the main focus of the presentation pertains to the issue in lack of affordable housing within the City. It intended to provide context for the subsequent discussion centered around three major points. First, to discuss where new housing can be built in Portsmouth to address changing demographics and increased costs. Second, to identify what forms of development are appropriate to certain areas of the City where new housing can be built. Lastly, to suggest actions the City should take to address the problem.

Mr. Rick Taintor's presentation included the following statements:

- In the past six years, there have been 182 housing units completed. Given current and prospective development plans, the housing stock is expected to increase by 10% from 2010 over the next decade.
- There are several varying definitions of affordable housing based on either household size or family income.
- The sale price of any unit classified as workforce housing is proportionate to income, which in Portsmouth equals a sale price of \$289,000 for family income of \$86,000. Workforce housing rental price including utilities is \$1,160, which accommodates lower income individuals earning around \$46,490.

- 46 ● Potential strategies to increase the availability include, but are not limited to, adding density in
- 47 zoning, introducing mixed-use zoning, providing zoning incentives, providing land, or
- 48 underwriting housing costs.
- 49 ● Housing types conducive for affordable housing are new apartments and condominiums in
- 50 retail corridors, accessory dwelling units, multifamily conversions, or small infill in residential
- 51 areas.
- 52 ● Examples of affordable housing development designs in other communities were provided to
- 53 illustrate possible residential and mixed uses.
- 54 ● SB146 law would require the City to permit ADUs in every zoning district where single-family
- 55 is permitted either by right, special exception, or conditional use permit. Further explanations
- 56 of the Residential Density Incentive Planned Unit Development (RDI-PUD), Gateway Planned
- 57 Development, and Incentive Overlay Districts (Character-Based Zoning) were provided for
- 58 context.
- 59 ● The Housing Committee reviewed several areas for potential affordable housing; a commercial
- 60 corridor behind Service Credit Union, an area nearby Five Guys, an area nearby Bowl-o-Rama,
- 61 the outskirts of Woodbury Avenue near Market Basket, a parcel between Borthwick Avenue
- 62 and Islington Street, the Greenleaf Woods office development, and the Frank Jones Center
- 63 property.
- 64

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67 **III. PUBLIC INPUT SESSION**

68  
69 Jeff Kisiel, 21 Wallis Road

70 Mr. Kisiel answered the proposed questions as follows:

- 71 1. New Development Location – He felt that an area near Wallis Road would be conducive for
- 72 affordable housing. The Bursaw’s Pantry site would be good for mixed use development. The
- 73 Yokens lot would not be ideal, however, the area behind it at Mirona Road could offer a nice,
- 74 secluded village. The McKinnons’ lot may not fit what the committee is looking for. He
- 75 mentioned over 200 acres of land between of Peverly Hill and Banfield Road could be a great
- 76 place for high density development similar to Beechstone, Springbrook or Patriots Park.
- 77 2. Forms of Development – He thought it should be high density, shared public space.
- 78 3. Actions – The charrette for Route 1 that occurred was a great idea.

79 Mr. Kisiel expressed concern that the City lost an opportunity in the Maplewood Avenue project.

80  
81 Craig Welch, 77 South Street

82 Mr. Welch noted he is the director of the Portsmouth Housing Authority, which is the largest landlord  
83 of affordable housing in Portsmouth and offers several support programs to help facilitate new  
84 affordable housing developments. He thought that price and scarcity of land are the largest  
85 impediments to increasing affordable housing. He answered the proposed questions as follows:

- 86 1. New Development Location – Their team plans to work on a charrette at Gosling Meadows. He
- 87 thought that focus should remain with preserving the affordable housing that is currently
- 88 available. There are a variety of financing tools available such as the Low-Income Tax Credit
- 89 and other subsidies.
- 90 2. Forms of Development – Energy efficiency, mixed income, mixed age, and support services are
- 91 important considerations in any proposed affordable housing development.

- 92 3. Actions – The City can introduce density and construction standards. He encouraged utilizing  
93 the Portsmouth Housing Authority as a tool and resource to help solve the scarcity problem of  
94 affordable housing.

95 Councilor Dwyer asked what percentage of the Housing Authority’s current stock provides for seniors.  
96 Mr. Welch explained there exist six public housing properties built between the 1950-1970s and most  
97 were originally intended to serve seniors. However, the ADA later required that affordable housing be  
98 aimed for non-elderly individuals with disabilities. Of all occupants, approximately 200-300 are  
99 disabled, 200-300 are elderly, and the rest are families with children.

100  
101 Councilor Dwyer enquired Mr. Welch for his opinion on the value in developing micro apartments. He  
102 thought the demand is very high and noted the size of the waiting list for all rental units is consistently  
103 300-400 people. Location is the most important factor for microunits.

104  
105 Johanna Lyons, 18 Cutts Street

106 Ms. Lyons explained that her residence is bordered by truck stops and falls on a line between  
107 commercial and residential. With that, she felt it is best to introduce residential into commercial  
108 districts, rather than the opposite. She was conflicted on promoting higher density because it is unsure  
109 if the affordability would be preserved. She thought that the gateway on Route 1 is a great area to  
110 introduce mixed use. The traditional neighborhoods intersected by I-95 should be improved to make  
111 whole again. She thought that smaller stores mixed with residential housing is something to consider  
112 on Route 1.

