

FINAL

**LEBANON HOUSING TASK FORCE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
[LebanonNH.gov/Live](https://lebanonnh.gov/Live)
Monday, May 19, 2025
8:15 AM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tim McNamara, Chair, Ryan Dube, David Duncan (virtual), Andrew Faunce (virtual), Tracy Hutchins, Sarah Riley, Ellen Smith Ahern, Tia Winter

MEMBERS ABSENT: Susan Almy, John D'Entremont,

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

1. CALL TO ORDER: Meeting was called to order at 8:17AM by Mr. Tim McNamara

Ms. Catheryn Hembree read the preamble.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

*Ms. Tia Winter MOVED to approve April 21, 2025 Minutes.
Seconded by Ms. Ellen Smith*

** The MOTION was approved 4-0 (2 abstained)*

Mr. Andrew Faunce joined at approximately 8:35AM.

3. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Housing Opportunity Grant (HOP)

Mr. Steve Whitman, with RP&D, started this conversation by providing an overview of the policy and regulatory draft that his firm sent to Task Force members.

- Overview of the Policy and Regulatory Audit
- Review and Discussion of Audit Key Findings
- Update on Outreach and Education Tasks and Timeline

Chair McNamara said that the City Council approved the Strategic Plan through 2028 and so they can use this to inform themselves as there were some changes.

Mr. Whitman said that the City has been very focused on both housing variety and supply issues for many years. These have informed land use regulations which guides the day-to-day work and will most likely be the path forward.

He shared the following Housing Related Strategies under Policy and Regulatory Audit:

- **Balance development** within the limits of current City services, neighborhood character, infrastructure, and tax structure.
- **Collaborate with employers, organizations, and communities** in the region on workforce housing initiatives.
- Encourage new housing to be located **close to urban centers and infrastructure.**
- Ensure that there is a **diversity of housing in and around the Lebanon Central Business District.**
- **Encourage and work with the Lebanon Housing Authority** and other organizations working on housing issues.
- Explore incentives for **creating housing opportunities on upper-level floors in West Lebanon and Lebanon Downtown.**

They will continue to circle back to this working list and fine tune it as needed.

Overview of the Policy and Regulatory Audit – Mr. Whitman asked:

Is there any desire to restrict the location or potential of larger multi-family structures?

Are there any questions or comments on the Draft Audit?

Chair McNamara commented that over the last year or so, the Council has heard concerns about large multi-family units. The sentiment is not focused on anything specific, however the core is more that people see this as the only alternative in this market. So, a key focus is to create some different housing opportunities.

Also, people have suggested that the City should simply turn down any new building proposals; this is neither a viable nor legal option.

Mr. Dube said this is a balancing act in that there is a demand for townhouses, garden-style housing and apartments, etc., but that these are not economically feasible for builders. He asked what could the City do to make these smaller units and private housing more viable?

Mr. Faunce added that at the Planning Board level, they hear vehement reluctance of large-scale apartment units (R-1 zones), unless they are very near DHMC. Other residents seem to support redevelopment in downtown areas, building walkable, higher density housing in West Lebanon and Lebanon (e.g. former woolen mill). He hears that Lebanon is quickly becoming a renter's community rather than a buyer's community.

There is a desire for a smaller scale higher density housing; how do they incent to make this attractive to the market.

Mr. Dube said there are significant code requirements above 4 units inside a building, but in order to make it viable financially, the costs of all of the other units go up as well. This is the "missing middle".

Another consideration is having new higher density construction match or fit into current neighborhoods (e.g. columns, large front porches, etc.) How do you do this without pushback from the current residents, and still have it be financially feasible for would be builders?

Parking has been a hindrance for smaller lots, but the State has improved on this recently, now requiring only one spot per resident, and Zoning can use different tools such as a shared parking area.

Mr. Dube said that they need to look at not only the short-term needs of professionals, but the housing needs of the same people as they grow their families. Ideally, Lebanon wants to keep these people here in our community, but if we do not have housing for them, they will be forced to move away. This will have a detrimental impact not only on citizens but on local businesses as well.

