

Housing Task Force Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 11, 2022, at 10 am Durham Council Chambers

Members Present:

Heather Grant, Chair

Tom Elliott – arrived at 10:03

Richard England

Nick Taylor, Advisor to Committee (Executive Director of the Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast)

Sally Tobias

Michael Behrendt, Town Planner

By Zoom –

Members Absent : Charlotte Hitchcock, Mimi Kell, Al Howland

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 AM by Heather Grant.

Agenda- Agenda had added the invitation of John and Maggie Randolph of Harmony Homes and developers of workforce housing project in Dover, NH

Public Comments: None

Approval of Minutes: March meeting minutes approval postponed to next meeting.

Updates from Town Staff and Boards related to Housing:

Heather Grant/Michael Behrendt – updated on Planning Board items

Discussion-

Nick Naylor updated the Housing Task Force on housing related work being done at the State level. He also provided printed document on the State process for challenges to Planning Board decisions. Discussion occurred around the topic of State involvement in defining Short Term Rentals, and how any wording would impact what Durham has implemented into the Zoning, as well in general the topic of pressure for rental housing competing in some areas with Short Term Rentals.

John & Maggie Randolph presented a picture of the challenges from a cost perspective for workforce housing builds. Along with costs to actually complete construction, the ability to even breakeven with an affordable housing project is impacted by delays in approvals by local Boards. Impact costs are ongoing, ie costs of loans and taxes, etc.

They believe ADUs will add much to help with housing needs. Two per property, both attached and an additional unattached is being discussed in some communities. It can allow elderly to move to the ADU, and release housing inventory for a new growing family. Enables to age in place on the property they own, but in a smaller more manageable housing unit.

Affordable housing – current workforce housing density benefits are not enough, they focus on developing without density. We need developments with high percent of workforce housing.

-Dover used a TDR Program to enable practicable solutions to move the project forward and within the requirements, no Conditional Use. Constructive working relationships, progressive land-use regulations that create density required to enable workforce housing.

To get the Dover project approved, they had two TRC meetings and two Planning Board meetings. Once the checklist was confirmed to be compliant, then that was it, no fiddling with opinions of minor changes that add time, which adds costs.

55 and over housing is ageism/segregation in housing. It is easy to get passed, but if we want our State to continue to prosper, we need to integrate ages, it is a healthier lifestyle with mixed developments and we need young people to come into our state.

The Durham project allowed them to improve their hiring situation at Harmony Homes.

Good takeaway -We need to make sure we are being effective to get good projects through Durham with strong technical reviews to ensure compliance to regulations that take away some time from the Planning Board process. We can be effective at defining the project for Public Comments review feedback but manage total time on the process. Don't get lost in the weeds! Town staff should have more authority for minor adjustments, not need to come to Planning Board for things like Sign size adjustments.

Comments on other Agenda Item of review of Conservation Subdivisions- we ran out of time to review adjustments to the Conservation Subdivision regulations, postponed to May meeting.

Adjournment –

The meeting concluded at 11:51 a.m.

Next Meeting- May meeting:

Richard Reine to come for a discussion on infrastructure as it relates to new housing.

Review of Conservation Subdivision review, review of State influence on housing 79E and the Housing Appeals process, possible attendance by Richard Reine, Public Works Director, on infrastructure.