



Adopted 9-18-08

**Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Housing
7:30 a.m. – August 28, 2008
City Hall/City Manager's Conference Room**

Present: Councilor Christine Dwyer, Chairperson; Councilor Laura Pantelakos; Dick Ingram; Jane James; William Gladhill; Kay Maneen; Councilor Ken Smith; John Bohenko, City Manager (Ex-Officio); David Moore, Asst. Community Development Director (Ex-Officio);

Also present were Lucy Tillman, Chief Planner, Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager; and Peter Britz Environmental Planner/Sustainability Coordinator

Absent: Joe Couture, Cindy Hayden, Deputy City Manager (Ex-Officio)

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- 1. Call to Order** - Chairperson Dwyer called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 a.m.
 - 2. Consideration of Minutes from July 31, 2008 Meeting** - Chairperson Dwyer reviewed the agenda for the meeting and asked for a motion relative to the minutes from July 31, 2008. Councilor Smith made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 31, 2008 Housing Committee meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Pantelakos; all voted in favor.
 - 3. Follow-up comments on mixed-use options in key locations along transit corridors and exploration of Pease as a site for affordable developments** – Chairperson Dwyer recognized Peter Britz to provide some background information on wetlands at Pease in follow-up to the discussion from the previous meeting with the PDA staff representatives. Referring to a map of wetlands at Pease, Mr. Britz indicated that a large section of prime wetlands are located at the southern portion of the PDA land adjacent to the Pannaway Manor housing development. He indicated that this section of the Pease land serves as the headwaters for Hodgdon Brook. The committee members observed that these prime wetlands were located in the area thought to be a potential site for the development of affordable housing. The Committee reviewed its earlier discussion about affordable housing at Pease and the regulatory obstacles to revising the land use plan to include affordable housing. Other obstacles discussed included the environmental health concerns related to contamination at Pease and the lack of available land for large tract residential development. The Committee discussed how the opportunity to introduce residential land uses at Pease would not likely be through the development of detached single family homes but through redevelopment of existing sites to incorporate residential units above offices and other uses. After further discussion, the Committee agreed that a concept plan, which includes a residential use would be useful as a way of introducing the discussion with stakeholders. The Committee discussed how a concept plan would enable decision makers to refer to the type of residential uses

envisioned out at Pease and be useful in discussing the regulatory changes that would eventually need to be addressed with the Federal Aviation Administration and the Air Force.

Mr. Sinnott asked if the Committee received an answer to its question contained in the July 31st meeting minutes about whether the Environmental Impact Statement completed prior to the deed transfer in the early 1990's, would need to be completed for the entire Tradeport prior to the introduction of an additional land use such as housing. Mr. Moore said PDA staff indicated that all questions related to revisiting the approved land uses as part of the original deed transfer would need to be directed to the FAA and Air Force.

Chairperson Dwyer asked if the Committee had learned anything more about the feelings of the Tradeport tenants about housing issues. Mr. Ingram indicated that a survey of the Tenants Association at Pease (TAP), which had limited response, did not indicate a great deal of urgency regarding the housing issue.

Mr. Bohenko agreed that a concept plan which includes a residential component to a proposed development plan would be effective in communicating with the agencies at the federal level. Mr. Sinnott said the PDA revisits its land use plan periodically and that introducing residential land uses at Pease could be discussed at that time.

Councilor Smith discussed how the questions of making changes at Pease for housing may be an opportunity to address other issues in the City. He indicated that this could be an opportunity to revisit the City's right to claim land known as Parcel H out at Pease. Mr. Bohenko suggested that Lynn Hinchee, Legal Counsel at PDA, could be requested to answer questions related to the legal issues that surrounding these concerns. Later in the meeting, it was determined that Mr. Bohenko could work with Pease on issues related to housing and other concerns as appropriate.

Later in the meeting, Cliff Sinnott clarified that the Committee's recommendation regarding housing at Pease should not include reference to affordable housing, but emphasize the importance of a balanced land use plan at the Tradeport that considers housing as opposed to affordable housing.

