

**Ashland Planning Board
Draft Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 25, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER: Kendall Hughes, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mardean Badger, Tricia Farris (absent with notice), Kendall Hughes, Chris Janosa, Paula Hancock, Bethany Franz (alternate), Linda Barnes (alternate)

Kendall Hughes appointed Bethany Franz as a voting member of the board for this meeting.

HOUSING CHAMPIONS

Kendall Hughes advised the board that he had attended an online conference recently. At the conference he met Andrew Dorsett, Director of Invest NH. Andrew Dorsett made a presentation to the board relative to the program Housing Champions. Andrew Dorsett will explain what Housing Champions do, explain affordable housing, zoning information as well as granting information. Andrew Dorsett works for the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs. Andrew Dorsett is the Director of Invest NH. Lee Ann Moynihan is the person who runs the Housing Champions Program.

The Invest NH is a \$100 million program which the Governor uses to inject capital for multi-family housing projects. These projects have stalled due to inflation and other issues. Invest NH continues and financial awards are going out to communities to support housing projects.

There are three categories of housing that are supported by Housing Champions:

- **Market Housing** (layered housing, where the marketing rate is what the market will bear),
- **Affordable Housing**, housing for teachers and nurses. It is not considered subsidized or low income housing. This is the next level above Market Housing.
- **Subsidized and Low Income Housing**

Housing Champions Program

The Housing Champions Program is a new program. It is designated to enable municipalities to voluntarily apply to become a Housing Champion. When a municipality has received this designation the municipality is open to a series of grant opportunities to help support the community in housing. In 2025 the Housing Champions Program will have \$5 million to distribute to give to municipalities in the following areas: housing production, municipal grants.

To qualify for the Housing Champions Program there are six categories the community has to meet: adopt land use regulations on behalf of the community, adopting regulations for housing, example ADU units (the statutes for ADUs have recently changed).

As a Housing Champion community there is a requirement that all land use board members obtain training. This training would be done partnering with other organizations. The training would be conveniently scheduled.

Housing Production: Communities are rewarded that permit quick housing projects that are affordable housing. **Affordable Housing Definition:** A housing project is considered affordable to persons making 80% of the average median income. Affordable rent would be 30% of the median income.

Housing Champions have rolled out several new programs. These new programs are described below:

- **Housing Infrastructure Municipal Grant:** The money in this program is for anything that could support housing: the extension of sewer and water lines, sidewalks, lighting as well as any infrastructure that helps support housing.
- **Housing Planning and Regulatory Municipal Grant:** This program is designated to help municipalities to look at their planning, their zoning, have community conversations about housing. It helps communities to look at potential barriers within their planning and zoning that will make developing housing more difficult.
- **Implementation of Water and Sewer Infrastructure Upgrades:** This grant rewards communities that have Capital Improvement Plans (CIP) in place. This program supplies seed money for communities to be able to meet the water and sewer capacity portion of the infrastructure for a new development.
- **Implementation of Transportation and Walkability Infrastructure:** There is a program at the State level separate from the Implementation of Transportation and Walkability Infrastructure called **Transportation Alternative Program** through DOT (Department of Transportation) to help with sidewalk construction, walkability and multi-mode transportation and improvements. These monies from these two programs can be used to establish a revolving loan fund for the community.
- **InvestNH:** The InvestNH Program has components of the Housing Champions Program as part of their ongoing program.
- **Hop Program:** The application process is coming up shortly to participate in the next round of the HOP Program. 57 communities participated in the first round of the program. The goal of this program is to get communities to start talking about housing before a developer arrives. This means that all issues pertaining to housing have been explored in advance such as where the community wants housing units. There can be community discussions on what a community can do, what can be done as well as discuss housing capacity. Communities can review all planning and zoning documents as well as find grants to support a regulatory audit if needed.
- **Demolition Grants:** This program would pay for the demolition and internal demolition of unusable community structures. This program would also pay for the repurposing of an existing structure into a commercial or residential structure. This repurposed structure could be designated for market, affordable or low income housing.
- **Municipal Per Unit Program:** This program is similar to the Housing Champion program. Under the Municipal Per Unit Program the monies in this program will pay \$10,000 per unit. This has a \$16 million fund. This program supplies direct capital for housing and for housing investment in communities. The state needs all types of housing.
- **Invest in NH Round II:** This program will be similar to the Capital Program. This program will have a fund of \$60 million in \$10 million grants increments for direct investment in housing projects. This program will work more slowly. This program will be rolled out shortly.

