

FINAL

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

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Ellen Smith Ahern, Dave Duncan (Alt), Tia Winter

**STAFF PRESENT:** Nathan Reichert, Director, Planning & Development,

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**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Meeting was called to order at 8:17AM by Mr. Andrew Faunce, Vice Chair

Mr. Nate Reichert read the preamble.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A. October 20, 2025

B. November 17, 2025

*Mr. Ryan Dube MOVED to approve both sets of the Minutes as written  
Seconded by Vice Chair Andrew Faunce*

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

**3. STUDY ITEMS:**

A. Outreach & Engagement Report

Mr. Steve Whitman, RKG Associates, started with an overview of what's included in the Outreach draft report and a highlight of some of the major findings. He said that it is fantastic that the City of Lebanon heard from more than 1,000 people, and that the variety of methods used along with the dedication of employees and this Housing Task Force was the driving force behind these results. He added that they do not usually see these types of excellent results.

Key findings from all outreach reinforces the conversations they have been having:

- Housing costs are a major pressure against all household types
- Limited supply restricts options for homeowners and renters
- Competition and eligibility requirements creates barriers to access

- Property taxes and overall high cost of living influence housing decisions in Lebanon
- Neighborhood fit, scale, and design remain important to community considerations (this was also reflected in the last Housing Chapter)
- A wide range of housing types needed to meet community demand
- Rental experiences and property management practices affect housing stability
- Housing challenges directly affect the local workforce and regional economy
- Transportation access shapes housing feasibility for many residents and would be residents
- Community members are open to creative and flexible housing solutions

He said that the remainder of the document is set up with summaries, for example, the focus group feedback begins on page 4, the community conversations are grouped together and summarized as well, and lastly the housing survey including who they heard from, the demographics, and they have included all of the raw data including actual responses, in the Appendix.

Chair McNamara asked Mr. Whitman if there was anything “new” to them? Mr. Whitman responded that people new to the community and renters have found it challenging to find housing and for renters, trying to get through the process with landlords.

Chair McNamara said one thing that stood out to him was that so many of the respondents are already residents of Lebanon and he was encouraged by this. Mr. Dube added that the mix of these respondents was almost 50/50 (residential property owners/renters), which provides both perspectives. Both sides are facing similar but yet very different challenges, realities, and difficulties in either maintaining their current status as a homeowner or becoming one. Whether or not they are looking to rent or to buy. He appreciated that RKG provided all of the raw data and said that as he read through this his takeaway is that everybody had their own reasons/ issues/scapegoat to blame but many people offered suggestions and were optimistic and choose to remain here in Lebanon. For example, one scapegoat is Dartmouth Medical Center, and yet many employees of DMC responded that they are not highly paid doctors, and they are facing the same issues as other residents/would be residents.

Everybody agrees that more affordable housing is needed.

Chair McNamara said that there is *not* a lot of support of large-scale building of more studios and one-bedroom rentals. Employers have said this as well. We need smaller-scale housing developments, more distributed than what the City has on Mount Support Road.

Mr. Dube added that small-scale housing is needed, and that many people with larger properties are also ready to downsize or interested in looking to downsize and yet they too have limited opportunities for smaller housing options.

Chair McNamara said that the results affirm some of the colloquial things that he was hearing with some real data. Mr. Dube said that it was also helpful to see what the “other housing” was such as renters of rooms, and that these are clearly not regulated, and is a cause for concern, and it gives a clearer perspective to this Housing Task Force. He also said that with his work in the community, that a majority of rents have more than doubled since 2019, and yet improvements (or lack thereof) are not in line with these increases. This is a large drag on the local family economy.

Chair McNamara asked Mr. Nate Reichert how the results they have with this initiative correlate, if at all, of where they are heading with some of the Zoning amendments that are housing related.

Mr. Reichert said a key takeaway to get housing in general with a preference to ownership opportunities as well as more rentals and that the Zoning changes they are making are reflecting this need. He added that Zoning cannot dictate the exact housing that will be built in Lebanon, and there is a misunderstanding with some of the public, as many think that Zoning controls the exact types of housing that can be built in Lebanon.

Vice Chair Faunce was asked about an update on The Brickyard. Vice Chair Faunce said that he thinks this project will be +400 units total (potentially with ownership opportunity), which will be 5-6 mid-rise complexes with a majority being single bedrooms and/or efficiency (studios), and there will also be approximately 51 townhome units that are rumored to become condominiums.

