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MIDDLETON
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NEW DURHAM
NEWMARKET
NORTHWOOD
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ROCHESTER
ROLLINSFORD
SOMERSWORTH
STRAFFORD
WAKEFIELD

**Strafford Regional Planning Commission Q1 Meeting
Rochester Performance and Arts Center
Rochester, NH**

September 27, 2018

FINAL Minutes

SRPC Members Present: Leslie Schwartz (Durham), Michael Bobinsky (Somersworth), Marcia Gasses (Dover), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Steve Diamond (Barrington), Stephanie Benedetti (Dover), Mark Avery (Madbury), Fred Kaen (Lee), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Evan McDougal (Wakefield), Wayne Burton (Durham). David Landry (Dover)

SRPC Staff Present: Jen Czysz (executive director), Shayna Sylvia (communications and outreach planner), Stefanie Casella (data collection and analysis assistant), Monique Duchesne (data collection intern), Kyle Pimental (principal regional planner).

Guests: Julian Long (City of Rochester), Barbara Holstein (Rochester), Tim Bethke (Tom Tom), Katharine Labrecque (UNH), State Senator David Watters

1. Welcome/Introductions

Chair Victoria Parmele welcomed everyone to the meeting at 4:15 p.m.

Communications and outreach planner Shayna Sylvia noted the meeting topic, housing affordability. She introduced the presenters: George Reagan of the New Hampshire Housing and Finance Authority (NHHFA), Sarah Wrightsman of the Workforce Housing Coalition (WHC) of the Greater Seacoast, and Chris Parker of the City of Dover. She said the presenters would cover the meeting theme from the perspectives of research, advocacy, and implementation, respectively.

2. Presentation: Housing Affordability

Panelists: George Reagan (New Hampshire Housing and Finance Authority), Sarah Wrightsman (The Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast), and Chris Parker (City of Dover)

G. Reagan shared an anecdote about his experiences as a homeowner in Dover, where he has lived since 2004. G. Reagan has worked at the NHHFA since 2008 and is the administrator of the housing awareness program. He explained his role in working with municipalities and organizations, such as the WHC, to serve as a resource and educator on housing and its relation to economic development.

G. Reagan introduced his presentation, "Working and Living in NH: Economic Growth and the Housing Market," by summarizing what the NHHFA does and how it functions.

G. Reagan transitioned to a discussion of New Hampshire's housing market including statistics about median home purchase price. He explained that home values have recovered since the Great Recession and new homes are selling at a significantly higher rate than existing homes. He added that there are fewer homes on the market, and, if priced right, homes are selling faster. NHHFA's research shows that homes under \$300,000 are becoming scarce.

G. Reagan next addressed the cost of renting, which never declined during the recession. He noted that rents are higher in some areas of the state such as Rockingham and Strafford counties.

G. Reagan presented a detailed look at data on median purchase prices for the Portsmouth-Rochester Fair Market Rent Area, the SRPC region, and the cities of Rochester, Dover, and Portsmouth. He elaborated on the decline in the availability of homes for sale in Strafford County and in the Portsmouth-Rochester HMFA. He did note that only very recently has a small upward trend of the number of homes for sale started to happen.

G. Reagan offered a detailed look at incomes needed to afford different rent prices in the Portsmouth-Rochester HMFA, in Strafford County, in the SRPC region, and in Rochester, Dover, and Portsmouth.

G. Reagan added that he attended the WHC Rochester Housing workshop, which S. Wrightsman would discuss during her presentation. G. Reagan added that the rental vacancy rate in New Hampshire is very low. He also reviewed other influences on the housing market, such as supply and demand, demographic trends, economic development, and the labor force.

G. Reagan addressed connections between housing and economic development, noting that in-migration is influenced by factors such as job availability in addition to the availability of housing.

G. Reagan closed his presentation with a review of other NHHFA products and services that complement the organization's role as a data resource. He mentioned NHHFA's draft affordable single-family-housing study, its municipal technical assistance grant program (administered with partner PLAN NH), housing conferences, homeowner and municipal accessory dwelling unit guides, and other resources.

S. Wrightsman introduced the WHC, explaining its focus on advocacy, education, and engagement. She shared its mission, which is to ensure the availability of a variety of types of housing that is desirable and affordable to the workforce. She also reviewed the WHC service area, which covers Maine and New Hampshire.