Lack of housing in the state can contribute to homelessness and other employment issues. It can also lead to employers running into a barrier where they can't expand or maintain their production because their employees have nowhere to live. Lack of housing can also be a barrier to economic growth across the state. There is an organization at the state level called NH Housing and Finance Authority This organization has a fairly solid process to get a housing project implemented and assist with economic issues. It is a slow, steady process.

PUBLIC INPUT ON HOUSING CHAMPION PROGRAM

Mardean Badger: Regulations for your program, is there an application process?

Andrew Dorsett: There will be an application that will show up online. The community can work with their staff or work with Lee Ann Moynihan who can walk you through the application process.

Jane Sawyer: Is this grant system a one time deal or something you can get in on annually? Are these funds limited? Once they're gone, they're gone?

Andrew Dorsett: With the \$100,000,000 projects those were all one time. A developer could access the money through the Capital Fund or our Demolition Program. With the Municipal Per Unit Program there is a mix of what you could do with the money. We have almost no restrictions on the money that is raised through the municipalities permitting. Some communities use the money to replace a school roof. Other communities take the money and create a revolving loan fund. Some communities use the money to extend water and sewer lines for a developer. The rest of the money will be used for a grant match. Municipalities can't match federal funds but can match state funds.

Linda Barnes: Is there a list somewhere of the projects that have been funded that we might not otherwise think of?

Andrew Dorsett: If you go to our website or put our program in your search engine you can see what we have active now. There is a map and a link to communities. We will do a rapid deployment. We will also start compiling success stories from our program and show what communities have done with their funds. Our Demolition Program can be used for revitalization projects like the revitalization of the Stevens Mills in Franklin from a mill to high end affordable housing. Another mill has been bought by Stanley and by teaming with DES will turn the site into a community park.

Mardean Badger: I just want to clarify. You have grants under the HOP Program and Invest NH. But the grant under the Housing Champions you have to qualify for a Housing Champion first in order to get these grants?

Andrew Dorsett: In the application we will also publish a guidance document. That can really tailor what you want and what you already have or what you'll do to be a Housing Champion

Sarah Stoppe: I am wondering with the outcome of the gubernatorial election we will no longer have Governor Sununu and not knowing who the next governor will be, are these grants dependent on that? or could the next governor come in and do away with these programs and all the funding disappear?

Andrew Dorsett: I have met Joyce Craig. She is a candidate and I have met her at some of our sites and she is a strong proponent of housing. Kelly Ayotte has also toured our sites with us and the same there. The programs we have right now are funded and those are funded independent of who becomes governor. This is a bipartisan issue. It feels like it is going to be in the forefront for some time. It is beyond a feel good issue at this point It has become a real revel in the NH economy. All the surrounding states are feeling the same pressure. Our companies too are feeling the same pressure. If we can't meet their needs for housing as a state so they can have employees. The employers may seek other places to produce their product.

Kendall Hughes: What about job investment?

Andrew Dorsett: For job investment. Like that Workforce Program? Right.

Kendall Hughes: Ashland doesn't have a lot of jobs for a workforce. So is there anything that you guys do to simulate that?

Andrew Dorsett: We actually have a whole office specifically for that. Joe Thorian is the director of that office. It is the opposite of the workforce initiatives.

Andrew Dorsett: Does anyone know Beno Lamontagne? Beno is an outstanding resource. Don't let him skip your meetings. He has his ear to the ground on manufacturers.

Kendall Hughes: We have had inquiries from people who would like to build here in the commercial area. We don't have much commercial area.

