

TOWN OF ESSEX HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 2, 2026

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

Administration and Staff: Brittany McGregor (Town of Essex); Georgia Levine (Planning Commission Liaison)

Guests: Cheryl van Epps; Robert Lalancette

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

- a. Comments from the public on Consent items and items not on Agenda

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Approve minutes from April 7, 2026 meeting

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

- a. Community Fall Festival (September 19th, 11 am - 4 pm) - Housing Commission Table
- b. Town Coffee Talks - community outreach opportunity for the Housing Commission
- c. Discussion and Vote on moving forward with pillars for the Housing Trust Fund/RFP

7. MEMBER AND STAFF UPDATES

8. ADJOURN

1. CALL TO ORDER

Anna called the meeting to order at 12:15 PM.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Lois requested addition of the following topics:

- Why a Housing Commission (HC) meeting wasn't held in May 2026
- HC meeting length/schedule
- Discussion to consider renovating 2 abandoned houses using CTE resources; topic will be added to future agenda to allow time to gather information and to allow for advance public notice; **Action:** Lois to share property addresses; Brittany to add to next month's HC meeting agenda

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

- a. Robert Lalancette proposed a "Center Village" that would incorporate housing into the Town of Essex's Center Road building plan. The Essex Town Selectboard is driving the project and currently there are no concrete plans; HC has provided some input on housing considerations during site design and will keep Robert's proposal in mind during future discussion that include the HC. Lois suggested using an alternate term to "affordable" due to negative connotations and asked how do we get on record that we are supporting affordable housing?
- b. Cheryl van Epps raised the following points:
 - i. Essex may lose the Route 4 bus; please keep accessibility in mind when planning housing
 - ii. What is the process for how the HC votes and comes to agreement on decisions?
 - iii. Please be aware that developers continue to build very expensive homes in Essex, rather than focusing on more moderately priced units

4. APPROVE MINUTES FROM APRIL 7, 2026 MEETING

Noah motioned to approve the minutes, Carolyn seconded. The minutes from the April 7, 2026 meeting were approved unanimously.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

- a. Community Fall Festival (September 19th, 11 am - 4 pm) - Housing Commission Table
 - i. HC agreed to sign up for a table and will consider sharing space with another related committee **Action:** Brittany will inquire about a shared tent space for the Community Fall Festival
 - ii. Consider generating a hand-out for the table
 - iii. Carolyn may not be able to attend, will know closer to the date
- b. Town Coffee Talks - community outreach opportunity for the Housing Commission
 - i. Opportunity to invite community to discuss HC-related topics; format can be open town hall, short presentation, or solicit feedback from the public on a specific topic
 - ii. HC members will keep this opportunity in mind when a specific topic need public awareness or feedback
 - iii. Consider a coffee talk on the topic of transportation in collaboration with Planning Commission; **Action:** Brittany to connect Planning and Housing commission chairs to consider a shared coffee talk on transportation; Georgia is willing to be representative
- c. Discussion and Vote on moving forward with pillars for the Housing Trust Fund/RFP
 - i. HC members revisited prior proposal to focus on the following:
 - 1. ADUs, e.g., incentive creating
 - 2. Existing home quality improvement related to health, safety, and accessibility
 - 3. Ask contractor to explore other funding opportunities to support housing development within Town of Essex and how to fund, e.g., through partnerships
 - ii. Lois revisited priorities of spending money in a way that recirculates funds, creates new housing, and supports long-term goals and community resilience; HC agreed that these priorities can be addressed by the proposed focus areas
 - iii. Carolyn motioned to move to a vote on the 3 proposed focus areas listed above in the Housing Trust Fund RFP, Noah seconded.
 - iv. **Vote:** 3 Yes (Anna, Noah, Carolyn), 1 No (Lois)
 - v. **Action:** Anna and Brittany will identify next steps for Housing Trust Fund and provide update at July meeting

d. Meeting Scheduling

- i. Lois feels that to miss a monthly meeting is not responsible to the public given the urgency of the current housing situation and would like to see more time spent on HC-related work. HC members discussed balancing the urgency with time and work constraints of HC volunteers
- ii. HC members agreed to revisit meeting scheduling and consistency, consider 2 hour evening slots, and use working groups of 2 members outside of monthly meetings as needed

6. MEMBER AND STAFF UPDATES

- a. Lauren's seat will be open as of July 1; please support recruitment of a new HC member and share the opening with potential candidates
- b. Georgia Levine has joined HC meetings as liaison from the Planning Commission, which shares some HC goals. Georgia serves as a resource to the HC and will communicate back to the Planning Commission. Please bring any questions about regulations that could increase housing to Georgia.

7. ADJOURN

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 1:18 PM.

Minutes submitted by Carolyn Ellenberger, Clerk.