

MINUTES
APPROVED
Durham Housing Task Force
April 10, 2023
10:00 am – Council Chambers

Video recording of meeting available online at:

<https://durham.vod.castus.tv/vod/?video=5bc6aede-f076-4a84-a3f1-6aaa47c26c5f>

Housing Task Force Members Present

Heather Grant, chair, Planning Board representative
Cathy Frierson (via Zoom)
Charlotte Hitchcock
Chuck Hotchkiss (Town Council Representative)
Al Howland
Eileen Murphy
Michael Saputo
Judith Spang (via Zoom)
Sally Tobias

Others Present

Mimi Kell, advisor, Golden Goose Properties
Nick Taylor, advisor, Workforce Housing Coalition
Michael Behrendt, Town Planner (“Michael B”)

--Chuck moved to approve the March 13 meeting Minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

--Heather opened the floor for reports from Durham committee members and Advisors to Task Force.

Nick reported on State House bills passed in the budget since last Housing Task House meeting.

These included: Affordable Housing Fund: \$30,000,000.00

Invest New Hampshire: \$15,000,000.00

Both bills now go to State Senate.

Al commented on the steps needed to get the bills passed at the full proposed amounts after the House voted. He stressed how “amazing” it was that the full amounts made it into the budget.

Heather reported that the 74 Main St. project in Durham is back before the Town Planning Board.

Mike B. noted that there are currently only twelve (12) 2-bedroom units in the 74 Main St. project. Sally said that they are to be offered at market rate. Thus, not likely to mitigate affordable or workforce housing needs.

Mimi called attention to UNH’s recent release of the West Edge Innovation Plan for the west end of campus along Main St./155A. She noted that it includes housing for UNH graduate students and other residential housing, but the plan does not state such housing will be affordable or for workforce housing. Perhaps an opportunity to address affordable housing needs.

Regarding the UNH West Edge project, Sally asked that the Housing Task Force request meetings with someone from UNH who can provide details about the plans and progress. Her suggestion opened a discussion among members about why our engagement in the West Edge project as Durham representatives “at the table” henceforth would be suitable and important for the work of our Task Force. She said we needed especially to get a better understanding of what the UNH planners mean by “mixed use” in the plan.

Mike B. explained that it’s a bit early in the process to be expecting details, but said UNH would have to work with the town on the plan, because the properties there will be privately owned, thus subject to taxes and zoning regulations. He said he would ask UNH planner Ken Weston to attend our next meeting.

Al stressed that working collaboratively with UNH planners would facilitate our application for state funds, such as Invest NH. We should request that they share the scope of their studies and that we share ours. He noted that this would be especially important on infrastructure issues.

Mike said that the town could go ahead and develop the P.U.D. ordinance.

Nick stated that the next two rounds of funding for the state grants are for Phase 2: Audit of zoning regulations, and Phase 3: Development of plans. Application deadline for Phase 2 proposals is end of June. Application deadline for Phase 3 proposals is November 15.

Al responded, “All the more reason” to sit together with UNH planners as soon as possible, with an eye to those proposals.

Sally asked Mike B. if it might be useful for the town to prepare a P.U.D. (Planned Unit Development) ordinance as part of the UNH West Edge process. Mike B. said it can be done,

and then explained the steps to be taken by the developer and the town in issuing a P.U.D. He explained a P.U.D. usually emerges in phases. Heather reminded members that P.U.D. instructions are available in the NH state regulations. Al responded that this sounded like a process that could take a full year to get done; Sally again stressed that we should still pursue it as part of our charge on Housing Task Force to pursue the Housing needs for the full town of Durham, in whose boundaries the West Edge project will fall and whose infrastructure and housing supply it will affect.

As part of the continuing discussion of the West Edge project, Heather noted that the UNH announcement indicated that UNH hopes to attract more graduate students via the development on West Edge. Thus, perhaps even greater shortages of graduate student housing loom.

Sally stressed that Durham and surrounding towns simply do not offer affordable housing for new employees UNH envisions for West Edge development. For now, more employees will mean only more commuters.

Mike B. explained that that the drive behind the West Edge vision is high-tech innovation. He noted that the UNH release stresses goals of creating a walkable neighborhood, including housing and some retail. A mixed-use project aimed at attracting high-tech businesses and employees.

Michael S. suggested he reach out specifically to Cari Moorhead as dean of Graduate School to discuss the graduate student housing element in the West Edge project, UNH study on graduate student housing needs, and the overall challenges. Al offered the caveat that Mike S. must present himself NOT as representing the town or the task force, but as a Durham resident trying to facilitate the sharing of information.

