

FINAL

**LEBANON HOUSING TASK FORCE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
[LebanonNH.gov/Live](https://lebanonnh.gov/Live)
Monday, January 27, 2025
8:15 AM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Tim McNamara, John D'Entremont, Ryan Dube, Andrew Faunce, Tracy Hutchins, Tia Winter

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ellen Smith Ahern, Susan Almy, David Duncan

STAFF PRESENT: Catheryn Hembree, Associate Planner, Nathan Reichert, Director, Planning & Development

1. CALL TO ORDER – Meeting was called to order at 8:16AM by Mayor McNamara.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Ryan Dube MOVED to approve December 16, 2024 Minutes as amended. The motion was Seconded by Mr. Andrew Faunce.

Amendments:

Page 2, lines 17 and 21 change to Mr. Dube (replace Faunce)

** The MOTION was approved unanimously*

3. STUDY ITEMS:

A. Housing Opportunity Planning Grant consultants

Joining today's meeting were: Steve Whitman and Liz (no last name provided), with Resilience Planning & Design, Eric Halvorsen and Alison Christensen, RKG Associates.

They along with Fougere Planning & Development (in the future) will be helping the City of Lebanon Housing Task Force with the HOP Grant. Liz will be taking the lead on community engagement. Eric and his firm focus on market analytics to help communities understand their housing market. Allison will be focusing on the numbers.

Mr. Whitman explained their process and how the four items under the Project Scope work together.

The focus for the beginning of today's discussion was Housing Needs Assessment and Market Analysis, the first of four parts under the Project Scope. They will evaluate the housing situation today in terms of the kinds of housing here currently, and what the housing needs will be in the future (for both current and future residents of Lebanon). Their study will look at demographic changes, household changes, changes in employment both here and in the region, and they will evaluate the housing stock, along with pricing for both for sale housing and rentals, again both here and in the broader region.

Lastly, under this item, they will assess the affordability factor, considering the pricing of housing compared to various income levels of households as well, resulting in an affordability gap analysis, which looks at Lebanon's current housing stock, the incomes of households who live in the community today, and determines if there is a mismatch between the price point of housing and the incomes. This can be used to target specific income groups.

The above will entail a review of zoning, infrastructure, rents pricing, talking with major employers in the area, and holding several focus group meetings. Zoning will be reviewed after voting in March 2025.

Mayor McNamara stated that they can utilize the current substantial data already in existence and the need to utilize this grant as effectively as possible. The City is in an extremely difficult budget season now and will be for some time to come, exasperated by a lack of State funding. There is a high level of sensitivity around housing, so he asked the consultants to be sure and include a financial analysis on the impacts of various types of housing on the community.

Mr. Faunce likes their approach and the fact they will come back to the Task Force with the data they collect and invite questions from this Task Force. One consideration he cited is for major employers to become more involved with the municipalities in which they are located.

Mr. Duby asked if the consultants can also consider Vermont in their studies, since this is part of the "broader region". They indicated they think they can, given the proximity of Vermont to Lebanon.

Ms. Hutchins stated that in terms of broadening their scope, many Lebanon employees drive as much as 60-90 minutes from their homes, a very large area. She asked the consultants to be aware of this. They confirmed that they will be working with large employers, such as Dartmouth, to uncover their employee surveys to get a sense of what the employee demand is. There is a belief that many different people want to live in Lebanon. They anticipate conducting new employer specific surveys that will result in employees helping to quantify information.

Mayor McNamara stated the importance of "**community first**" and that their work needs to take the temperature of our Lebanon residents. How can we best serve them? This will remain a top priority and Mr. Halvorsen confirmed this is their primary focus as well.

Next, Mr. Whitman said that the regulatory and compliance audit will start in March (*after* voting on zoning). They will review the City's guiding documents, Master Plan, vision statements, and other elements of planning documents that the City has developed, and the regulations, among other things, to see if they are aligned or if there is a disconnect.

Given the need for and move towards a new housing chapter in Lebanon, the consultants will incorporate more peoples' lived experiences, along with information to try and identify gaps and/or strategies that the City might want to adopt. They will also be talking with many City staff. All this will be to help create an implementation plan for the next phase of regulatory work that the City could do for the next housing chapter for the City of Lebanon. This will be in the spring and the early summer. The consultants will come back to this Task Force for further feedback on their findings.

The next item under the Project Scope that was discussed was Community Engagement, which is a key component of this project. Initial branding of this project along with messaging about why people should care are a key consideration especially if residents know they can weigh in on their own unique housing needs. This is one of the consultants most important tasks, and they will lean on this Housing Task Force to help them be sure they are getting the initial messaging right. They will utilize a diverse suite of

mechanisms to try and get people engaged as noted above. These mechanisms fall into two general categories, first getting the word out and the second is how they are soliciting feedback from the community. Liz said they will utilize employer surveys, employee surveys, and resident surveys as well. She said they will bring specific outreach ideas to this Task Force in the February meeting. This will further help define their work and uncover any gaps.

Mayor McNamara said it can sometimes be a challenge getting feedback early on from the public. Mr. Faunce asked if the consultants could scrape names from minutes or target specific stakeholders, and they indicated that they could do this. They are open to many different strategies to get the required information. RKG tries to be diverse in their approach and that is why the initial work and initial messaging they get out is of utmost importance.

