

FINAL

**LEBANON HOUSING TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
LebanonNH.gov/Live
Monday May 4, 2026
8:15AM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tim McNamara, Chair, Andrew Faunce, Vice Chair,
Ryan Dube, Ellen Smith Ahern

MEMBERS ABSENT: John D'Entremont, Dave Duncan (Alt.), Sarah Riley, Tia Winter

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

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Tim McNamara, Chair, started the meeting at 8:15AM.

Ms. Catheryn Hembree read the Preamble.

Ms. Jennifer Sargent, Director of Housing & Child Care, Dartmouth Medical Center, participated in this meeting virtually.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. April 13, 2026

*Mr. Dube MOVED to approve the April 13, 2026 Minutes as amended
Seconded by Ms. Smith Ahern*

**The MOTION was approved (3-0), 1 abstained*

Amendment: Vice Chair Andrew Faunce was absent from the April 13, 2026 meeting.

3. STUDY ITEMS:

A. Housing Master Plan Chapter Discussion

Mr. Steve Whitman, Resilience Planning & Design started with some points about the first Draft that he provided this Task Force (in advance of today's meeting), including that they reformatted the Chapter to focus on the 7 key issues and then they used these same 7 under actions/ priorities as have been discussed in prior meetings. Also, he said they did the best they could with the photos, but if anyone has others to include, let him know.

Chair McNamara really likes the format and he also likes the pictures that Steve included. He provided his input on some specific items within the Draft, and Mr. Whitman will incorporate these, along with a Table of Contents and including an Appendix.

Chair McNamara went on to say that they want to emphasize the pathway to ownership which helps with community stability and it helps to build wealth. The percentage of renters has been going up and is currently at just over 50%. Related to this, when we talk about the “missing middle”, cottage homes and even smaller homes on conventional lots are some pathways to ownership. He added that the majority of older homes in Lebanon and West Lebanon are actual illustrations of our “pattern zoning”, that is homes on smaller lots, e.g. 4,000 square feet.

Mr. Dube said that this Chapter needs to be clear that while there are thousands of people renting here, and this is what has driven growth in this part of housing, there is not a lack of demand for family sized housing and owning homes, rather people have chosen what is currently available, which is a majority of 1 and 2 bedroom rentals. This plan is for the next 10, 15, 20 years, so this Chapter needs to lay the groundwork to be looking ahead for the anticipated market changes. Graphics will help tell the story for much of this data.

Chair McNamara noted that family sizes are getting smaller and this will be referenced in the national and regional demographic data.

It was agreed that the section outlining things that the City of Lebanon can and cannot do will be informative for the public; it needs to provide concrete examples. Also including actual areas of improvement and plans in the narrative can help emphasize that there has been much work already done, and of course much still needed.

They will also place emphasis on the fact that land that is suitable for development is an increasingly limited supply, which is a key feature in Lebanon, and therefore will put an emphasis on infill for much of the new development here. This is a big factor and will become an even bigger one as we come closer and closer to that limitation. Development here will involve infill rather than more greenfield development. This Chapter should touch on the difference between these two. It is a key consideration in seeing what gets built.

Ms. Smith Ahern suggested that they provide some “housing jargon”(a list of Definitions) for the layperson to have a better understanding of this report, for example “neighborhoods”, “community character”, “local values” workforce housing”, “rent burdened”, “walkability”, “infill”, and “green fill”.

She added that emphasizing the positive that comes from conserving land, and helping people to imagine what that looks like would be useful, rather than just an image on a map. Mr. Dube stated that by preserving, we get to maintain the natural character of rural areas in Lebanon, which most people here really value. Chair McNamara agreed and said that they can have some definitions spelled out and also that within the text itself, utilize layperson terms and language.

Mr. Reichert said that we all bring to the table a set of value assumptions that inform how we approach this topic, such as that home ownership is a good thing, neighborhoods and communities help us to get to know our neighbors, etc. He suggested they might want to include a value statement that by consensus we agree on, to clearly articulate these values. Vice Chair Faunce added that much of what they’re talking about as relates to values, conveniently fit the problem in front of us, which is that we need to house more people, which is more density (infill), values of sociability, neighborliness, etc. And if these are not your

values, that is good too, since there are also big swaths of land and residential three, to fit other ways that people want to live.

