

FINAL

**LEBANON HOUSING TASK FORCE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
[LebanonNH.gov/Live](https://lebanonnh.gov/live)
Monday, November 17, 2025
8:15 AM**

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tim McNamara, Chair, Dave Duncan, Tia Winter

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

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order at 8:20AM by Mr. Andrew Faunce, Vice Chair

Ms. Cathryn Hembree read the preamble.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. October 20, 2025

Approval of the Minutes will occur in the *December meeting*, due to not having a quorum today. “Lead free” will be changed to “lead safe”.

3. STUDY ITEMS:

A. Data Review with RKG and Associates

Mr. Whitman was able to meet with RKG associates last week and discuss the data and documentation concerns shared by the Housing Task Force in the October meeting. RKG (team member Allison) will edit the two reports to add disclaimers to clarify the sources used and their limitations. She will also review and update the Key Takeaways to be sure they are consistent. Ms. Hembree will provide additional data after calling rental properties.

Mr. Whitman shared that the general findings of these documents are still valid – Lebanon has a housing problem that needs to be addressed through the addition of a *variety* of unit types, and those new units will have a positive net benefit to the City.

Mr. Dube noted that in a meeting they had with RKG early this year, he provided them current and accurate housing data, but it doesn’t appear these data are being utilized. He remains very disappointed in the housing market analysis and data being provided by RKG, citing a lack of high confidence, valid claims, or deep dives.

B. Outreach Update

The City of Lebanon was highly successful in getting people to respond to the outreach and engagement process here. RP&D will have a full Draft of the Full Outreach & Engagement Report (delivered as a consolidated summary) in early December, and it will include a summary of all activities and findings.

He recapped the various outreach advertisement techniques used in this initiative. He provided some details of the Focus Groups & Community Conversations, and he shared the sentiment by one resident “Many don’t think the housing issues need to be studied any more – we need action”.

Results from the online housing survey Early Themes included:

- High housing costs are the primary barrier, including high rents in the \$2,000 - \$3,000 range as well as home prices in the \$400k-\$600k range being unaffordable even for dual-income and professional households.
- Many report being cost burdened and struggling to meet basic needs while paying for housing.
- Limited supply of affordable, appropriate options. There are gaps in starter homes, downsizing options for seniors, accessible units, and decent non-luxury rentals.
- Long waitlists for subsidized or income-restricted housing, and difficulty finding units that allow pets or meet accessibility needs.
- Intense competition and displacement pressures such as bidding wars, rising rents, and stringent application requirements (credit, deposits (first/last/security) making it hard to secure housing.
- Demand from DHMC and the college system contributes to higher prices and competition for units, particularly for local workers.
- Community and tax pressures – some respondents commute 30-60+ minutes because they cannot find or afford housing in Lebanon, thereby increasing transportation, etc. expenses and reducing quality of life.
- Long-time homeowners, especially seniors, report rising property taxes as a threat to their ability to remain in the community.
- Substandard housing conditions and housing insecurity include reports of deteriorating units, mold, safety issues, and “slumlord” conditions, with limited options to move elsewhere.
- Some respondents describe experiences of homelessness, living in cars or tents, or relying on emergency and temporary shelter.
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Next steps for Outreach and Reporting:

- Complete the Outreach & Engagement Report, combining focus group, tabling/pop-up, housing stories, and survey finding into a single document
- Deliver the Draft for Review in early December
- Use the outreach findings, along with the Housing Needs Assessment, Fiscal/Market Analysis, and Regulatory Audit, to guide the Housing Master Plan Chapter and Strategic Housing Plan recommendations.

Ms. Hembree asked if there were any surprises with this entire process/surveys, and Mr. Whitman said that the big surprise was the high level of engagement and respondents. Also, Mr. Dube noted that 49% of the respondents were homeowners and he suggested that they select some of the issue areas that differ between homeowners and renters and see whether there are significant differences in certain metrics and whether their concerns overlapped in some areas and not in others, given these groups are two very different markets and frequently two very different situations in life for people in these two groups.

Mr. Whitman agreed to do this.

Ms. Smith Ahern wondered if there is a plan to include current action that Lebanon is taking to house the unhoused in emergency shelters, to include this in the Master Plan. Mr. Whitman asked if she, along with other TF members, can assist with this and address both the unmet needs and action steps. A consolidated presentation in the Master Plan will be completed on this topic and Ms. Hembree will provide her notes to Ms. Smith Ahern and other interested persons.

Mr. Reichert said that they had many memorable conversations (anecdotes rather than formal feedback), though no audible was collected. Ms. Riley proposed a “hotline” similar to the NPR (National Public Radio) Story Corps, though the studies have now been completed so this can perhaps be included in a future initiative. There was much discussion about different ideas they could use, but it was also agreed that for now, many of these ideas are very late in the process; they can however be used in the future. Mr. Reichert and Ms. Hembree might be able to help supplement some information, but they cannot slow down the current pace for the consultants, rather it could help inform the Housing Master Plan and incorporate the qualitative part of the feedback from people.

