

FINAL

**LEBANON HOUSING TASK FORCE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Remote Via Microsoft Teams  
[LebanonNH.gov/Live](https://lebanonnh.gov/live)  
Monday, October 20, 2025  
8:15 AM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tim McNamara, Chair, Andrew Faunce, Vice Chair, Ryan Dube, John D'Entremont (Remote), Sarah Riley (Remote), Ellen Smith Ahern

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Dave Duncan, Tia Winter

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

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**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Meeting was called to order at 8:15AM by Mr. Tim McNamara, Chair

Mr. Nathan Reichert read the preamble.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A. September 15, 2025

*Vice Chair Andrew Faunce MOVED to approve September 15, 2025 Minutes  
Seconded by Ms. Ellen Smith Ahern*

*\* The MOTION was approved (5-0).*

*Mr. D'Entremont abstained*

**3. STUDY ITEMS:**

A. Housing Opportunity Grant: Public Outreach Events

Ms. Liz Kelly, Resilience Planning & Design provided an update of the outreach and engagement over the last several weeks, along with an update on what they've accomplished to date including:

- Collected 452 survey responses to date/survey will close November 9, 2025.
- Hosted a Housing and Conservation Focus Group
- Hosted a Business and Young Professionals Focus Group
- Hosted an LGBTQ Focus Group
- Hosted a Focus Group at Heater Landing Apartments

- Targeted Outreach at the TLC Recovery Center
- Targeted Outreach at the Listen Center Free Community Lunch
- Targeted Outreach at the Food Pantry

All of their findings will be compiled into an Outreach & Engagement report and provided to this Housing Task Force in November.

She said that these conversations have been very helpful. She added that Ms. Catheryn Hembree, Associate Planner, along with other City staff have also conducted numerous meetings including a Rotary Club meeting, a PTO meeting, a meeting at Kilton Library, manned a Farmers Market information table, etc., in order to learn more from the Lebanon community. Additionally, they have put QR codes on the Lebanon buses for people to participate in the survey.

#### B. Housing Opportunity Grant: Discussion of Completed Studies

Next, she presented a snapshot of what they've heard so far, and most if not all issues posed align with what this Task Force intuitively knew.

For example, "housing is too expensive for many working families and young adults", and many spend more than 40% of their income for housing, leaving little for essentials.

There is a strong demand for starter homes to own as well as affordable rentals. These came up repeatedly across all focus groups.

Many residents feel priced out of Lebanon and therefore are forced to commute from surrounding towns.

Poor housing quality and maintenance in some older units was commented on numerous times; there is a need for stronger code enforcement and rent protections, exacerbated by a large number of absentee landlords and out of state investors which is also driving up rents.

Also, there are several marginalized groups such as LGBTQ, single mothers, and people with a criminal record. "Step up" housing such as what were formerly referred to as "boarding houses" could help people in the interim/those with housing insecurity. Mr. Dube said that one of the main reasons this type of housing ended was problems with staffing them. In 2010 there were 5 of these houses in Lebanon, and now there is only 1, but trying to have case managers at these sites 24/7 has been the challenge.

Chair McNamara said that boarding houses were a common thing when he was growing up and they were traditionally run by families, and this has changed in our society now. Most larger houses have become rental apartments, and he too cited the willingness of people to become boarding house operators has decreased substantially. These provided important housing for singles, and for the most part no longer exist. The need has not disappeared though. He said that co-living arrangements and ADUs are the modern-day equivalent of boarding housing.

Next Steps are:

- Survey closes November 9<sup>th</sup>
- Continue to promote survey until then
- Provide summary of outreach and survey results to the Task Force at the November 17, 2025 Housing Task Force meeting
- Outreach and Engagement Report to be completed and provided to TF by the end of November
- Housing Chapter Writing to occur in December 2025 and January 2026

Ms. Smith Ahern asked if they collected any stories from residents, as originally planned, and Mr. Kelly said that they have; the survey itself has a place added for people to put their stories, so they have many stories now within the database.

Ms. Hembree said that they get the most powerful stories when they actually engage people, rather than a single sheet of paper with someone having written their story. Mr. Dube said that many people actually missed the questions, but once they started pointing them out (last question at the end of the survey), people starting completing this section.

Chair McNamara asked what the staff engagement is for the materials being produced and he asked if they learned anything new. Mr. Reichert said that he and his staff will be there to guide and provide substantial input to the consultants. He and Ms. Kelly said that it will be a collaborative. Chair McNamara said that he wants to be sure that they have this process nailed down.

Mr. Dube said that it's important that they don't simply look at the draft and fall into that line and miss the broader points that they have all been talking about.

Chair McNamara asked that given what they have done to date, did they learn anything new, and are there any surprises? Mr. Dube said that it was interesting to see how many people brought the **quality of housing in as possibly the #2 priority**, second to housing affordability (as expected). Chair McNamara asked what the City has done to date to help bring about the needed changes, and what can the City due potentially, additionally, in the future to help bring about the needed changes? That is really the important question. And is there a solution?

Mr. Dube posed that where the City of Lebanon goes with this is different than what they have for the current problem. What the issues will be 10 years out will potentially be different than the current ones, because for example, single people with housing issues could become married people, with families and therefore different types of housing needs. Chair McNamara said that it's important that the Chapter not be completely Lebanon focused, because this is, of necessity, a regional and a State issue as well. How does Lebanon fit into that? This is the chapter that cannot be solved locally; Lebanon can only make a contribution. This Chapter will need to acknowledge this as well as what else is going on in the State of New Hampshire and how that is contributing to this situation. Mr. Dube added that everything that is around us is impacting Lebanon.

