

**APPROVED MINUTES**  
**Durham Housing Task Force**  
**September 11, 2023**  
10:00 am – Council Chambers

**Housing Task Force members present**

Sally Tobias, chair  
Charlotte Hitchcock joins on Zoom around 11:15am  
Chuck Hotchkiss, Council Representative  
Al Howland  
Eileen Murphy  
Paul Rasmussen, Planning Board representative on Zoom  
Michael Saputo (“Michael S”)  
Judith Spang on Zoom

**Others Present**

Nick Taylor, advisor, Workforce Housing Coalition  
Michael Behrendt, Town Planner (“Michael B”)

**Members of Public**

Janet Perkins-Howland

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Call to order 10:04am

**Approve Agenda**

Approved with consensus

**Public Comments**

none

**Approval of August 14, 2023 minutes**

Al Howland moves  
Sally seconds  
Roll call: all yes (Al and Chuck abstain due to absence at last meeting)

**Reports from Committee Members and Advisors:**

State (Al Howland, Nick Taylor):  
Legislation is coming, this week is filing period. We do expect a proposal regarding ADUs. There’s a lot of conversation currently. Specifics are not publicly filed yet.  
Possible ADU ideas: limits to parking regulations or minimum lot sizes in municipalities; allowing detached ADUs by right.

Randolphs (Michael B.): willing to come speak to Task Force to talk about their development in Dover. (Sally): touring “The Cottages” – their development in Dover – might be very valuable for the Task Force. Helps us visualize how much can fit on a small lot, how the space is utilized in a small house.

Discussion about scheduling to get Planning Board members and Task Force members to attend: during work vs. after hours. (Nick) Workforce Housing Coalition is planning an after-hours tour.

### **Communities and Consequences – “Fact or Myth” Episode 1 – a short film on housing** (Nick)

There were 2 longer documentaries over the last 10 years or so. This is a shorter “Fact or Myth” film meant to focus on most challenging issues in housing. Meant to be a tool for Planning Boards, committees, etc. to provide reliable information to residents.

Stories from residents of workforce housing in Portsmouth and Lancaster.

Sally: one of the producers, Sarah Wrightsman was formerly a Durham resident, but she couldn’t find housing in town when she wanted to buy. She and her family now lives in a condo in Newmarket.

Paul: This is an example of how Newmarket has done a better job meeting the needs of the community.

### **Housing Task Force Charge – Review of charge and consideration of proposed change from Janet Perkins-Howland**

Al: It does seem important to add “future residents” into the charge. As the Durham workforce evolves, Durham needs to evolve as well.

Sally: Durham doesn’t have balanced housing options anymore.

Discussion amongst all members on Mission and words used in the charge.

Michael B: provides revised language, incorporating the proposed revision.

Sally: We’ll need an explanation to the Council as to why we need this change

Al: acknowledging that we’re not just serving “current” residents is important

Paul: Instead of talking about current and future can we say “growing Durham community?” We don’t want it to feel like “us” vs “them.”

Sally/Al: the word “growing” may get pushback.

Al: Part of planning is planning for the future, we need to think about what Durham will look like and need 5 years from now.

Judith: What is the word “environment” for?

Sally: the conditions on the ground.

Paul: I don’t think environment is a good word.

Al: What about “housing stock?”

Michael B: we say *housing* environment, does that help?

Michael S: can we say “housing market?”

Judith/Sally: that refers for buying/selling, what’s available

Michael S.: what about “housing options?”

Paul: housing “inventory?” – general consensus on this

Sally: Invitation to Janet Perkins-Howland to comment

Janet: Removing “future *people*” and replacing it with “future of Durham” removes the human element that was intended by this proposed revision.

Judith: it’s possible we’re getting too into the weeds. Let’s make sure this statement guides us into the future still.

