



AGENDA

**City of Portsmouth
Housing Blue Ribbon Committee
School Board Conference Room at City Hall*
October 17th 2024
5:30 p.m.**

I. Roll Call

Assistant Mayor Kelley, Councilor John Tabor, Councilor Beth Moreau, Andrew Samonas, Digin Migilditch, Tracy Kozak, John O'Leary, Erik Anderson. Excused: Mary Loane, Jenn Stebbins.

II. Meeting Minutes for October 3rd 2024.

Motion to approve made by Tracy Kozak, seconded by Joanna Kelley and voted unanimously.

III. Working Group Updates

a. Zoning Working Group – Councilor Moreau reported discussions concerned:

- Any legal constraints that might prevent the City of Portsmouth from enacting zoning ordinances and what experience other communities have had (e.g. Nashua) with enabling legislation. Co-chair Kelley to meet with Jane Ferrini in Legal to discuss. Group also suggested inviting State Sen. Kwoka and State Rep Williams to a Committee meeting to learn how the City might balance the needs/wants of the State and those of the community.
- Density and what makes sense in different neighborhoods e.g. Pannaway vs. downtown or commercial/research overlay districts where taller buildings might work. All to be related to the Master Plan.
- Looking at layers such as co-use and parking allowances that no require multiple steps (and attorney time) for committee/board approvals.
- How to plan communications and community education regarding any zoning change recommendations.

IV. Discussions on Housing with Jodi Carnes, City of Portsmouth Welfare Director

How City Welfare Department works:

- All towns and cities in NH must have a Welfare Officer
- PHA is funded by HUD and renters must contribute 1/3 of their income (adjusted when income changes, eg seasonally) to receive housing voucher assistance. Food stamps and other assistance also Federally funded.
- State assistance includes Section 8 vouchers and other programs.
- RSA 165 requires that an annual budget for emergency assistance funds come from the General Fund, distributed through Welfare. Any overspending must go to City Council and any excess goes back to the General Fund. Funds are not sustained monies; they must be on a case by case

basis for emergency needs although individuals do continue long-term because of the very limited (0.4% vacancy) availability of housing.

- FY19 overspent 139 percent: budgeted \$150k but needed \$166k, of which \$65k was for emergency shelter (budgeted at \$10k).
- Requests are rising: 28 in Jul 2024, 45 in Aug, 81 in Sep. Paying assistance to people in workforce who can't make the rent.
- PHA properties have mixed income housing with different AMI thresholds. Ruth Griffin Place has a parking option costing renter \$50 to \$100. Those who cannot afford this cost point up the need for transit options.
- Scenarios:
 - Person from TN ubered to Manchester Shelter because Cross Roads was full, but then has case management help.
 - Senior on the wait list for 5 years in a hotel for \$673 per week, contributes portion from Social Security. Was ok on the 2 incomes when spouse was alive but now can't afford on own.
- Rent assistance requires a lease – no short term rentals. Welfare pays the landlord directly.
- Challenge is inventory – many in the 42-60 age bracket need just 1 bedroom living in 2, 3, 4 bedroom housing as there's no inventory, which means families looking for 2, 3, 4 bedroom also have no inventory becoming available. Yet state defines "Workforce housing" as a minimum of 2 bedrooms, 800 sf.
- Welfare is not income restricted and has 100 percent moral obligation to serve, with case management. Recipient must prioritize basic needs and Welfare reviews paycheck or Soc Sec payments and bank account on monthly, often weekly, basis.
- Also provides mortgage assistance (not interest or taxes), property tax.
- All PHA residents and any eviction letter recipients are informed about Welfare. PHA also has resident advisors as well as property management.
- Goal is retention and taking care of residents.
- Covenant properties – can Housing Trust Fund help keep these properties affordable?

V. Discussions on Programming and Funds of a Workforce Housing Trust

- a. Review of memos from Community Development Coordinator -- Legal Dept recommends a new trust using the amended 2016 Trust as the basis, rather than amending that Trust as that would require NH Charitable Trust review instead of just working from the Housing Committee, to the Trustees of the Trust Fund to City Council approval to the State AG.
- b. Review of Workforce Housing Trust Fund established in 2009. – Of the 11 terms and conditions, #11 is boilerplate on dissolving the trust; #5-10 define the Trust management. Focus on #1-4.
 - Legal suggested deleting "Workforce/Affordable" and naming this the Portsmouth Housing Trust Fund.
 - Purpose: To receive and distribute funds for retention of existing and creation of sustainable long-term affordable housing units.
 - Send edits to Howard Synder by October 28,
- c. Programs for a Workforce Housing Trust Fund in Portsmouth.

VI. Public Comments

Adjourned. 6:43 pm