

TOWN OF ESSEX HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

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, Anne Miller

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES
3. APPROVE AGENDA
4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD
5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Approve minutes from February 3, 2026 meeting
6. BUSINESS ITEMS
 - a. Housing Fund Discussion and Update from Karen Adams
 - b. Zoning Regulations Updates
 - c. Discuss Winter/Spring Event and Community Engagement
7. ADJOURN

1. CALL TO ORDER

Anna called the meeting to order at 12:01 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

No changes to the agenda were made.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

The agenda was approved unanimously.

4. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

No comments from the public were made at this time.

5. APPROVE MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 3, 2026 MEETING

The minutes from the February 3, 2026 meeting were approved unanimously.

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

- a. Review work plan and update status of projects
 - Google Drive is no longer available, but an updated, uneditable work plan file will be available to HC members on a hidden Essex Town website page
 - Update housing-related sections of Zoning and Subdivision regulations:
 - HC members supported the Planning Commission's idea of designating a liaison to the HC
 - Anne Miller suggested conducting an analysis of what other communities have done to adjust zoning to meet housing needs
 - Consider providing a plain language summary/guide to zoning
 - Develop a Housing Trust
 - To be discussed further in the agenda
 - Create collaborations
 - Include partnerships with state legislators
 - Consolidate this item as part of developing the Housing Trust; having discussions and forming partnerships will be part of the Housing Trust info gathering activities
- b. Housing Trust
 - Develop project timeline
 - Proposal to Selectboard by June 2027
 - Consider resident feedback on housing needs received at yesterday's Town Showcase (see below)
 - RFP not required, but HC will clearly define expectations and deliverables including:
 - Focus on 2-3 levers to design potential programs around (vs a broad survey of options)
 - Define whether to look for ideas/comparisons locally vs state-wide vs nationally

- Propose what could be done with the pilot money
- Include a timeline for expected check-ins
- Identify target audience, e.g., aging population, younger wage-earners
-
- Brainstorm who the Trust can serve (i.e. first-time home buyers, ADUs, residents aging in place)
- Identify three qualified consultants/vendors to obtain quotes from
- **Action:** HC members will consider who we want the trust to serve and with which levers; prepare to share 2 ideas at the April HC meeting

Essex Town Showcase

March 2, 2026

Ideas and concerns shared with Housing Commission by resident attendees:

- *A resident expressed their dislike of the terms “workforce housing” and “affordable housing” and what they imply; area construction is largely too-expensive McMansions*
- *A resident of Pinewood Manor addressed concerns about a very “conscientious” developer currently facing challenges with trying to develop housing on steep slopes and overall concern about restrictions facing developers; a lengthy discussion including Lenora Dodge, State Rep on Housing Committee*
- *A resident expressed concerns about out-of-state buyers of second homes in the area, reducing even further the availability of suitable places for current community members to live; this resident lives with partner and kids in a single family home with aging in-laws*
- *A resident asked how Act 881 / House Bill 631 will affect us; this resident feels there is too much talk about housing in the state government, not enough action; doesn’t think state actually wants us to have more housing*
- *A resident suggested a tiny village, perhaps through renovation of abandoned warehouses; suggested Upper Main as location for tiny village*
- *A resident reported that they built an ADU on their property in case grandkids go to UVM and need a place to live; ADU is currently unoccupied as the owner doesn’t want to be a landlord*

7. ADJOURN

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 1:03 PM.

Minutes submitted by Carolyn Ellenberger, Clerk.