



Blue Ribbon Committee on Housing
7:30 a.m. – May 29, 2008
City Hall/City Manager's Conference Room

Present: Councilor Christine Dwyer, Chairperson; Councilors Ken Smith and Laura Pantelakos, Dick Ingram, Jane James, Joseph Couture, Karen Maneen, Cliff Sinnott, Cindy Hayden Deputy City Manager (Ex-Officio), David Moore, Asst. Community Development Director (Ex-Officio)

1. **Call to Order** - Chairperson Dwyer called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 a.m.
2. **Welcome New Members** – Chairperson Dwyer welcomed Cliff Sinnott, Executive Director of Rockingham Planning Commission.
3. **Consideration of Meeting Minutes from May 1, 2008** – Councilor Pantelakos moved to accept the minutes of the May 1, 2008 Housing Committee meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. James; all voted in favor.
4. **Review Working List of Committee Topics (attached)** – It was determined that the Chair would revisit this agenda item towards the end of the meeting.
5. **Discussion of Background Materials** – Chairperson Dwyer asked if any members of the committee had any suggestions, clarifications, questions, or observations about the content of the *Roadmap to Affordable Housing* document circulated by staff at the first meeting. The committee members thanked Ms. Hayden and Mr. Moore for their work in preparing the document. Chairperson Dwyer observed that the data indicates there is a particular need for housing for those earning between 80% and 120% of Median Family Income and that renters under the age of 65 make up the largest percentage of residents who pay more than 35% of their gross monthly income towards housing expenses. Councilor Pantelakos observed that many single people who have one income struggle with housing costs in Portsmouth. Mr. Ingram indicated that the information about jobs in the Roadmap document was significant because in the past there was more housing than jobs and now there are significantly more jobs than housing.

Further discussion took place and the committee identified other additional pieces of data they would like to see in the road map document. The requested information included: expanded information about the section 8 housing voucher program; waiting list information for public housing; foreclosure data in the City; tax liens data (number, description of reasons for liens); and real estate indicators (days on market).

Mr. Couture provided information about the housing voucher program in response to questions from the committee. He said there are 406 Section 8 vouchers dedicated to PHA that can be used anywhere in the region from Newmarket to Milton, usually affordable units cannot be found in Portsmouth so a lot of voucher holders go to other communities including Somersworth, Rollinsford, and Exeter. To qualify for a Section 8 voucher a recipient must earn below 50% of Median Family Income based on household size.

Mr. Couture presented the members with a PHA Development Sheet which provided the income requirements for each of the PHA owned and managed properties. Chairperson Dwyer felt that it would also be helpful to have a sense of numbers on waiting lists. Mr. Couture said that could be provided and said the waiting list for PHA properties and Section 8 vouchers fluctuates between 900-1100 people.

Cliff Sinnott referred to the possibility that the Brownfield Program, which can be used in communities for housing development, might be an idea to further explore. Mr. Sinnott asked if the Hometown Program is still available, which he considers a useful housing program. Mr. Moore indicated the program is still active.

Topic Focus: Home-Sharing – Chairperson Dwyer indicated that she hoped the committee was moving forward with a list of actionable strategies for positively impacting the housing issue in Portsmouth. She hoped discussing and researching the possible housing options presented to the committee would result in recommendations for certain actions at the end of the process. She then recognized Ms. Hayden and Mr. Moore to present some introductory information about the home sharing concept.

Mr. Moore said home sharing programs work to connect people living in single family homes who are willing to share their home with a tenant who in turn would provide services and/or rent. He further explained that people participating in home sharing programs throughout the country are mostly seniors who can use assistance, either financial or in the maintenance of their homes. Mr. Moore provided a handout of materials about home sharing organizations, including an agency in Vermont and one in Seattle, Washington. He said these organizations have part and full-time employees who market the program, manage applications from people interested in home sharing arrangements, conduct interviews with applicants, perform screening and background checks. The responsibility for choosing a tenant is the responsibility of the homeowner. A nominal fee for background checks is typically a part of the application process.

Chairperson Dwyer observed that the homesharing concept could preserve existing housing as well as create greater access to housing. After discussing the homesharing concept it was determined that more information was needed concerning who would be interested in home sharing in Portsmouth. Several committee members indicated they would be interested in contacting organizations who might have a perspective about the likelihood of attracting homeowners and potential renters. Ms. Hayden indicated staff would contact local organizations serving seniors to determine if Portsmouth seniors would be interested in participating in the homesharing concept. Committee members indicated they would ask around in the community for input. Organizations which could be helpful include large local employers, smaller business, local churches, home care providers and other civic groups.

In summary, Chairperson Dwyer indicated that the committee could discuss this as a recommendation if the research showed the concept could be successful in Portsmouth.

Topic Focus: Accessory Apartments/Accessory Dwelling Units – Chairperson Dwyer acknowledged Ms. Hayden to review the land use regulatory issues concerning accessory apartments. Ms. Hayden noted that in Single Residence A and Single Residence B zoning districts only one dwelling unit per lot is permitted. She noted that a second dwelling unit cannot be created in these zones. She clarified that the addition of a second kitchen would constitute a second dwelling unit from a zoning perspective. Ms. Hayden also noted potential downfalls to the creation of accessory apartments in single family zones. For example, she noted that dwelling units created for family members typically are successful, but over time reuse by other tenants is sometimes problematic in terms of parking issues and quality of life issues for surrounding neighbors.

Councilor Pantelakos said she was supportive of the creation of accessory dwelling units for family members. She said the Committee should investigate ways to permit the creation of accessory dwelling units in some appropriate zones to be used by family members related to the homeowner. Chairperson Dwyer stated that an accessory dwelling may not be an attached apartment but could be a carriage house.

Chairperson Dwyer suggested looking at ordinances in other communities. Mr. Sinnott indicated that he would be able to bring examples of ordinances permitting accessory dwelling units to the Committee. Ms. Hayden indicated that it would be important that the committee review zoning ordinances from communities similar to Portsmouth in terms of its type and tenure of housing stock.

6. **Public Comment** – Chairperson Dwyer reported that a gentleman dealing with Habitat for Humanity in Southern New Hampshire asked to meet with her. She said that the organization is interested in buying a property from the City and creating a dwelling unit. She said the organization may not be ready to move a project like this forward for approximately 3 years. Ms. Hayden indicated that there a listing of City-owned land could be made available to Habitat for Humanity.
7. **Topic(s) for June 19th Meeting** – Chairperson Dwyer asked committee members to review the list of housing topics with an eye towards what should be discussed at the next meeting.

Councilor Smith mentioned the possibility of housing at Pease and suggested that the committee spend some time discussing this issue. Committee members agreed that this should be reviewed.

Ms. Hayden indicated that Rick Taintor, the City's consultant who is working on the zoning rewrite, would be able to speak about the issues of accessory apartments/dwelling units, expansion of density ordinances to other areas of the City and mixed-use options around transit corridors. Ms. Maneen showed the Committee information on a mixed use development in Massachusetts and said she could picture a similar mixed-use development in Portsmouth. Mr. Moore said he would be able to provide color copies to all Committee members.

Mr. Sinnott suggested the committee review the workforce housing legislation soon to emerge from the New Hampshire legislature. The Committee agreed that this would be helpful. It was suggested that a future agenda item include time for Dick Ingram and Cliff Sinnott to review the pertinent housing legislation to emerge from the current legislative session.

The next meeting is June 19th.

8. **Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Elaine E. Boucas, Recording Secretary