

TOWN OF CUMBERLAND HOUSING TASK FORCE MINUTES
Tuesday, November 30, 2022, at 6:30 pm

Call To Order: Chair Broder opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

Roll Call: Present: James Broder - Chair, Lu Gallaudet - Vice Chair, Brian Cashin, Rick Doane, Betsey Harding, Katie Magoun, Eben Sweetser, Gail Witherill, Justin Wood, Town Councilors Bob Vail & Mark Segrist and Admin. Asst. Christina Silberman.

Absent: Mark Lapping & Town Planner Carla Nixon.

Approval of Minutes of last Meeting: The minutes of the November 16, 2022, Housing Task Force meeting were accepted.

Chair Comments: Chair Broder said he would like to go through his prepared draft of recommendations and noted that he tried to include all appropriate comments and concerns.

Review of Draft Recommendations: The Housing Task Force began review of Chair Broder's draft recommendations. Chair Broder said that a lot of focus has been put on having a point of contact where people can get information that has community interaction, support of local organizations and the statutory authority to build and finance projects and enter into partnerships with other entities. Chair Broder referred to the powers of the Housing Authority listed on page two of his draft. Chair Broder said he wants to make sure that the powers of the Housing Authority are communicated effectively to the Town Council.

Mr. Doane suggested that a statement be added to the Housing Authority section to soften the wording because it reads as if the Housing Authority didn't do what they should have done and they did what they were asked to do. Other Task Force members agreed with this. Councilor Vail suggested that a Council Liaison be assigned to the Housing Authority. Ms. Witherill asked if a conversation should be had with the Housing Authority regarding the recommendation. Mr. Wood said that the Task Force envisions what the Housing Authority can be, not what it is, and the recommendation can clearly delineate this. Councilor Segrist said that the Housing Authority was developed for a purpose that was needed at the time but times have changed. Mr. Sweetser asked if the outcome with the Town Council would change if the Task Force treads lightly versus goes full steam ahead. Councilor Segrist said the Task Force should stick to the facts of what has been determined and not lay blame. Chair Broder said he will redraft this section.

Chair Broder explained the recommendation to hire a competent advisor. Ms. Magoun suggested an intern with a background in urban development. Chair Broder said there needs to be someone with experience. Councilor Vail said the Housing Task Force needs to sell their recommendations to the Council and proposed suggesting the new position be funded for one year only to see how it works. Mr. Wood added that the revised Housing Authority could operate to be self-funded. Chair Broder said the organization would have revenue sources to pay for staff but it could take a while to get things up and running. Mr. Wood said it would be helpful to include some numbers/cost

estimations with the recommendations. Councilor Segrist referred to page three, item six of the draft for an affordable housing trust fund and suggested adding examples of where the funds would be derived from.

Mr. Doane suggested defining how many units the community should be creating and then saying at that point and time, thoughtful stewardship will be needed. Chair Broder said being realistic about what can be done in the near term is important. Mr. Doane said the Town needs to be careful about how much new development is being created. Chair Broder said this is not a part of the Task Force's mission. Mr. Doane referred to page three, item eight of the draft and said the wording seems to imply that the Council would have oversight and sign off on projects that it is being asked to fund and, by implication, the door is open to projects with other partners that the Council is not being asked to participate in. Mr. Doane said the idea of a housing authority taking property by eminent domain is something he could have some serious energy about. Chair Broder agreed with Mr. Doane and said this authority is in the State statute and the Town would want to control it. Mr. Doane said he doesn't think this is what it says. Chair Broder asked Mr. Doane to send him a proposed amendment to make it clearer.

Vice Chair Gallaudet said there has to be a numbers conversation and asked with 150 proposed new units, how many kids would this add to the schools that already don't have enough space. Chair Broder said the Town survey showed strong support for affordable housing. Ms. Magoun said there is a shortage of inventory of housing in Cumberland and this is part of the reason it is not affordable to live here. Ms. Witherill said the Town does not ask private developers how many families with kids there will be and asked why the Town would ask this of affordable housing through the Housing Authority. Mr. Doane said the Task Force is talking about creating special incentives for a level of development that wasn't contemplated when developing Town ordinances and there should be a target to strive for. Mr. Doane said he can support the idea of a trade off for "for profit" developments to pay into a pot but doesn't think there should be an immediate special incentive. Mr. Wood said development is happening and the Town can piggyback on projects that are already in flight but if the Town does nothing, development will all be market rate. Mr. Harding said a target could be set and revisited annually. Chair Broder said the Town is considering a new comprehensive plan and could ask if residents feel affordable housing should have lessened zoning restrictions. Mr. Doane suggested adding a finite number of units to their recommendation as a goal.

Ms. Gallaudet referred to ADUs and said she would like to see regulations in place for short term rentals. Mr. Wood said he doesn't think short term rentals are an issue in Cumberland. Ms. Magoun said short term rentals, when restricted, can push the issue into neighboring communities.

Ms. Witherill said she wants to see something added to the recommendations about regional issues. Ms. Witherill would like to encourage the Town Council to invite Greater Portland Council of Governments to come in and discuss raising funds for emergency housing needs. Ms. Gallaudet suggested Ms. Witherill go directly to the Town Council with her suggestions. Chair Broder said this issue can be presented to the Council in the Housing Task Force's cover letter for their recommendations.

The Task Force discussed ideas for requiring that a percentage of affordable units be required in new developments. Chair Broder suggested having a mandate to have affordable homes in every new development or to have an impactful fee in lieu of having affordable units.

Ms. Gallaudet asked about Cumberland Meadows' current status and suggested this housing become open to all ages and that it be affordable.

Administrative Matters: Chair Broder asked that additional comments be sent to him by email and he will draft a final report and share it prior to the next meeting.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 8:38 pm.