C. Discussion: Housing Master Plan Chapter

Mr. Whitman asked if the TF wants to look at the current Master Plan or focus on the New Housing Master Plan Chapter.

Mr. Dube said that while many of the prior issues have been addressed, many have not and he thinks this could be the time to look at the ones that are still ongoing and see what strategies were previously proposed and the success of any of the strategies that have been used. **He thinks consideration should be given for what the concrete barriers are that Lebanon could address as *action items* – linking what are the reasons we cannot get to the goal, and what can be done about these (e.g. construction costs, working with Planning & Zoning, etc.).** Mr. Whitman said this is reasonable to really focus on the barriers, and then recognizing what’s within the scope of what the Master Plan can address.

Mr. Faunce, Vice Chair said that the Planning Board had a recent conversation and wants for their new Master Plan, to be more accessible since the current one is overly long, and hard to wade through it so one suggestion is that they include a 1–2-page Executive Summary for each section, for easier readability, alongside the formal Housing Master Plan Chapter. So, for example, all the key topics (e.g. Issues & Priorities, Future Challenges, etc.) will each include an Executive Summary.

Mr. Faunce, Vice Chair, invited Mr. Whitman to the next Planning Board meeting, December 8, 2025.

In December, Mr. Whitman, RP&D and his team will provide the Lebanon Housing Task Force with:

- Updated Reports from RKG to website (after sign off by Housing TF)
- Draft Outreach and Engagement Report
- Master Plan Chapter – refine outline and begin work on actions

He encouraged Task Force members to zero in on a list of actions, *creating a master list that they want brought to the forefront*, so that by January, that will start to take the shape of the Chapter.

Ms. Riley asked if the new Chapter will also include Strategies along with Actions; will they be broken out, listed as simply Actions, or what? Mr. Faunce, Vice Chair said that while this is a vision piece, it needs to be heavy on the vision, and not dictates since there are layers to the specific – e.g. we need

access to more soccer fields, not we will build a soccer field at X location, etc. She said that the Conservation Commission which she is Chair of also addressed parallel structures. Mr. Dube said they need to include 1- what are the issues? 2- what is the goal? (not necessarily ultra concrete) and 3- what are some issues that need to be addressed (not how to) and reasons why these haven't been addressed to date, so that this can be a guiding document for now and looking back on this several years out, one can see what if any successes were accomplished.

Mr. Faunce, Vice Chair, encouraged TF members to call out the compelling issues (in New Hampshire), even those without an obvious current solution, which could possibly have the impact of changing legislation at the State level. Mr. Reichert added that any document they compile needs to recognize our advantages and disadvantages relative to State and Federal policy. We are dependent on both, to complete many housing outcomes. Ms. Riley suggested that this TF share stories with the residents about those things that might impede Lebanon, what the limitations are, and why. Mr. Dube added the need to convey what are realistic outcomes – what the City controls versus those things they do not control.

Ms. Smith Ahern wants to endorse a point that Mr. Faunce, Vice Chair, made about being expansive and bold in our vision and reach. Mr. Faunce reiterated to “not speak only about what is possible but also to things that we don't yet know are possible”. All Housing Task Force members have an assignment prior to the next meeting, for them to spell out the obvious and/or bold so they can discuss this in December.

While other towns and counties impact Lebanon, the City of Lebanon must think about Lebanon as part of the larger regional area, for example the town of Hanover. One item on the new Master Chapter might be to coordinate with other communities and not think of Lebanon as an “island”. There was extensive conversation about what the trend of things is and the capacity to help other towns. Septic systems and water were both cited as clear policy decisions that Lebanon will need to make; is it appropriate that we *not* expand these?

4. OTHER BUSINESS:

Review and adopt the 2026 Meeting Calendar

Ms. Hembree shared a 2026 Meeting Schedule for the Lebanon Housing Task Force. Both the January and February meetings will need to be moved due to national holidays. For January she proposed Tuesday, January 20, 2026, or Monday, January 26, 2026. For February, she proposed Tuesday, February 17, 2026, or Monday, February 23, 2026. Winter Break is also that week.

She will conduct a straw poll, to help ensure quorums, and also let Cinda Mersel, Recording Secretary, know the chosen dates.

5. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Ms. Riley inquired about the City's data on the unhoused and wondered if the consultants have looked at this information yet? It is available to them and Ms. Hembree connected the consultants with the survey information and other sources as well. Some of the best data we have is our own. Also, the school system has good sources of information, as well as The Haven, Listen, etc. and this was provided to the consultants. Ms. Smith Ahern asked about how our winter shelter functioned the last year; we need to be thinking more about this expansively and be sure that this is addressed by the consultants and the new Master Plan Chapter. At the very least state the issues/barriers and concrete successes. Mr. Dube will

reach out to Housing First, if they have not been approached already. They will be invited to the December 2025 meeting.

6. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Faunce MOVED for adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 AM

Respectfully submitted,
Cinda Mersel
Recording Secretary