

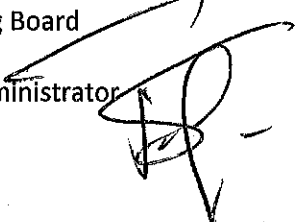


TOWN OF DURHAM

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Memorandum

TO: Durham Planning Board

FROM: Todd I. Selig, Administrator 

DATE: March 13, 2024

RE: Recommendations Concerning Tonight's Public Hearing - Workforce Housing Proposed Zoning Amendment and Rezoning of Parcel Consideration of a set of proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance pertaining to workforce housing including adding a definition, adding a line to the Table of Uses, adding a section providing the standards for workforce housing, making several other text changes, and rezoning a 117-acre lot of land owned by the Leda M. Keefe Rev. Trust, c/o Daniel Keefe, at 59 Piscataqua Road, Tax Map 209, Lot 39, from Residential Coastal (RC) to Office Research (OR).

The process used for the above noted workforce housing amendment, including the public hearing, has resulted in valuable input from the Housing Task Force, residents, developers, and other stakeholders. This has taken a significant amount of time and effort by the Planning Board, Housing Task Force, and other stakeholders, and the community is fortunate to have the benefit of the Planning Board's work.

Some of the suggestions proffered, in particular the development of workforce housing overlay districts, have resonated well with staff, residents, and developers. Durham now has the benefit of examining how such overlay districts have been implemented in other NH communities, and in particular, how one or more of such overlay districts might work in Durham, versus the current zoning proposal under consideration by the Planning Board.

It is my understanding that there is an interest by workforce housing developers, like John Randolph, to possibly develop projects with more age and economic diversity while remaining focused on workforce housing. This may lead to more vibrant developments over the long-term and may make proposed projects more economically viable and therefore more likely to actually move forward. This should be examined.

A variety of concerns have been raised in regard to the proposal currently before the Planning Board that would rezone parcels within Residential Coastal (RC) districts to Office Research (OR).

Given the above, I offer the following recommendations:

1. After the Planning Board receives feedback this evening and closes the public hearing, opt *not* to move forward with the current proposed zoning changes before the board.
2. Instead, request that town staff examine both workforce housing overlay districts (with the goal of developing such an overlay district appropriate for Tax Map 209, Lot 39 and potentially for other parts of Durham as ultimately deemed appropriate), and investigate additional options to add more economic and age diversity to workforce housing districts in order to increase a workforce housing project's financial viability and long-term vibrancy.
3. Request such findings and recommendations be brought back to the Planning Board to be integrated into a new zoning ordinance proposal that would utilize the best aspects of what has been developed to date, combined with what is learned through the upcoming process.
4. Depending on the complexity and time involved with this work, the Town might consider engaging outside expertise, though I would defer such a decision to future conversations.
5. Separately, RKG Associates will need to address a variety of issues that have been raised by residents and staff so that their draft Housing Needs Analysis report dated December 2023 can better inform Durham's long-term strategy. The revised report, however, should *not* be a prerequisite to our continued work on a workforce housing zoning amendment, though the revision may impact where Durham ultimately chooses to use future workforce housing overlay districts and to what extent in other areas of the community.

I believe the recommendations outlined above will allow for a useful refresh and more measured and collaborative conversations concerning next steps moving forward as Durham works to address this important issue.

Thank you as always for your consideration.

cc: Town Council
Housing Task Force
Daniel Keefe
John Randolph