Andrew Dorsett: That is something to think about. Look at your map. I think that's where accessing some of the funds in the housing opportunities program. Have a professional consultant come in at no cost to the town. Try to get a grant to do that. Have them work with the community, hold charettes, maybe hold roundtables and just explore.

Kendall Hughes: Charettes will be good for the whole town.

Jane Sawyer: I would assume affordable housing would be for profit by an owner. They would pay taxes. The issue comes in when low income comes in with non-profits and there is nothing for the town from this project.

Andrew Dorsett: There is always going to be payment to the town. The money is returned over a ten year period in taxes (10 year model) and water fees. We also think about who is going to buy property where people are downsizing.

MILL POND WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Board reviewed the Mill Pond written questions. The Board had no questions about the responses to the questions. The question responses will be put on the town website for public review.

ZONING ORDINANCE

Kendall Hughes worked with Bethany Franz working on the updates and changes to Article 2. Kendall made a presentation to the Board highlighting the changes and updates needed for Article 2 of the Zoning Ordinance. Kendall noted the following proposed changes:

- Article 2.1: The Commercial Zone 1 and 2 are not well defined. This article does not tell us what is contained in each Commercial District.
- The proposed change is to make Commercial Zone 2 a mixed use zone. Commercial Zone 1 will be the business district.
- Another Zone will be the Industrial/Commercial Zone
- Rural Residential Zone which will allow agriculture
- One Zone is the Pemi Overlay

- Squam River/Squam Lake Overlay
- The Floodplain area is presently listed in a Special Section of the Zoning Ordinance. It is being proposed that the Floodplain area be moved to the Industrial Commercial Zone
- Mill Pond is in the Floodplain. This is a Class A Floodplain.
- There is a Section in this Article that describes the individual zones. There is a second section that describes Overlays. Mardean Badger advises to be careful when describing zones and overlays. Each has specific regulations pertaining to them.
- There are no proposed changes to the description that follows Article 2.1A
- Article 2.2 defines Zone 1 and Zone 2. Commercial Zone 2 extends from West Street to the Mobil Station on Main Street
- Commercial Zone 1 extends from the Mobil station up Main Street
- Currently cell towers are allowed in Commercial Zone 1 and 2. The cell tower has no line of sight in these zones. The proposed change is to strike cell towers being allowed in Commercial Zones 1 and 2 and insert cell towers as being allowed in Industrial/Commercial and Rural Residential.
- Commercial Zone 1 extends from Mill Street to Winter Street. This would be the business district. In this district there are first floor businesses with apartments above. Apartments are limited to six units per lot.
- Retail business has been allowed in Commercial Zone 1 since 2008

Commercial Zone 2

- The proposal for Commercial Zone 2 is to move LW Packard Mill from Industrial Zone to Commercial Zone
- In the Commercial Zone 2 the proposal is to allow to have different avenues, parks and residences
- The Mill 3 site will stay the same.
- All Zones that are Commercial include stores, shops, personal services, lodges, apartments residential, marinas, storage and rural residential will be added to the Commercial Zone 2.
- After reviewing and reflecting on the existing zoning maps the Board needs to update what is currently located in the Commercial Zones. Purple sections of the zoning map designate Rural Residential. The sections designated in orange are our Commercial Zones. The sections designated in red on the maps are designated as Industrial.
- The Floodplain and the Industrial do match up.
- Manufacturing, floodplain areas, auto establishments and garages are in the Commercial Zones.
- In the description in the 2024 Zoning Ordinance update the Mill will be moved out of its current zone and be placed in the Commercial Zone.
- Commercial towers will be allowed in the Commercial Zone
- The proposal is to take gas stations and auto repair shops out of floodplain
- There is also the Village Residential Zone.
- Town water and sewer will need to be expanded due to the Thompson Street Granite Ridge Development. New roads and residence numbers will be needed for the Granite Ridge Development.
- The proposal is that the areas of the Zone maps designated in purple which is Rural Residential be extended to the New Hampton town line. This zone will include River Street and Thompson Street. River Street and Thompson Street both have water but no sewer lines.
- Andrew Benton could be a good resource relative to zoning ordinances.
- The current zoning maps mirror the James Rollins zoning maps from the early 1960s.