Michael B reads the proposed mission statement:

*The mission of the Durham Housing Task Force is to analyze the existing housing inventory and to advocate for a balanced housing mix with a variety of choices that meet the economic, social and physical needs of current and future residents of varying financial resources.*

Many support this statement.

Michael B: Janet also a suggested addition to “Duties”

Chuck invites Janet to explain why she wanted an addition.

Janet: The word “equity” is meant to set the mindset with which the committee does its work.

Al: have we covered equity with our revisions to the mission statement?

Chuck: We are missing language about specific mechanisms and tools

Michael B: such as proposed strategies

Should language about solutions to the housing crisis be added?

Chuck/AI: Do we have a role in suggesting regulatory changes to the Town Council?  
Or is this overstepping?

AI/Sally: We should research and identify tools available to improve housing options and share that information with the Town Council. This supports the mission of the Council. Zoning is not the only answer to housing issues – there are many layers.

Paul: That falls under long term strategies.

Proposed new bullet under “Develop long-term strategies regarding housing”:  
*Advocate for housing designed to accommodate under-served households including identifying and incorporating state and federal incentives that enable its development.*

Paul: second-to-last bullet sounds elitist and puts up barriers to what we do.  
Many members agree with this opinion.

AI: Many of these things are elements of the Master Plan – this is meant to encourage us to align with the Master Plan.

Sally: “*Unusual* closeness to nature” is unclear.

Eileen: Can we add “equity” to this list under the second-to-last bullet?

AI: This is a list of barriers to equity that’s often used against us, sometimes as tools to prevent equity, let’s add “equity” to balance that out.

Sally: We should add equity, but the issue is the main statement in this bullet. Equity needs to be in here if Durham is to be a welcoming community. That said, “quintessential” seems problematic.

Michael B: Can we propose removing this word? Iconic?

AI/Paul: Quintessential could be removed. “Academic” sounds elitist as well – hints at an ivory tower.

Consensus: Add equity and diversity, strike “unusual” from “closeness to nature.”  
Strike “quintessentially” and “academic.”

Sally: Also issues with “Review regional housing patterns...” A true analysis of changes across the region would be impossible.

Paul: I don't think we can respond to this but nor do we have to we don't need to.

Michael B: Our next task is to bring these changes to the Town Council on October 2. Our charge sunsets on October 2.

Sally: It was also said that we will need to report what the Task Force has accomplished. Let's move that to November.

- The Task Force is currently designated year to year. This work will take more than one more year.

Michael: If we want it to run for more than a year, we should propose this in October. Most communities with housing committees have terms of longer than one year.

Sally/AI: Hopefully we'll be finished with the needs assessment and community outreach a year from now. We won't have zoning recommendations ready a year from now.

Chuck: But forcing the Town Council to think about this every year brings housing issues to their attention year after year.

Paul: We need time to provide a package of our findings to the Planning Board and have the Planning Board respond before we bring anything to the Town Council. That adds a number of months to our timeline.

Consensus that a reasonable term for the Housing Task Force is 2 years.

Charlotte joins on Zoom.

Vote to propose changes to the Town Council (changes to the charge and extension of HTF term):

Motion to approve: AI

Seconded: Eileen

Roll call: All yes (Judith does not vote)

### **Outreach to Individuals and Organizations in the Durham Community**

Reponses coming in from most people on Task Force.

AI: ORCSD has been hard to get through to. They may be more responsive to the electronic forms.

Michael B/Eileen: Why not send it to the broader community?

Sally: Let's stick with employers and employees in the Durham community.

Charlotte: Will share link with Riverwoods staff.

Michael S: The responses are giving some insight into the issues people are facing.

Michael B: So the idea behind this is to go through businesses and organizations first.

Sally: When we do another survey we can reach out to Durham residents in earnest and collect more information about their experiences.

### **Other Business**

October 9 meetings falls on Indigenous Peoples' Day and needs to be rescheduled. Rescheduled for October 16. Same time.

### **Adjournment**

Al motion

Michael S second

All yes.