

FINAL

**LEBANON HOUSING TASK FORCE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
LebanonNH.gov/Live
Monday, June 16, 2025
8:15 AM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ryan Dube, John D'Entremont, Andrew Faunce (virtual),
Ellen Smith Ahern (virtual), Sarah Riley

MEMBERS ABSENT: David Duncan, Tracy Hutchins, Tim McNamara, Tia Winter

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

****NOTE THAT THERE WAS NO AUDIO OR VIDEO FROM THIS MEETING.
FUNDAMENTAL DRAFT IS FROM NOTES OF THE RECORDING SECRETARY**

- 1. CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting was called to order at 8:19AM by Mr. Andrew Faunce,
Vice Chair

Ms. Catheryn Hembree read the preamble.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

*Ms. Riley MOVED to approve May 19, 2025 Minutes as written.
Seconded by Mr. Dube.*

** The MOTION was approved unanimously*

3. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Housing Opportunity Grant (HOP)

- Market Analysis

Alison Christensen, RKG started by sharing a presentation of their analysis of what is happening in Lebanon, New Hampshire. It is an overview, and they will continue to add and edit this.

Key areas covered were a profile of Lebanon's housing stock, current market conditions, and development trends (over the past 10 years), and assessing the housing demand.

They have been conducting interviews with stakeholders and found there were at least three recurring themes. Those are:

- Housing is too expensive and unstable for many residents
- Market demand is strong, but supply is inflexible and mismatched

- New development is suppressed due to high costs and regulatory barriers
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She shared a more detailed slide showing more on each of these themes. Some key points were:

- Lebanon is the largest town in Grafton County
- Claremont, Hartford, VT, Springfield, VT, and Hanover are the next largest
- There are approximately 6,500 housing units and these are split 50% owners/50% renters
- Existing housing stock is dominated by single family homes, owner occupied
- Rental stock ranges from 1-4 units to more than 50 units
- Vacancies are higher in the rental stock, highlighting the need for more affordable housing

National average is approximately 2,500 square feet (for houses) both nationally and in Lebanon. Also, households in Lebanon are a majority of 1-2 person households, hence the demand for smaller, flexible arrangements.

Vacancy rates for both owner (1.5%) and rental units (3.1%) is quite low, indicating a highly competitive market with limited availability.

Lebanon has an increasing amount of seasonal units, and this has risen dramatically from approximately 90 units in 2019 to around 770 units in 2023, almost an 8-fold increase in just four years. “Seasonal” is defined here as occupied for six months or less (per year). Since these units are not inhabited nor are they on the market, this further limits the Lebanon housing market for people who want to live here.

Next, Ms. Christensen shared what has been happening in the past 10 years in Lebanon. 1,018 units have been added since 2015, with a vast majority of these (more than 90%) being rental units. This is both a result of high market demand, and high construction cost as well as higher interest rates.

While there has been consistent construction of new single-family homes during this same period, the numbers are quite small.

Median sales prices have increased drastically since 2020, largely driven by pandemic related shifts in housing preferences and a demand for less dense areas. Lebanon median price tracks with the State but is well above Grafton county.

Housing inventory has also decreased sharply, resulting in a high demand for homes as well as sustained high home prices. There are many people coming to this area, unable to find affordable housing to purchase. Turnover of homes for sale is fast, and more than 30% sell for more than asking price.

25–44-year-olds dominate single family home purchases; they are earning much higher incomes than in recent years. Younger buyers are borrowing on average 95% of the valued property, whereas buyers 35 and older are putting down 20%, reflecting common national lending patterns. The median property value among these applicants is approximately \$355,000.

Market vacancy rates on multi-family units were questioned since they varied dramatically on two different slides. Ms. Christensen will look into this but stated that the current slide (“a moment in time”) is more up to date than the earlier slide.

The core upper valley has a steady demand for rental units. Asking rents have steadily increased, with the sharpest growth in two- and three-bedroom units, where there is a tight supply and high demand. She

showed three large multi-family units in Lebanon and Hanover, and they maintain between an 84.8% to 93.3% occupancy rate. Lebanon is the driver of multi-family housing in the core upper valley sub-market.

Ms. Christensen showed information on the top ten Lebanon employers in 2024 along with the average earnings of the ten highest earning positions. Next, she presented the top ten largest occupation categories in 2024 along with average earnings for each role. These occupations do not pay sufficient earnings for these people to afford a majority of housing in Lebanon.

Lastly, she presented their findings of housing demand. Lebanon has approximately 15,000 residents. Two key dynamics are occurring simultaneously: many long-time residents are aging in place and there is an influx of individuals aged 25 to 45, likely attracted by the employment opportunities.

She stated that if the City of Lebanon were to house 25% of the projected 2034 regional workforce (5,276), it would need to accommodate approximately 1,918 more workers and would result in the need for about 900 additional households, to keep pace with this demand.

The Housing Task Force invited the consultants to identify a language and/or labeling system for the fact claims or recommendations based on more speculative data rather than verifiable data.

Ms. Hembree said that she and Mr. Reichert met recently with Dartmouth, and they were asked to message to please not build any more studio apartments. They have a need for larger 1,2- and 3-bedroom apartments, so that employees can bring their families. Ms. Christensen said that developers build these smaller units because they are much more profitable for them. Mr. Faunce asked if they could incentivize builders. Mr. Dube said a lack of larger units could be even more detrimental in the future as employees' families grow. Mr. Reichert said that many lower wage earners are being displaced here, because they cannot afford housing in this area.

Mr. Eric Halvorsen asked for the Task Force's help to get them contacts so that they conduct Employer Surveys. **Mr. MacNamara and Ms. Hutchins have offered in the past to help so this will be conveyed.**

Ms. Hembree also said that she and Mr. Reichert have their first speaking engagement scheduled for July 1, with the Lebanon Rotary Club. They now also have outreach materials for the Housing Task Force.

Liz, RP&D presented the ***Living in Lebanon* Tabling Kit Contents**. It is comprehensive and is the package that will be used throughout the spring into the fall. Some highlights:

- Community Housing Survey (residents and would be residents of Lebanon) will be available as a hard copy and on-line.
- Housing story cards for people to share their housing experiences/struggles
- A Postcard provide the link address to take the survey
- A two-question survey to be used the Farmers Market
- Posters with graphics that identify some of the big pieces of this project and how they fit together.
- A synopsis of Key Findings to give people some initial information along with information from the Housing Needs Assessment; this will also be posted on the City's website

The goal is to provide many ways for people to give their feedback, or take materials to give to others, with the goal to get feedback from as many people as possible. People will also be able to provide their emails to get updates on this project.

Ms. Riley commented on the Community Housing Survey and asked that they eliminate the word “crisis” and perhaps use “shortage” or restate the sentence and make it a positive statement that “a lot of people want to live in Lebanon”.

Mr. Dube asked that they delete the image of an older person using a walker; perhaps use “55+”. Ms. Smith-Ahern has several comments and will email them to Ms. Hembree.

Mr. Faunce thanked the consultants and the Housing Task Force members for all their hard work to date.

4. NEW BUSINESS:

5. OTHER BUSINESS:

6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

7. ADJOURNMENT:

*Mr. D’Entremont MOVED for adjournment
Seconded by Ms. Riley*

**The MOTION was approved unanimously*

The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 AM

Respectfully submitted,
Cinda Mersel
Recording Secretary