Rural Residential Zone

- There is a proposal to add language to the Rural Residential Zone description to include manufactured homes.
- The language relative to commercial camping needs to be brought in line with the State regulations
- All sanitary laws and regulations need to be revised.

Pemi Overlay

- The Pemi Overlay will go from the Ashland town line to the New Hampton town line to the Pemi River and on to Plymouth.
- There will be no change to the Pemi Overlay language

Squam Overlay

- The Squam Overlay will be 250' from the centerline of the Squam River on each side. The proposal is to describe each side of the river. Under the proposal the line will be extended to the dam in Holderness The line will continue down River Street to the mills. The proposal is to extend the line to downtown Ashland (specifically Memorial Park).

Linda Barnes inquired about the line along a shifting shoreline: The current line is defined as stopping at the gauge in Holderness

Overlay Restrictions

- There will be no application of fertilizer or herbicides
- No use of tanks in the area
- Excavation Permits will not be allowed
- Take the present Overlay language and move it from Section 5 of Article 4 and move overlay districts to Article 4 Section 4.10. These changes were voted in by the voters in 2023.

Zoning Maps

- The new Zoning maps should be printed with colored lots and make sure that nothing is left out of the final copy of the maps
- The new colored zoning maps will be put on the town website under Forms and Documents
- Any comments about the new maps can be written on the side of Google maps docs.
- There needs to be two Public Hearings held on all the Zoning Ordinance changes
- A Deliberative Session will be scheduled in December to explain to the residents all changes to their Zoning Ordinance.
- The changes will strengthen the Zoning Ordinance and deal with what is actually in town
- There are houses in the commercial zone. These houses have been grandfathered.
- Residences are allowed in the Commercial Zone
- The final Zoning Ordinance document will go on the town website for public review

IMPACT FEES

- Impact fees are used to offset costs of developers
- The Board can bring in experts and technical people. The experts make a presentation to the Planning Board.
- The Planning Board makes the final decision on the issue

- At some point to be determined the cost will trigger impact fees.
- The above is the entire processing of impact fees

Bethany Franz made a motion to look into impact fees. Chris Janosa seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CHARETTES

Charettes are an avenue to bring together developers, monied people, planning people and the public for a brainstorming session. It is at these sessions that all ideas are possible. In the later process of the charette the gathered people look at the realities that Ashland can realistically support or maintain. The community will decide what they want, where they want it and how they want it. The community can make changes later in the process. The community needs a basic plan. Ashland has potential. The charette is a form of town meeting. It guides us in what we can and can't do with the land and legally. Charettes look at feasibility of ideas and what will work for Ashland.

BENO LAMONTAGNE

Beno Lamontagne knows all manner of funding resources.

MILL POND APPLICATION

The Mill Pond Application has been received by the Planning Board. The Board staff is currently going through the massive Mill Pond Application. The Board will need to bring in an engineering expert. These engineers need to be knowledgeable about all parts of this application and their studies. The engineers will need to have the capacity to do what we need. Marissa will send out requests for proposal. The Board needs to look at more than one engineer. The Mill Pond Application will be put on the agenda for our October 23 meeting.

On October 15 the Planning Board will meet to continue their review of the Zoning Ordinance. The meeting is scheduled for 6:30 PM at 6 Collins Street.

DISPOSITION OF MINUTES

The Board reviewed the minutes of their Wednesday September 4, 2024 meeting. Chris Janosa made a motion to approve the amended minutes. Mardean Badger seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Mardean Badger advised the Board that the residents at 139 Thompson Street are running a commercial business and a farmstand in a Rural Residential Zone. Mardean Badger recommended that the residents come to the Planning Board for an informal discussion about what their plans are for their property. It was noted that the business has been registered as a business with the State.

ADJOURNMENT

Kendall Hughes made a motion to adjourn. Chris Janosa seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM. The next Planning Board meeting will be Wednesday, October 2, 2024 at 6:30 PM. At 6 Collins Street.

Minutes submitted by Paula Hancock