Mr. Dube said that of what he knows, the waiting list for people in need of small renter units like this being built, has over 200 people waiting (for 1 bedrooms and studios), and depending on the list, 5-10 (or more) years waiting for a voucher for lower income families. He reiterated that these are the same people that will need different housing as they marry, have families, etc. There will be a greater need for more houses and larger rental properties. And there is already an unmet need for many seniors, even though Lebanon has more senior housing per capita than other areas in New Hampshire.

Mr. Reichert said that building costs are a real detriment as well. Costs structure on the building side of "Occom Path" near Oakridge Rd., for 1500 square ft. units have a build cost of close to \$750,000. If they are rented, rents will go for at least \$2,000-\$3,000 per month, even with employer-based subsidies from Dartmouth College. Most families cannot afford these amounts.

He suggested they talk with the builder along with Dartmouth (partnered with this builder) to learn more details about this project.

Chair McNamara said they are seeing this same type of thing on the Barrows Street project, though he also thinks that modular units are still reasonable. They are finding it difficult to find contractors to finish siding, add porches, etc. The ancillary services like these are problematic and when they do get bids, the pricing is typically egregious.

Mr. Dube said he knows of builders needing to charge high prices to build and cited an example of a 2-bedroom house that would cost about \$800,000 to build here in Lebanon, just to break even; if they want to make a profit these would sell for \$900,000. This might be because of our higher standards or planning or zoning costs. He also hears it from local homeowners where they get quoted higher here than in other New Hampshire towns. Impact fees were noted as being high in Lebanon as well, and an impediment to building here. Vice Chair Faunce added that these fees also help offset higher taxes for Lebanon property owners.

Mr. Reichert added that many contractors from out of the area come to work in Lebanon. Many follow the building codes and rules, whereas some nearby towns do not follow the rules, building codes, etc.

Chair McNamara asked if we cannot control building costs, what can we (Lebanon) do and what direction can the City of Lebanon head? For the Barrows Street project, the City decreased the land costs for builders and plans to offer pattern zoning. Mr. Dube added that this has a long tail though, and it is hard to know if what they are doing is working, at least for the short term.

The City of Lebanon has had a general policy for at least the past 20 years, that they do not want to expand water and sewer. It is very costly to build and to maintain, and capacity is limited. There is no desire to push out into new areas so we are for the most part looking at infill. Are we better off with

zoning that limits the number of large-scale apartment complexes and reserving that land for a future time when the cost of construction is more reasonable? Once the land is gone, it is gone, and given it is finite, this could be a logical policy to put in place here. Mr. Dube asked if this is posing more of a problem for the short term. Vice Chair Faunce said that he thinks there is a place for both opportunities and he thinks ***Planning needs to come ahead of Zoning from this point forward***, with a more human scale. Lebanon needs to declare what they want here and entertain that. He suggested that building properties that look like houses (2-4 units) could make sense, rather than mostly high rises. Solely single-family new construction is not practical at this juncture. Providing approved plan sets for builders and buyers is in the works, and this could be lucrative for builders while helping achieve Lebanon's housing goals. Planning is very open and welcoming to those builders who want to build here.

Chair McNamara suggested it would be timely to have the City of Lebanon review R-3 to allow for more duplexes and larger units (2-4).

Ms. Sara Riley asked to have a map displayed on the room screen and said that the duplex and triplex would be allowed wherever the pattern zoning overlays R-3s are, and these can be completed in the denser, downtown areas, which is a large area.

Chair McNamara said that there is a bank, Merrimack Savings Bank, who is willing to honor the low interest rates of current homeowners, to loan them money (as a second mortgage) at that same low rate (for example 3%), to build ADUs on their properties. Mr. Reichert said the issue here is that the ages of a majority of these property owners are more senior (50-70 years of age or older) and they for the most part are unwilling to become landlords at this stage in their lives.

Ms. Riley agreed with Vice Chair Faunce in his earlier comment that ***Planning needs to come before Zoning***. She posed that this Housing Task Force can take a closer look at this, to ***see what they would like for the City of Lebanon to look like, and also what kind of carrots could be put out in the market, to help make this vision happen, as opposed to what they have been seeing in recent years***.

Ms. Riley said there is also ample opportunity to build housing on parking lots, and turn those into denser areas, both in Lebanon and West Lebanon.