113  
114 Edward Miller, 5 Central Avenue

115 Mr. Miller felt that any possible location for future affordable housing development is largely based on  
116 the proper zoning and availability of land. The developer has to risk their own capital and should  
117 expect a reasonable return on that investment. It has to be a parcel that fits into the Master Plan,  
118 ordinances, and the surrounding community with respect to density. He cautioned to avoid drastically  
119 change zoning to suit the needs of any proposed development. He was encouraged by the locations  
120 suggested in the presentation and felt those areas could be suitable for affordable housing. The  
121 neighborhoods around Maplewood Avenue already offer a form of affordable housing with several  
122 duplex and condominium parcels. In all the incentive based options, the definitions were all focused on  
123 family incomes and household incomes.

124  
125 Robin Comstock, Executive Director, Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast

126 Ms. Comstock introduced the mission and background of the Workforce Housing Coalition of the  
127 Greater Seacoast and offered their services. It currently supports 54 communities in the Seacoast  
128 region and serves as a catalyst between residents and governments. The organization is currently  
129 working on a charrette project at Gosling Meadows in October and will be hosting a Housing Summit  
130 in November at UNH Durham.

131  
132 Ms. Comstock answered the proposed questions as follows:

- 133 1. New Development Location – Proximity to the central business district and major employers is  
134 an important aspect of workforce housing, especially given the scarcity of public transportation.  
135 Walkability is also an important factor.
- 136 2. Forms of Development – Mixed income, mixed use, and mixed age increase the integrity of the  
137 construction. Owner operated businesses can be well integrated into residential communities.

- 138 3. Actions – Land use regulations and density ordinances should be the primary course of actions.  
139 She echoed the initiatives discussed in Mr. Taintor’s presentation.  
140

141 Rick Becksted, 1395 Islington Street

142 Mr. Becksted provided a brief background of the land transition at the Pease Development Authority  
143 (PDA) and suggested the city seek regaining any portion of that land. He supported more  
144 developments similar to Patriots Park, Beechstone, Cedars, but found that the high cost of land would  
145 pose a major obstacle. He encouraged the drawbacks in any future endeavor to promote workforce  
146 housing be weighed into consideration. Impact fees could be leveraged for the City to negotiate their  
147 intentions for new proposed development.  
148

149 Dan Umbro, 21 Wallis Road

150 Mr. Umbro read a statement composed by the 603 Initiative non-profit organization, a group aiming to  
151 empower young adults to enhance civic participation and advocacy. The statement indicated the  
152 organization’s full support for the efforts of the Housing Committee and thought additional workforce  
153 housing should be best achieved through zoning changes. Other areas outside downtown should be  
154 examined, in particular the Route 1 corridor.  
155

156 Barbara DeStefano, 99 Hanover Street

157 Ms. DeStefano was intrigued by the ADU law and hopes that the City does not apply too many  
158 restrictions to that type of development. It could be an avenue to increase the number of microunits  
159 available. She referenced a property on Lafayette Road that is well suited for affordable housing. She  
160 preferred the idea of the Southgate Plaza as opposed to Portwalk Place. She felt more development  
161 should suit elderly people that want to live on their own in the downtown area.  
162

163 Cliff Lazenby, 303 McKinley Road

164 Mr. Lazenby reminded that several people at a Master Plan public forum indicated density should not  
165 be increased at several areas within the city. He suggested providing incentives to specific  
166 neighborhoods to compensate impacts from surrounding capital improvement projects that increase  
167 density.  
168

169 Paul Mannle, 1490 Islington Street

170 Mr. Mannle explained how many pockets of land in the City are landlocked by wetlands, as noted by  
171 the Master Plan consultants. He understood that affordability is based on housing costs and  
172 transportation costs combined. That is why Boston’s affordability is lower than Portsmouth because  
173 their transportation costs are much lower. He recommended that detached accessory dwelling units be  
174 allowed in any future proposed ordinances. The WHEB parcel near the commercial strip could be a  
175 potential opportunity for workforce housing. He suggested using existing parking lots to expand  
176 upwards to provide parking for workforce housing. The Committee should approach the PDA  
177 regarding potential available land for workforce housing.  
178

179 Councilor Dwyer responded that only about two acres of remaining available land in the PDA is not  
180 wetland. It was documented in the 2008 Master Plan and could be potentially revisited. At that time,  
181 the Air Force would not allow housing certain sections of the PDA and there may be valid, unknown  
182 reasons for that.  
183

184 Wes Tater, 411 Middle Street

185 Mr. Tater acknowledged Councilor Perkins', the Housing Committee, and the Master Plan efforts to  
186 help devise a housing plan and improve the quality of accessibility to housing. Gentrification continues  
187 to challenge several many communities.

188  
189 Mr. Tater thought existing neighborhoods should be expanded and industrial land space be preserved.  
190 He advised that microunits and entire developments foster connectivity to avoid isolation from needed  
191 services. Any workforce housing development should consider implementing sustainable practices,  
192 enhancing public transportation, and increasing water conservation. Identifying the target demographic  
193 could help to shape future development for affordable housing.

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197 **IV. NEXT MEETING: JULY 15, 2016 – 8:30 AM**

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201 **V. ADJOURNMENT**

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203 The Housing Committee meeting of June 21, 2016 adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

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205 .....  
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207 Respectfully submitted,

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212 Marissa Day  
213 Acting Secretary for the Housing Committee