



LEBANON STRATEGIC PLAN TASK FORCE
SEPTEMBER 15, 2026 - 8:30 AM
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL OR
REMOTE VIA VIRTUAL PLATFORM
LEBANONNH.GOV/LIVE

1. Call to Order

The September 15, 2026, Strategic Plan Task Force Meeting is hereby called to order.

2. Approval of Minutes

A. September 1, 2026

3. Old Business

- A. Review of Existing Master Plan Vision and Purpose Statements
- B. Major Milestones and Timeline of Strategic Planning Committee
- C. Make-up of Strategic Planning Committee
- D. Connections to Master Plan Update Process / Planning Board and Planning Department
- E. Availability of Public Data, Comments for Public Input, use of National Survey
- F. Review and Discussion of Request for Proposals / Qualifications (RFP/Q) Samples

4. New Business

- A. Discussion about Public Engagement Tools

5. Other Business

6. Adjournment

Meetings are open for in-person and remote attendance. Members of the public who wish to attend remotely may do so by going to [LebanonNH.gov/Live](https://lebanonnh.gov/live) where you will find instructions on how to enter the meeting. Members of the public will be able to participate and ask questions through the City's virtual platform or by phone. Please note: Should technical difficulties occur during the meeting that disrupt virtual or phone connection(s), the meeting will continue without remote access capabilities.

Any person with a disability who wishes to attend this public meeting and needs additional accommodation, please contact the ADA coordinator at City Hall by calling 603-448-4220 at least 72 hours in advance so that the City can make any necessary arrangements.

DRAFT

**LEBANON STRATEGIC PLAN TASK FORCE
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL OR
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SEPTEMBER 1, 2026 8:30 AM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councilor Lori Key (Chair), Councilor Timothy McNamara, Councilor Kellen Appleton, Fire Chief James Wheatley, Deputy Finance Director Victoria Paquin, Recreation, Arts, and Parks Director Paul Coats, Dr. George Blike (remote), and Fran Casale (Alternate)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Deputy City Manager David Brooks

1. CALL TO ORDER

Councilor Key called the September 1, 2026 Strategic Plan Task Force to order at 8:30AM.

2. PREAMBLE: Read by Deputy City Manager Brooks

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. *Councilor McNamara MOVED to approve the August 18, 2026, Minutes as written.*

Seconded by Ms. Paquin

**The MOTION was approved (7-0)*

4. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of Existing Master Plan Vision and Purpose Statements

Councilor Key opened today's meeting by saying that while she would be taking the agenda items out of order today, she still plans for them to cover all topics.

A document she prepared was on the room screen and it outlined the groundwork for the work that this Task Force has been charged with. This Strategic Plan Task Force has reached consensus that in order for this to be a successful endeavor, they need community-wide vision that describes the desired future of Lebanon as imagined by residents in the broader community.

1 As a jumping off point, the Task Force is utilizing the 2012 Master Plan where each Chapter had
2 its own Vision Statement. She reiterated what this TF agreed to before, that being Lebanon
3 needs a community-wide vision.

4
5 Three themes came across to Councilor Key:

- 6
- 7 • Residents like Lebanon's distinct rural character and the quality of life here.
- 8 • Understanding Lebanon's current strengths and challenges is imperative
- 9 • Emphasis on public dialog and engagement will need to stay at the forefront of their
- 10 work.

11
12 Referencing Dover's work, it had a strategic perspective of how they approached their process
13 for designing their Strategic Plan, so that the overall vision (one Vision Statement) would truly
14 reflect the overriding desires and priorities and thereby it gave direction to their strategic plan for
15 what they wanted to accomplish in the next 3-5 years, to meet their vision.

16
17 Councilor Key proposed that now is the time for this Strategic Plan Task Force to map out what
18 else they need to do, as follows:

- 19
- 20 • Draft recommendations for how this Task Force is going to develop their process to
- 21 engage the public, including what their overall communication strategy is going to be,
- 22 such as-
- 23 -Consider using a validated national survey
- 24 -Outreach to public using social media
- 25 -Utilize online polling
- 26 -Hold multiple community events
- 27 -Conduct focus groups, etc.
- 28 -Utilize external consultants **
- 29

30 By using the above tools and perhaps others, it will allow them to get extensive and current
31 feedback from the public regarding their needs and priorities.

32
33 She noted that people tend to get more engaged if they know there is something in it for them,
34 which is one of the reasons a 2025 initiative of getting signatures while standing outside of the
35 Library and City Hall, among other activities, was so effective; people understood there was a
36 financial stake.

37
38 **In advance of today's meeting, Councilor Key reviewed the website of two consultants that
39 can be hired for basic service such as designing only, or designing and facilitating public
40 engagement, or designing, facilitating and analyzing data, to name a few. Members will need to
41 decide what makes the most sense for Lebanon.

42 B. Major Milestones and Timeline of Strategic Planning Committee

43
44
45 See A above.

C. Make-up of Strategic Planning Committee

To be determined

D. Connections to Master Plan Update Process/Planning Board and Planning Department

Ms. Paquin thinks there will be about four (4) months for the Strategic Planning Commission (SPC) to develop a strategic plan for it to be included in the 2028 budget. She suggested that the SPC needs to develop a Strategic Plan that says we need a Master Plan (updated and streamlined), and convey this to the City Council.