There was much discussion and opinion about the term "neighborhood" and clearly, this takes on many faces depending on the location. Mr. Dube suggested that this Housing Task Force define the term neighborhood. Chair McNamara said he sees 2 different ways of addressing neighborhoods, one where you are taking an existing neighborhood and amping it up a bit, without disturbing or destroying the character of the neighborhood, in other words "infill". The second is creating a new neighborhood, such as Centerra, and creating new neighborhoods is much more challenging than infill. Vice Chair Faunce added that most of us grew up in neighborhoods, and those did not exist as some point in time, they were created. The immediate task at hand is to influence what happens to housing here in Lebanon, and what the City of Lebanon becomes.

They want to be more intentional about defining what a new neighborhood is; ***this is the inflection point for the City of Lebanon***. To be intentional, with a focus on encouraging what is needed to be built here, the "long look", even though this takes longer with a plan for the next 20, 30, 40 years). ***Hurrying is not the answer***.

Mr. Dube mentioned Quail Hollow and wondered if that could be duplicated? Chair McNamara said he was involved in that project from day one, it is freestanding and that this area has clearly become a "neighborhood" to the people who live there.

In terms of “new neighborhoods”, next steps could be to identify those areas where there is potential to contribute to an existing neighborhood or build a new one and also have a better definition of what exactly the City of Lebanon considers a neighborhood, so that people understand what the City means when this term is used. He noted that there is a lot of fear in the community that the City of Lebanon is going to allow big apartment buildings to be plunked down in the middle of a single-family neighborhood, which is not the case.

#### B. Housing Chapter Outline & Process

Mr. Reichert said that they are planning to have a meeting with the Planning Board, along with Steve Whitman, RKG Associates, in the month of January. There, they will present the deliverable and once they get that feedback, they’ll share potential deliverables with the Housing Task Force. Mr. Whitman proposed that for their next meeting with the TF in January, the TF look at the outline and share any issues or opportunities with how it was structured, prior to their meeting with the Planning Board, and focus most of their time on what are some actions that are housing related, that could help guide the writing of the Chapter.

Chair McNamara said it would be much easier if they had a team of developers that they could work with, that was willing and able to build out that plan, ones that understand the City of Lebanon’s vision. He asked, as they are developing their own Chapter, what do they want to see? They can create “perfection” but that could then go on the shelf. They need to address a plan that can be implemented.

Ms. Riley asked about the old Land Use Chapter and they have an active Land Use Map. The Planning Board might need to rethink the land use map, right away, given the space that can be built on is limited.

Vice Chair Faunce proposed that this Housing Task Force should write out things that they want and need to promote, preserve, and modify. He will provide each TF member this same list of topics to work from and come up with their own ideas of wants and needs; this can help inform how they move forward. All of their ideas will be shared with Mr. Reichert. TF members were encouraged to step back from what they think are possibilities or not, stay open, and be creative with vision; they will review their input in their January meeting. Also, they were asked to look at the current Master Plan so that they are familiar with it.

Mr. Reichert suggested they be sure that they add housing challenges such as for the homeless.

Chair McNamara reminded the TF that they are heavily influenced by property taxes, and much of this is outside of the City’s control, given the way New Hampshire taxes. There are NH towns like Moultonborough and Meridith with extremely high valued second homes, and those properties absorb much of the tax burden. Lebanon along with Manchester, Concord, Portsmouth, and Keene) are highly desired communities with an archaic way of taxing homeowners, and so homeowners here and in those towns take the brunt of the tax burden. He added an example that approximately 70% of calls to the Police Department are from people who are not residents here, which requires a much larger police force that would otherwise be needed. The City has proposed ideas to help with property tax relief, but each of their ideas to date have been turned down at the State level. So, they need to understand the environment they are working in. Many would say that Lebanon is not surviving, and in fact is driving people away. This is not a political issue; this will ultimately impact the State negatively and already has in some instances.

Ms. Riley suggested they add Lebanon's Open Space Plan to be included in the Housing Chapter, things to be informed by in the Outline of Sections. There are lots of interesting points, nuggets, and resources within this document, though it is admittedly lengthy.

Lastly, she also encouraged all TF member to listen to "Brave Little State" on NPR, Vermont. A recent episode focused on housing and conservation and they also touched on why there are no halfway houses, and the reasons why we are where we are today. While it was about Vermont, many similar things apply here in Lebanon.

**4. OTHER BUSINESS:**

**5. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:**

- A. January 26: Planning Board Meeting: Master Plan Changes

**6. ADJOURNMENT:**

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

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

**The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 AM**

Respectfully submitted,  
Cinda Mersel  
Recording Secretary