TOWN OF ESSEX HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

Housing Commission (HC): Anna Brouillette (Chair), Lauren Ressue (Vice Chair), Carolyn Ellenberger (Clerk), Noah Detzer, Lois Whitmore

Administration and Staff: Brittany McGregor (Town of Essex)

Guests: Cheryl Van Epps

1. Call to Order
2. Agenda additions/changes
3. Public to be Heard
4. Approval of Minutes
    - Approve minutes from September 2, 2025 and October 21, 2025 meetings
5. Business Items
    - Debrief Community Day
    - Debrief Selectboard Meeting
    - Housing Needs Assessment conversation and decision
    - Invitation from Planning Commission to attend December 11, 2025 meeting and discuss priorities based on the Action Plan chapter of the Town Plan
    - Early 2026 Priorities
    - Discuss potential for Zoning Regulation updates to support housing development
    - Discuss upcoming schedule/scheduling needs
6. Member and Staff Updates
7. Reading File
    - Keystone Trails Project Draft Plan
8. Adjourn

1. CALL TO ORDER

Anna called the meeting to order at 3:02 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Cheryl Van Epps, Essex Town resident, was present.

4. APPROVE MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 2, 2025 MEETING

The minutes from the September 2, 2025 and October 21, 2025 meetings were approved.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Debrief Community Day
   i. Anna and Noah reported productive, meaningful discussions with the community
   ii. The event was a positive experience; future tabling events could focus on opportunities with a more targeted audience

b. Debrief Selectboard meeting
   i. Anna and Carolyn attended Nov 10 Selectboard meeting, with Anna representing the Housing Commission and addressing questions posed by Selectboard members
   ii. The Housing Commission will continue to keep the Selectboard informed of activities and consult as needed

c. Housing Needs Assessment conversation and decision
   i. Little value is expected from an updated Housing Needs Assessment because the need for affordable housing is confirmed and specific housing targets have been identified
   ii. **Decision**: The Housing Commission members agreed to not pursue an updated Housing Needs Assessment at this time and instead focus efforts on specific activities to encourage and enable affordable housing in Essex

d. Invitation from Planning Commission to attend December 11, 2025 meeting and discuss priorities based on the Action Plan chapter of the Town Plan
   i. All commissions have been asked to attend to address how they are incorporating actions into their plans
   ii. Anna will attend Dec 11 meeting

e. Early 2026 Priorities
   i. Suggestions included:
      1. Regulation requiring universal design on all new construction

2. Impact fee for developers to fund a housing trust
3. If town decides to go with local options tax, include short-term rental tax to fund a housing trust
4. Invite Wisdom House founders to attend an upcoming HC meeting to discuss bringing the concept to reality
5. Efforts to help those experiencing homelessness
6. Consider repurposing commercial buildings for housing
7. Eliminate restrictive zoning
8. Map out who is doing business in the area (developers, banks, tradespeople, community members, etc..) and consider a roundtable/Housing Night to generate ideas and foster collaboration

ii. Housing Commission members to review 2025 Workplan for additional ideas

iii. **Action:** Anna to include discussion of Roundtable/Housing Night at next HC meeting, plan for winter/spring event

iv. **Action:** Lois to invite Wisdom House representatives to future housing commission meeting

f. Discuss potential for Zoning Regulation updates to support housing development

i. Planning commission is looking to update zoning regulations to enable development; opportunity for Housing Commission to make suggestions

ii. **Action:** Brittany to circulate zoning regulations; Noah to lead Housing Commission member review and updates

g. Discuss upcoming schedule/scheduling needs

i. Housing Commission members agreed to shift meeting time to 12:00 PM, first Tuesday of the month

6. MEMBER AND STAFF UPDATES

- Keystone Connectivity Draft Plan provided as FYI

7. ADJOURN

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:16 PM.

Minutes submitted by Carolyn Ellenberger, Clerk.