E. Availability of Public Data or Comments for Public Input

Dr. Blike shared that Dover's report is available online and in fact he was able to see and read their summary report which also described their methodology, along with showing Dover trends over the past several years.

Ms. Paquin posed the idea of perhaps reversing the process and instead of asking the public to tell us their vision, the Committee offer the City's queue of projects, for example, here is what Recreations wants to do, here is what the City Clerk thinks they want to do, here is what the Fire Department wants to do, and so on. So in other words, here is what we have going on, tell us what you think is/are the most important. This way, we are giving people tangible things to weigh in on, and thereby also learning what their priorities are. This aligns with the ideas that Councilor Key and Mr. Coats shared in their last meeting, that is giving people more specifics so they know the potential options and tasks at hand. However, there is also a consensus that open-ended questions can be very effective in learning more about what is on peoples' minds. Both approaches make sense.

The Committee could then also learn what is important to people, by asking them about what they want that is not on this list. This can in all likelihood lead to more public engagement, because things are more tangible and help people feel that there is something in this for them.

Turnout was solid both when the Route 120 meeting occurred, (clearly people came out to that meeting to say, "enough is enough"), and also for the initiative of getting signatures to approve a Financial Advisory Committee, where the actual need came to the forefront, that being people want to be able to stay in their homes.

The team reiterated that they need to understand what the current most pressing needs/priorities are in order to do a Strategic Plan for the City, thereby enabling them to take action in the short term over the next two to five years. The information that this team gathers now can also help drive an abbreviated (hopefully) Master Plan.

1 Councilor Appleton said that one thing they need to get residents to answer is “what is the one
2 thing that Lebanon provides that makes you want to stay” or something specific and along this
3 line of thinking

4
5 The Committee agreed that they need to decide what their questions will be, and how they will
6 frame them. There was consistent accord that the vision for the Strategic Plan and the Master
7 plan need to align, and also that they need to get the broadest possible group to participate and
8 respond to questions, being cognizant of the different timelines for these two documents.

9
10 Councilor McNamara sees the key things for this Task Force to accomplish is:

11 A - recommend to the City Council that it become a committee,

12 B - give it a timeframe, and

13 C - give that committee this task of gathering data, developing the questions and designing the
14 process.

15
16 The timeline that was set forth by the Mayor and the City Council was to have a Strategic Plan
17 available for the 2028 budget cycle. This means that by the summer of 2027, they would need to
18 be ready to draft out a Strategic Plan that the City could use for budgeting along with much of
19 their other work. Time is therefore of the essence also being mindful that the weather plays into
20 the turnout here; the warmer months will get the most people showing up. Initiatives can be done
21 concurrently to help speed up the process and yet still get a quality outcome.

22
23 There is a recent (2027) Housing Master Plan Chapter that can be utilized to help inform this TF
24 work since the Housing TF conducted extensive public outreach with great success. It’s also
25 important to remember not to let perfect get in the way of good here. They are at a critical point
26 in time now, to come up with a pivotal and unifying vision.

27
28 There was consensus that the Strategic Plan needs to get done prior to the Master Plan, and that
29 they will not need to start from scratch, and that public input is imperative, both from property
30 owners and renters (many are long term renters), and Lebanon has a strong data base to get
31 information from.

32
33 It would be useful if they can find a community similar in size to Lebanon that has done this kind
34 of work effectively. This is where utilizing a consultant that has this type of experience would be
35 helpful. A group called Small Towns USA does this type of work and for a much smaller price
36 tag than the \$22K mentioned earlier. Councilor Key had the opportunity to speak with this group
37 prior to running for Council and learned they could come here and work with the City of
38 Lebanon. This is another option.

39
40 This is a crucial opportunity to compile a strategic plan and Dr. Blike shared the Dover survey
41 with Deputy City Manager Brooks, who in turn will share it with this Task Force. He encouraged
42 them to take a look at the national benchmarking, which shows Dovers’ strengths and
43 weaknesses as a community. He would like to see the random sampling methodology used there
44 be used in Lebanon as well. This in turn can be a tool to help prioritize recommendations for
45 Lebanon.

To help them learn more about communications options, etc., they will invite the City of Lebanon Communications Director, Beth Beraldi along with Melanie McDonough, Chief Innovation & AI Officer to the next Task Force meeting on September 15, 2026.

Unlike many small communities, Lebanon has an extensive database of detailed information that can be used to help this process along. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, rather they will use the information already available and then gather as much information from the community as possible regarding their needs and priorities.

Councilor Key ended by saying that their charge is to build a process that the Strategic Planning Committee can put into action, and to this end, they have discussed many useful tools tonight such as preparing concrete but open-ended questions, perhaps 5 or so, deciding on their communication tools, thoughts of how they might use a survey like Dover used, and further discuss if using a consultant should be used, and if so, what that might look like. She will compile some information on the Small Towns USA and possibly some other organizations that this TF can learn from.

Additionally, she has already started work on the proposal, subject to decisions and further input from this TF.

F. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review and discussion of Request for Proposals/Qualifications (RFP/Q) Samples

This will be discussed at the next meeting, when City Manager Hosmer returns.

G. OTHER BUSINESS

H. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Key MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:57AM
Seconded by Chief Wheatley

****The MOTION was approved (7-0)***

Respectfully Submitted,
Cinda Mersel
Recording Secretary