Ms. Hutchins has a vast amount of knowledge and antidotal information that she can share. She likes the idea of focus groups and thinks they may get more information that way than with other efforts. Another idea is to have three public engagement events and Liz ask for their thoughts about this idea. This was well received.

Mr. D'Entremont suggested that they have had the best success for turnout by personal invitation. That partnered with a poster and QR code at neutral venues (e.g. a concert), along with someone there to answer questions, has worked well recently.

The consultants will also be speaking with the Zoning Board and Planning boards, as they move forward with creating their deliverables both to keep them updated and to get their feedback.

The consultants will be designing a *project logo* to distinguish this project and make it recognizable to the community. They will present this logo to the Lebanon Housing Task Force in February, to make sure it feels like Lebanon.

They will prioritize both digital and print educational materials on the housing landscape, including showing stats and figures, along with visuals and graphics to make it easy to understand and communicate information in an interesting and compelling way. These will be utilized throughout the project and in numerous ways. For example, they can also make 24"x36" posters with QR codes, posted in key places such as at the City Clerk's office, The Lebanon Opera House, etc... Also, possibly talking with people in lines (e.g. City Clerk's office) provides a captive audience and was suggested as another viable idea.

Mayor McNamara said that the senior community is a difficult demographic to reach but an important one, so an event at the senior center could be useful. Task Force members shared numerous ideas including: Mr. Dube suggested Valley News, since their demographic would include seniors. Networking with a core group with one-on-one interfacing could be helpful. DHMC could be a source. Catheryn asked about a program at the Senior Center, Harvest Hill, etc. Mr. Reichert suggested they try to leave no stone unturned. All points of communication, such as the Farmer's Market, senior living homes, etc. with public engagement will be helpful. It is vital that they get as broad of a cross section and all segments of the community and real effort as early on as possible, so that their information is thorough, and not skewed in any way. Mr. Dube reminded them that getting feedback from the diverse landlord population in Lebanon is important as well. Resident owners as well as corporations ownership and learning what would help keep the wealth here in Lebanon. Ms. Hembree suggested several small meetings for the best results.

Mr. Reichert suggested they also focus on ROIs and the positives, not just the liabilities. This is an area of sensitivity and perhaps this study can help guide the City. It was agreed that the School District needs to

be a key partner in this initiative. It's important that the consultants understand the schools, growth, enrollment study, etc. Mr. D'Entremont said he thinks a comprehensive study will be available possibly as early as April. Ms. Winters cited a survey that was given to all parents about school lunches, and she thinks this could prove valuable as well.

Mr. Reichert stated that if they (Task Force and employees) all step up with their engagement, they can take this to another level in providing comprehensive feedback and getting communications out to the public along with their feedback. Mayor McNamara wants to be sure that we have feedback from as broad of a swath of people as possible.

The consultants will be working with Ms. Catheryn Hembree, Associate Planner, and doing a driving tour of Lebanon on Monday, February 10th at 10:30AM; all others on this Task Force are invited to go. They will also work with Mark Goodwin, GIS Coordinator, Planning & Development, to obtain the substantial City of Lebanon information he can provide them.

The consultants will determine where they can best spend their time and provide a tiered approach so that they are focusing on this. They will also provide this task force with other actions that could be initiated by the Task Force as well as possibly employees so that they have many helping to facilitate this important project.

B. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission Request – Tia Winter/Public Housing Funding Model

The DEIs Chair had brought forth an idea about the public housing model study done in Montgomery County, MD, Maryland's Public Housing Funding Model. Ms. Winter provided an article from the New York Times, dated August 25, 2023. Mr. Dube weighed in on this and said that the key is getting the seed money and having accurate financial projections to see if the numbers make sense, since there is substantial ongoing costs to managing these projects.

There is also a Community Block Grant program that might make sense. Mr. Dube will reach out to his contacts and try to get more information. He cautioned against using the term "public housing" as that is not the goal here in Lebanon. The Federal Government funds public housing by providing funding thought capital funds and management operating funds to the public housing agency in this case Lebanon Housing Authority.

Mayor McNamara said it's important to completely understand what we already have here in Lebanon, particularly Twin Pines and others totaling approximately 500 units. Mayor McNamara said that these projects are expensive and very complicated, and they require staffing, so there are many things that would need to be factored into any projections. He acknowledged that these are all good models to look at and that it might be that we already have the infrastructure in place here. For a city of our size, we have had good success in growing our affordable housing.

Ms. Winter will go back to the DEI and share this information, so that the DEI has a better understanding of what low income housing we already have here.

It was noted that in many parts of the country, these issues would be addressed at the County level, rather than having one City, in our case Lebanon, shoulder the entire responsibility. Mr. Dube asked if we could work with the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority to see if we could get more assistance. The

communities that are doing a good job, like Lebanon, are in fact being penalized for their success, resulting in less funding. Mayor McNamara stated the importance of understanding all sides of the matter and balancing it. The option of more low-income housing will remain a consideration for the Lebanon Housing Task Force.

4. OTHER BUSINESS:

5. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

6. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Andrew Faunce MOVED for adjournment

Seconded by Ms. Tia Winter

****The MOTION was approved unanimously***

The meeting was adjourned at 9:38 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Cinda Mersel

Recording Secretary