



Accepted July 10, 2008

**Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Housing
7:30 a.m. – June 19, 2008
City Hall/City Manager's Conference Room**

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

Also present were David Holden, Planning Director and Rick Taintor, Planning Department Consultant.

Absent: Joe Couture, Kay Maneen

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- 1. Call to Order** - Chairperson Dwyer called the meeting to order at approximately 7:35 a.m.
 - 2. Consideration of Minutes from May 29, 2008 Meeting** - Motion made by Councilor Ken Smith to approve and accept the minutes of the May 29, 2008 Housing Committee meeting. Seconded by Councilor Pantelakos. Motion passed.
 - 3. New Committee Member Update** – Chairperson Dwyer informed the Committee that Everett Eaton would be unable to serve on the Committee. She announced that the City Council approved the Mayor's appointment of William Gladhill from the Economic Development Commission to replace Mr. Eaton.
 - 4. Update on state housing legislation** – Dick Ingram and Cliff Sinnott updated the Committee on legislation recently passed by the State legislature. Three separate workforce housing bills were consolidated into Senate Bill 342. The bill which passed, declares and states in essence that communities need to take actions to make reasonable opportunities for workforce housing. Dick Ingram referred to two other pieces of legislation, one having to do with taxation of affordable housing developments, which seeks to clarify the method in which a community assesses and taxes housing developments which are restricted by low income housing tax credit and related covenants. House Bill 4342 provides a clear income based assessment methodology and commitment from the municipalities to apply this evaluation for 10 years.

House Bill 1260 covered growth management reform for communities that have or want to have growth management ordinances. This law puts strict limits on building moratoriums in communities. House Bill 1259 provides for establishment of a local housing commission. The bill permits municipalities to develop tools and to appoint a commission to facilitate transactions to develop affordable housing and perform needs assessments as well as to recognize, promote, enhance, encourage, and develop a balanced and diversified housing stock.

Chairperson Dwyer said the housing bills from the last session were a great step forward.

Mayor Ferrini said that one of action steps envisioned at the creation of the Committee was suggestions for new housing legislation. After reviewing the housing legislation from the last session, he indicated the Committee could more readily focus on Portsmouth itself. He said legislative recommendations may still be appropriate.

5. **Home Sharing** – Chairperson Dwyer asked members of the Committee if they would be willing to report back on the feedback they heard from members of the Community regarding the concept of homesharing.

David Moore reported he concentrated on reaching out to some of the social service agencies in the City who serve seniors. Discussion of the home sharing concept might focus on the elderly in single family homes who might be willing to bring in people to pay rent and/or provide services. The executive directors of the three agencies he spoke with were hesitant to hypothesize about the level of interest by seniors in participating in homesharing, because their agencies primarily work seniors who are already in assisted housing or nursing facilities. Mr. Moore indicated that Living Innovations in Greenland has a robust home sharing program for the developmentally-disabled mostly in Southern and Central Maine. The agency is interested in expanding this service to seniors in the region. Mr. Moore reminded the committee of the research shared at an earlier meeting which described the organizational infrastructure needs of the homesharing concept which include staff time spent on education, outreach, application intake, background check coordination and interviews.

Mr. Moore also researched the likely pool of Portsmouth seniors who might be interested in homesharing. He looked at demographic data which showed approximately 1,400 elderly homeowners in the City over the age of 65. Two-hundred (200) of these homeowners are single family owners paying more than 35% of their gross monthly income towards housing costs. He indicated that these seniors may have an economic interest in the homesharing concept. However, he noted there are various reasons people may be interested in homesharing, which are not economic.

Chairperson Dwyer reported that some people have confused the accessory apartment issue with home sharing and found some residents who felt the City would increase tax assessments if a homeowner was participating in a homesharing arrangement. Members commented that this underscored the need for education and outreach efforts.

Dick Ingram spoke with representatives of the younger generation and did not find interest in the homesharing concept. He said younger professionals cited lifestyle compatibility concerns.

Chairperson Dwyer spoke with members of the sustainability initiative; she said one concern expressed was related to safety, privacy, and liability issues. She said some were interested in the concept and another person had been living in a homesharing situation. She indicated that members of the sustainability effort in the City would be willing to collaborate on an effort to bring the concept to fruition.

Chairperson Dwyer indicated that if homesharing was chosen as a recommendation, that a regional partner who might be willing to take the lead in a pilot effort would be needed. Members of the Committee agreed that this should be revisited at the end of the meeting process to determine if further exploration of the homesharing concept should be a recommendation of the Committee.

6. Zoning Discussion

- a. Accessory apartments – Chairperson Dwyer introduced the next topic which was the allowance of accessory apartments. Ms. Hayden stated that the City does not define accessory apartments in its zoning ordinance, but does define dwelling units. She pointed out that a separate dwelling unit is usually defined as having a kitchen and sanitary facilities separate from the primary dwelling unit. 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. Mr. Taintor explained that the accessory units are distinguished from apartments in that they are typically smaller than a standard apartment and the occupant is in some way related to the owner of the primary dwelling unit.

Mr. Holden gave an overview of the zoning map explaining the different districts in the City which consist of primarily single family homes and where the City could expand the uses in the zone to allow for accessory apartments. He indicated that this use needs to be carefully examined for impact on traffic and off-street parking. He noted that neighbors in single family residents are particularly sensitive to traffic and parking issues.

Further discussion took place and the committee supported the idea of recommending an Accessory Apartment Ordinance but they were concerned that the zoning ordinance carefully address the issues identified in the discussion, by regulating the following: that the owners-occupy the primary unit; that a maximum square footage of the accessory apartment be established; that the accessory apartment be subordinate to the main structure; that a license be issued annually to ensure compliance; that reversion be addressed; that the unit occupy the existing footprint or a maximum increase in the footprint area be established.

Mr. Taintor stated that many communities who permit accessory apartment in their zoning also have a licensing process which requires the unit to be renewed each year with a City Clerk. He said the process is a certification process in which the owner certifies compliance with three conditions set forth in the zoning ordinance.

Chairperson Dwyer indicated that the accessory apartment issue would likely be considered as a recommendation by the committee as long as the proper controls were in place. She said if the Committee were to include increased opportunities for accessory apartments in the zoning ordinance it would be referred to the Planning Board.

- b. Expansion of density ordinance to other zones – Ms. Hayden asked Mr. Taintor to explain the City's Residential Density Incentive – Planned Unit Development ordinance and what parcels are affected in the General Resident A and B zones.

Rick Taintor referred to the 2005 Zoning map and a map showing parcels greater than one acre in size to give the committee an idea for the current parcels in the City which could, if developed for affordable housing, benefit from a density incentive.

The Committee generally discussed increasing the number of zones in which the RDI-PUD could be used. There was interest in this potential recommendation and it was noted that perhaps additional zones which are not residential could be examined for residential uses.

7. **Topic for next meeting on July 10th** - At the July 10th meeting, mixed use redevelopment along transit corridors will be discussed with Rick Taintor and David Holden present. The use of City-owned land for the development of affordable housing will be discussed at the July 31st meeting as will affordable housing at Pease.

Jane James is unable to be present at the July 10th meeting and informed the Committee that on July 10th the Seacoast Board of Realtors will have Sylvia Van Aulock speaking at the Wentworth Hotel at 8:30 a.m. Committee members interested in attending are welcome to contact Jane.

The next meeting is July 10, 2008, at 7:30 a.m. in the City Managers Conference Room.

8. Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,
Elaine E. Boucas, Recording Secretary