Mr. Dube said that the slide show named Housing Market Analysis with CoStar Oxford economics(possibly affiliated with Apartments.com) information does not make sense; he believes the data is inaccurate. For example, they show that the vacancy rate for multifamily properties in Lebanon and core Upper Valley in 2024 at 20% - 22.5%, which seems completely too high. Every other source that the City has puts this vacancy rate at anywhere from .4 to (HUD) to 1.5 to 3%, He thinks CoStar is looking at their own data using their open vacancies. Ms. Kelly said they will get these comments back to RKG. Red flags will be addressed now so they are not using any inaccurate data. She also ask if they have other comments of anything that looks out of line or inaccurate; they want to know now.

Mr. D'Entremont stated that to date, from the education perspective, this completely disregards Plainfield and Grantham/Eastman in the analysis, and that they need to look at the three communities individually yet it's important to do this along with enrollments and enrollment trends. Do any of these other towns have the capacity to help with the housing issues? How do they jumpstart their efforts to have more affordable communities as well?

### C. Housing Accelerator Briefing

Outside of Lebanon, such as Enfield, Lebanon contributes and helps facilitate infrastructure such as the costs of sewer in Enfield and other towns. How much capacity does Windsor have, Enfield, New London, Hartford, Newport and other towns? He thinks calls to these communities will allow them to have useful, accurate data that puts the City of Lebanon in context.

Ms. Smith Ahern asked what the thinking is for the currently unhoused, which is more pressing than some other housing issues. Ms. Riley said that it is not only the urgent need, but also how this Task Force can help the community understand the obligation that the City has for the unhoused and help people understand the importance of this. As she reexamined the purpose or charge is for this Housing Task Force, and she noted that one purpose or charge was to analyze current and potential equity issues in our housing supply( some of this came up in the results of the public outreach) , and so going forward, she wants to know how they will be addressing this.

Mr. Reichert said that they are in the process of putting a partnership together with the Urban Land Institute, and the thought is that they will bring in national help to see how they can actually put together an accelerator program, along with continuing to grow our partnership with the State. This will allow for guidance on how Lebanon can implement the recommendations. This will engage Lebanon in a broader perspective and help Lebanon stay on top of what is happening at both the State and national levels, as these are all in a state of flux and will allow Lebanon to be at the front of the line representing Lebanon's needs. The parallel track is to address the market side of this as well, so that there is a plan in place if there is no assistance or limited assistance.

Much like the early 1900's, employers may want to offer housing and childcare availability to their employees and Lebanon wants and needs to work with and help large employers, so they know that they are not alone. Vice Chair Faunce said that **now is the time for this Housing Task Force to work on their strategies offline**, so that these are catalyzed, resulting in being further down the road when the report does come to them.

A recap of some priorities included the strategy actions (noted in prior paragraph), education funding and interfacing with cited communities (Mr. D'Entremont is a key resource for this), survey push, balance between the infrastructure, the need and the obligation for housing the homeless, inequity issues in housing, incentives and regulations for the open market and things they have control over or the ability to influence, and partnering with local employers and the private sector to help impact needed changes as well as growing our partnerships at the State and national levels.

Mr. Reichert said that people are willing to spend substantially higher amounts of money for their homes, in places with excellent education, referred to as an "education premium". Because of the high-quality schools in both Lebanon and Hanover, this is already in play in both places.

Ms. Riley asked what, if any other partners they plan to reach out to, and wondered if contact had been made with Vital Communities, and the Housing Authority or any other non-profit housing providers. She also wondered if they could look to examples such as Northern Stage (they recently built housing for some of their employees), or other small and mid-size employers.

### D. Lead Education: Ryan Dube

Mr. Dube posed that the City of Lebanon needs to implement their own lead enforcement procedures, and he mentioned different resources that are willing to come in and help Lebanon with the education of lead

and lead abatement with an ultimate goal of lead safety in Lebanon.. He suggested they might want different requirements for different housing types. The resources are there now for abatement (and could go away in the future). While this does not fit into the Master Plan that they are currently working on, Chair McNamara agreed this is important. It can be tied into another housing initiative in the near future as they address substandard housing which also ties into the housing quality issues posed in surveys and at recent housing engagement meetings.

Mr. Reichert noted that the City of Lebanon has two in house experts on lead, and they can be resources as the City works on Lead education and enforcement.

#### **4. OTHER BUSINESS:**

#### **5. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:**

Summary of the report and provide feedback and Ms. Riley asked how they can be sure that RKG takes a closer look at their data sources as some is clearly inaccurate. Mr. Dube said that they also need to break out rentals, investment properties, etc. Ms. Hembree said she will invite RKG to the November meeting. RKG needs to provide more details on their data and be consistent with their own date. Mr. Dube agreed to give Mr. Reichert information on some of his sources which are much more nuanced than the information RKG has provided to date. Ms. Riley offered that the City has their own in-house data on the unhoused, and this should be used by RKG. It is not acceptable getting inconsistent and illogical data, especially at this late date.

#### **6. ADJOURNMENT:**

*Mr. Faunce MOVED for adjournment  
Seconded by Mr. Dube*

*\*The Vote on the MOTION was approved (6-0).*

**The meeting was adjourned at 9:44 AM**

Respectfully submitted,  
Cinda Mersel  
Recording Secretary \*\*