Mr. Dube would like to see the median monthly rents to be spelled out by size, one bedroom, two bedroom, family size units. He also said that HUD came through recently with their final Lebanon median income, which is too small so they used Grafton County, which is \$112,000. He offered some other figures as well; he will resend them.

There was some discussion about taxes and incomes and home values increasing dramatically over the past five years. There is a supply and demand imbalance and Vice Chair Faunce asked how they might want to include this, *if* they do. Also, the singular organizing theme is how do we keep from becoming a Hanover or Norwich? How do we address and arrest this? The current trends in Lebanon are making it so that only people of means can live in Lebanon, which is not part of our character, our DNA, rather Lebanon is a working town This Chapter needs to focus on what the actions are that the City can take, what are the partnerships that the City can develop, to create and sustain housing suitable for a broad swath of people, in other words, allow for socioeconomic diversity.

The City is taking the opportunity to support our character, with projects like Barrow Street, Muse apartment buildings, and the redevelopment of the properties on Main Street in West Lebanon. We must start doing this as a program, not just an initiative.

Taxes might be touched on to include the many outside factors that impact our taxes here. All Chapters are impacted by taxes. Ms. Sargent suggested that Page 4 in the Draft might be an appropriate place to add a brief narrative about taxes. She also said that the current rent for a studio apartment in Lebanon is \$2,200, reinforcing what Mr. Dube said, that being that the rents stated in the Draft document are low. An update prior to the final document is needed.

Also, it was agreed that a short explanation of how taxes work in New Hampshire must be included. State the fact that the primary system of taxation in the State of New Hampshire is property taxes, and property taxes figure prominently into affordability. And that they are regressive, meaning that they impact the people that are least capable of paying them. We need to explain this while being non-judgmental.

Mil rates might be mentioned as well, and possibly adding mil rates in nearby areas, to help further explain what goes into these.

Vice Chair Faunce recommended that they invite the City Manager to develop a two-pager that provides the explanation of this taxation topic and how it works and have a durable and regularly updated communication around this particular issue, since it is an ongoing issue. This would be outside of the Housing Chapter.

Ms. Smith Ahern added that there needs to be some commentary about the fact that our current State structure puts the burden of taxes solely on property owners. Because of the way they are structured, larger towns that provide more services out of necessity, the tax burden increases dramatically for larger towns.

Chair McNamara would like to site the 2021 NHHFA information. Mr. Dube will get his that information and he is confident that NHHFA would allow this to be included in our Housing Chapter.

Mr. Reichert brought of the fact that the top 5 employers in Lebanon are the source of much of the need for additional housing. It is a good thing but nevertheless exasperates the situation. It is a regional situation, not just Lebanon.

It is expected for Lebanon to do their part, but it is also necessary for these employers to help create solutions. We do care about social, economic diversity here, and hence the need for employers to contribute to the solutions as well.

Chair McNamara said it is important for them to answer where Lebanon wants to be. He cited Claremont and that they had made the actual statement that they want to be at 40,000 residents. Unlimited growth is not an option; it was undecided if this should be in the new Housing Chapter.

Vice Chair Faunce added that this ties into Lebanon's capacity such as sewer and water. He thinks it would be responsible for them to include this, possibly in the Vision. Mr. Reichert also asked: How long does the landfill last? What is the maximum buildout capacity for Lebanon? What is the future growth plan for DMC? More community dialog at this juncture is in order.

Somewhere in the Master Plan, it would be helpful to acknowledge where Lebanon wants to be. This can serve as a guiding, organizing principle.

Mr. Dube added that the smaller employers are also negatively impacted. This topic will be handled in the Economic Chapter.

To summarize, Mr. Whitman will focus on today's discussion and then get an updated Draft document out to all TF members.

Ms. Smith Ahern added that they also need to focus on low to middle income people, including workers as well as older people living on fixed incomes. Mr. Dube asked for Mr. Whitman to consider adding a narrative of why the pressure is so high for those living on fixed incomes.

4. OLD BUSINESS:

5. NEW ITEMS:

6. OTHER:

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

8. ADJOURNMENT:

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

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:52AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Cinda Mersel
Recording Secretary