

TOWN OF ESSEX HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

Housing Commission (HC): Anna Brouillette (Chair), Lauren Ressue (Vice Chair), Carolyn Ellenberger (Clerk); Noah Detzer; absent: Rupesh Asher

Administration and Staff: Kent Johnson (Town Planner)

Guests: Maya Balassa (CCRPC), Darren Schibler (CCRPC), Karen Adams (Essex Deputy Town Manager), Charles Cole (Essex Fire Chief)

- Call to Order
- Agenda additions/changes
- Approve Agenda
- Public to be heard
- Business Items
 - Discussion of Fire Impact Fee Ordinance
- Other Business
 - Housing Needs Assessment Review
- Adjourn

1. CALL TO ORDER

Lauren called the meeting to order at 3:01 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

The following additions to the agenda were proposed:

- a. CCRPC presentation
- b. Housing Needs Assessment timeline for updates

Noah motioned to approve the amended agenda, Carolyn seconded.

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

No members of the public were present.

4. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. CCRPC presentation

- i. Maya and Darren from CCRPC shared information on Act 181 and the proposed Tier 1b partial exemption from Act 250; CCRPC will attend the June 16 meeting of the Essex Selectboard, which will decide whether the exemption is wanted or not
- ii. Housing Targets for Essex and Chittenden County have been proposed as part of statewide Housing Needs Assessment
- iii. Chittenden County Future Land Use Map:
<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/79128f74bcbd4be58f24fc6fe20b27fb?draft=true>
- iv. Housing Targets and Land Use Map are open for comments through May 19
- v. Lauren shared data on number of units built in Essex by year; Essex has only met the target of 99 in 2 of last 10 years
- vi. **Action:** Lauren and Anna to prepare comments for Selectboard (due 6/16) and/or CCRPC (due 5/19)

b. Discussion of Fire Impact Fee Ordinance

- i. Karen (on behalf of Selectboard) and Charles (Fire Chief) presented the proposed impact fees to developers that would support fire services needed to address the impact of anticipated development through 2050; Housing Commission has been asked to comment on fees
- ii. In 2024, the Fire Dept received 2024 calls, a substantial increase over past years; >700 calls were for 7 high occupancy properties
- iii. Impact fees are designed to offset today's deficiencies, including additional equipment needed for high occupancy buildings and to properly address call volume; e.g., currently arial truck needed for large buildings must come from neighboring municipality, which delays response time
- iv. Fees do not replace operating budget and may be eliminated once growth needs are met
- v. Burlington currently has impact fees, and will be sunseting; Colchester has fees; Williston and Hinesburg are looking to implement; use caution in comparing impact fees between towns since each has different needs; **Action:** Karen will provide fees across towns

- vi. Affordable housing development could be exempted from fees
- vii. Alternative to impact fees is increasing operating budget, which hits all tax payers
- viii. Proposed fee options are provided on page 17 of packet in meeting materials
- ix. Housing Commission members considered whether impact fees would deter developers
- x. Comments requested by May 19 Selectboard meeting, but additional time may be granted if needed
- xi. **Action:** Noah to request additional time for discussion and to collect comments/recommendations; Housing Commission members to discuss at June 3 meeting

c. Housing Needs Assessment Review Process

- i. Given other priorities, HNA review is on hold for now; timeline for review will be revisited during the June 3 meeting

5. **ADJOURN**

Noah motioned to adjourn the meeting; Carolyn seconded. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:30 PM.

Minutes submitted by Carolyn Ellenberger, Clerk.