S. Wrightsman said the WHC's signature program is its charrette program, which provides opportunities to examine and challenge local land-use regulations and creates a space for conversation and education. She reviewed how the charrette program works, which includes identifying a site, inviting the public to attend a visioning session to brainstorm ideas for affordable housing on the site, working with a design and financial feasibility team to draft a design and scope, and then revealing it at a community presentation. She noted that this process is happening now in Rochester, where the visioning session was held on Sept. 26 and the reveal would take place on Sept. 28. The site being examined is 13–15 Hanson Street in downtown Rochester.

S. Wrightsman said that the WHC often continues to work with municipalities after a charrette is held in their community. She gave Exeter as an example. After a charrette was held there in 2017, Exeter successfully applied for an MTAG grant. The town and the WHC are still working together as the town complete its grant funded project.

S. Wrightsman closed her presentation by sharing some upcoming events WHC is going to host, such as their Kittery Housing Charette, or otherwise be involved in. She noted that the success of the charrette program is measured in many different ways, including the number of individuals who learn about workforce housing and changes in development or policy.

After introducing himself, C. Parker explained his role as the assistant city manager for the City of Dover. He addressed the terms affordable and workforce housing, noting that affordability is a difficult term because what may be affordable to one person isn't necessarily affordable to another. He added that workforce housing often has a negative connotation. He said that in Dover housing is simply categorized as single-family, two-family, three-family, or multifamily. He said this encourages diverse and dynamic housing that can appeal to a person throughout different stages of their life. C. Parker then shared an anecdote about living in three different homes in Dover.

C. Parker addressed Dover's current housing market, citing high home sale prices. He said Dover has worked to encourage new and affordable single-family housing. He explained how Dover revisits its zoning and other regulations often to promote creative approaches to a variety of housing options.

C. Parker elaborated on housing affordability and the desire for a range of housing options in Dover, which the city has begun to address by reducing the minimum lot size, allowing the transfer of development rights, and creating density bonus options. This approach has also led to additional funding that can be used to purchase conservation easements.

C. Parker said the city's low vacancy rate will not change much due to a variety of factors, including tariffs, limited construction, and hesitation to construct tall buildings. He added that to be economically viable a community needs to supply diverse housing options. Only then will businesses want to come to a town or region, as it creates a market for that town or region to sustain itself, creating a good quality of life.

V. Parmele thanked the presenters and introduced the action items.

3. Action Item(s)

a. Approval of Draft Minutes of June 28, 2018 Commission Meeting

David Landry **MOVED** to approve the minutes of June 28, 2018. Michael Bobinsky **SECONDED** the motion, of which all were **IN FAVOR**.

b. Approval of Executive Committee-recommended FY 2020 Dues Rates

D. Landry **MOVED** to approve the Executive Committee-recommended FY 2020 Dues Rates. Wayne Burton **SECONDED** the motion. M. Bobinsky asked how the dues rates are calculated. J. Czysz explained how this rate is determined. Evan McDougal **ABSTAINED**. The motion **CARRIED**.

c. Acceptance of the FY 2018 Annual Report and Commissioner's Handbook

E. McDougal **MOVED** to accept the FY 2018 Annual Report and Commissioner's Handbook. M. Bobinsky **SECONDED** the motion, of which all were **IN FAVOR**.

4. Other Business

S. Sylvia asked whether the audience had any questions. Attendees asked about incorporating energy efficiency into housing, age considerations with housing, repurposing buildings (e.g., converting a closed mall into housing), parking requirements with mixed use and housing, state building code standards, and strategies for encouraging more affordable housing in a rural area.

There was no other business.

5. Citizen's Forum

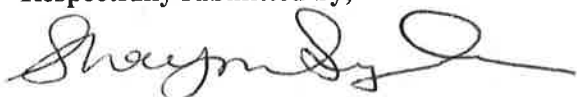
There were no citizen comments.

6. Adjournment

E. McDougal **MOVED** to adjourn. M. Bobinsky **SECONDED** the motion, of which all were **IN FAVOR**.


The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,



**Shayna Sylvia
Communications and Outreach Specialist**

Minutes approved on 12/6/18

By:  _____

**Victoria Parmele
SRPC Chair**