The Committee also briefly revisited its previous discussion related to opportunities to introduce new affordable housing units as part of mixed-use development in key locations along transit corridors. The Committee briefly reiterated its prior determination that this strategy, of all the strategies discussed to date, held the most promise for increasing the number of affordable housing units in the City. The Committee discussed how this might be achieved through zoning and referred to a previous meeting in which several options for achieving this goal were discussed by Rick Taintor, the City's consultant.

- 4. Topic Focus: Discussion of City-developed/City-partnered site, including location on City-owned land** – Chairperson Dwyer introduced the topic and the Committee discussed in general City-owned land. Mr. Bohenko indicated that staff reviewed City-owned parcels and noted that discussions regarding City-owned property always need to include the reality of encumbrances and deed restrictions attached to some properties, as well as other challenges such as site constraints. Mr. Moore indicated properties which have been topics of previous housing discussions include the Rock Street Garage and Lafayette School. Ms. Tillman added that several properties owned by the City contain significant constraints affecting development potential including size, location near or in wetlands, lack of street frontage, slope or open space/conservation restrictions. Mr. Bohenko said that development of the Rock Street parcel for housing is complicated and would need to have a development partner such as one of the abutting properties due to site access encumbrances on the City parcel.

Mr. Bohenko discussed the possibility of using City resources to work in partnership with developers to purchase private property, which the City would then control and use that leverage

to create affordability. He indicated that properties could then be ground leased to a developer in exchange for providing units of housing at affordable rents to people who earn between 80% to 120% of Median Family Income; they would receive a long-term lease and subsidy to facilitate the project. He indicated that a great deal of control would be retained by the City over the parcel. The Committee expressed a great deal of interest in the City taking such a role. Possible funding sources to acquire the land from private property owners were discussed. Mr. Bohenko indicated that staff needed to investigate this concept further and report back at the next meeting.

Chairperson Dwyer reminded the Committee that she had been approached by representatives from Habitat for Humanity who are eager to move forward with a project in Portsmouth. Chairperson Dwyer asked if any of the City-owned properties reviewed might be potential opportunities for Habitat for Humanity. Mr. Bohenko indicated that staff could investigate whether there was an appropriate parcel for this use and get back to the Committee.

5. Topic Focus: Overview of the City's first-time homebuyers program, HomeTown.

Chairperson Dwyer asked Mr. Moore if enough time was available to cover the planned HomeTown program discussion. Mr. Bohenko offered an anecdote and described how he was approached recently by a parent of a first-time homebuyer who was very grateful for the City's program. Mr. Moore indicated that enough time was not available for an in-depth discussion, and he reminded the Committee that it had previously heard of the outlines of the program and indicated that existing funds will not support the current high level of lending. A brief discussion was held about the possibility of creating a mechanism whereby developers who do not take advantage of a density bonus could offset that by contributing to a housing trust fund.

6. Discussion of proposed regional affordable housing information sharing session including possible partnerships. Chairperson Dwyer recognized Mr. Ingram and Mr. Sinnott to report on their discussions about a regional forum on affordable housing. Mr. Sinnott indicated that the Rockingham Planning Commission is planning a series of events for elected officials and the general public on SB 342. He suggested that the Housing Committee may be interested in being part of the series of sessions which will inform local elected and appointed officials about what SB 342 requires, how to respond to it, and what is being done by way of examples like inclusionary zoning. He said one of the sessions would include a panel of communities who are working on affordable housing issues, which could be an opportunity for the Committee to discuss its work in a regional setting.

7. Discussion of Topics for the Next Meeting on September 18th. After some discussion it was agreed that the Committee would add one more meeting to its schedule. The Committee will meet on September 18th, October 2nd, and October 23rd. Councilor Dwyer will ask the City Council to extend the Committee report deadline by one-month at the next Council Meeting.