Al said that we need to receive a copy of the graduate student housing report from survey and study underway at UNH. Further, we need to keep UNH in mind as we move toward the fall forum on housing that we have proposed in our first application to NH grant programs (the grant we received for \$20K)

The Housing Task Force then turned to discussion of RKG Consulting's revised proposal to prepare the study of housing needs for which we received the \$20K state grant.

Members offered several comments on specific aspects of the proposal. They fell into three categories:

1. Definition of housing categories with particular concerns about

- segregating data on student population and housing from town resident population and housing and

- for identifying housing for the over-55 population in both the current supply and the future needs.

2. Need to add relevant UNH data/reports more explicitly in the categories of data, reports, and interviewees. “Long-range planning and housing reports and documents.”

3. Need to have analysis of the dynamics of changing population and housing needs. That is, the analysis should go beyond just the data to help define housing needs and goals.

Within these three concerns, some members pointed to more elusive issues not currently visible in the RKG proposal. Over-55 population, housing needs, and transitions arose at several points in the discussion. Sally requested that RKG pay attention to the housing needs for caregivers for the Durham elder community. Is it possible to pursue data on what transitions most Durham seniors choose (age-in-place? Need for ADU for caregivers? Downsize? Assisted care? Memory care?) In particular, is it possible to find out how many residents of RiverWoods lived in Durham before moving to Riverwoods?

In addition to these revisions to the proposal’s categories of data, the Task Force addressed need to revise the Timeline for the data-gathering, iterative revisions as data come in, and opportunities for the Task Force to respond to the information RKG gathers.

Specifically, the following suggestions met with general support:

- Mike S. asked that the “kick-off” meeting described in the proposal happen very soon and before RKG starts gathering data. At that meeting, the Housing Task Force could see the revisions in the proposal and learn the schedule and specific steps RKG has scheduled.

Nick reminded the committee of June 30 and November 15th application deadlines for Phase 2 (Audit) and Phase 3(Development) NH housing grants. RKG timeline for meetings with us and providing the final report should align with those application’s needs. He also explained that the deadlines are “tight” because all the funds will come from federal ARA funds, which have to be spent by 2026.

Mike S. also suggested we align our meetings with RKG and receipt of their data with the Public Forum we have promised in our Phase 1 grant. Looking at the November 15 deadline for Phase 3 proposals, he suggested we ask RKG to submit full report by October 2 and that we schedule the Public Forum for around October 15. That would enable us to use the following weeks to finalize our proposal for Phase 3 deadline. Members discussed this suggestion and converged on the dates of October 2 for the report and October 15 for the Public Forum.

Judith asked how RKG would go beyond presenting statistics in their report. “Where will we see their judgment?” Mike S. and Nick pointed to specific sections of the RKG proposal that

constitute analysis, such as Housing Gap Analysis. Heather explained that the data will be dynamic because RKG will begin with data from 2019 to see trends. Chuck pointed to the promised projections of needs by RKG as analysis.

Mike B. asked for clarification on how his Town Planner office and staff should coordinate any of their work on ordinance changes with the RKG analysis. Nick stressed that the RKG report is being funded by NH state/ARA funds designed to add value to what town planners and their staffs can do, and that the RKG report and our Public Forum are thus to supplement the work of Mike B.s office, not replace it.

Following the discussion, Heather called for a motion to approve the RKG proposal, with the committee's suggested revisions included. Motion made and seconded. The roll call vote was unanimous in approving the motion.

Heather then opened a discussion of how we are able to accomplish public outreach on housing needs and to gain public input in advance of the Public Forum.

Mike B. reminded members that the state grant we have received calls for "significant community engagement," and that he had been told that the Public Forum was not enough to fulfill that obligation.

Sally and Cathy volunteered to prepare a first draft of a one-page survey to distribute to Durham residents, as well as to come up with ideas about how to get widespread public response.

Sally suggested that Housing Task Force send members to explain our work and goals to each of the Town commissions with an interest in what any revised housing ordinances might be. Most obviously, these would include the Historic Commission, Land Stewardship Commission, and Conservation Commission.

Members proposed we distribute surveys from a Housing Task Force "table" at such events as Durham Day (June 3), Farm Day, and weekly Farmers' Markets.

Mike S. also suggested that Todd Selig in the Friday Updates include an announcement about our work, the upcoming Public Forum in the fall, and a call for feedback to our survey efforts.

Heather called for a motion to adjourn. Al made the motion. Sally seconded the motion.

Roll call was unanimous Ayes, except for Judith., who had by then stepped away from her Zoom call.

Minutes prepared by Cathy A. Frierson, Housing Task Force member