Mr. David Duncan said that Dartmouth Health has been able to hire the number of nurses they've needed, approximately 400 annually, for the past several years. Many of these nurses leave here though after 2-3 years and when asked why (Dartmouth interviews each of them), it is because there is no housing here for them to buy their own housing. He asked if there is a way to incentivize construction of owner-occupied units. Chair McNamara said that at this time, it is not economically feasible. Builders have to rent out for several years with the hope that they might eventually be able to sell these houses. The other way is to build modest homes, for example 2,000 sq. ft. and these will sell for greater than \$900,000. There is a huge demand, even at these high prices.

Chair McNamara referenced the 5 units Barrows Street project, said that they are struggling to bring in a 900 sq. ft., 2-bedroom cottage, full unfinished basement, no garage, no land value, for under \$400,000. Land, materials, and labor are issues and lastly, add an entrepreneurial mindset, of a builder willing to do this.

Chair McNamara asked Mr. Whitman if part of their work will incorporate data specific to Lebanon and what makes Lebanon different from nearby towns? Can RP&D provide these details? Mr. Whitman believes they can provide some details and will look into this further.

Mr. Reichert said the City can help educate and facilitate current residents on how to go about building an ADU on their property; these additional units could provide substantial additional housing in the City of Lebanon.

Ms. Liz Kelly spoke next to provide an update of the Lebanon HOP Outreach Timeline. They have been working on mobile tabling and display kits, which will encompass numerous ways to not only get the word out about HOP, but also to collect information for this initiative.

- There will be a large banner to hang on the table at event and/or a large pop-up tent
- “Tell Us Your Story” 5x7 note cards for people who want to fill these out in person
- A large poster with 2 key questions from the resident survey and a QR code as well, giving access to the full survey
- A large poster showing the HOP process
- Take home postcards promoting the housing story online form as well as the online survey form
- A housing needs assessment one-page handout summary
- A Market Analysis/Fiscal Impact Analysis one-page handout summary
- An email subscriber sign up list

RP&D will continue to get feedback from the Housing Task Force. Along with this, their next step for the June meeting will be to provide a draft of the resident survey questions, a draft of the tabling displays and kit materials, and a presentation of the Fiscal Impact Analysis or Market Analysis.

Mr. Nate Reichert said that the local Lebanon Rotary Club is offering to help support these efforts with food, etc. at these events. They are very enthusiastic about helping with community outreach efforts. Mr.

Reichert and Ms. Hembree have a second meeting with the Rotary later this morning. They, along with other community partners, will step up and get the word out about this initiative. He will be able to provide more details at the June meeting.

Mr. Dube said that he thinks we have other business partners willing to contribute to this effort, such as a company that will make t-shirts, along with other items. Mr. Dube will pass this contact information along to RP&D.

4. NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Dube gave an update on the “housing world”. The State Senate Bill #81 is going before NH legislature soon, that earmarks a \$25M, one time deposit into the affordable housing fund as well as increasing the annual contribution from \$5M to \$10M (the State is saying they need more skin in the affordable housing market). This money comes from the real estate assessment tax that is paid across the state and is not a tax increase but rather a reallocation from general funds to housing specific issues. If this is of interest to anyone, seeing more of our money dedicated to affordable housing, he encouraged all to contact their local representatives to make your support known. This could result in more tax credit development approvals than would normally happen this time of year.

At the federal level, he encouraged all to really look carefully at the information being provided by various sources. He is reminded of the term “voodoo economics” and reiterated to really dive into the numbers and do your homework by looking at the line items, not just the headlines. For example, **a headline might read that there has been a housing funds increase of 14% but** there was also a 15% offset to funding, netting out to a negative number of funding for the year...

Ms. Smith Ahern suggested Junction Arts and Media (JAM) as a public outreach community partner to work with the community and encourage people to share their stories. JAM conducts podcasts, news interviews on the streets, etc., and can help this Housing Task Force determine how to best share peoples’ stories back into the community in a broader sense, rather than just relying on the report being prepared by RP&D.

5. OTHER BUSINESS:

6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

7. ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Winter MOVED for adjournment
Seconded by Ms. Riley

**The MOTION was approved unanimously*

The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 AM

Respectfully submitted,
Cinda Mersel
Recording Secretary