



**CITY OF LACONIA
MAYOR'S SPECIAL CITIZENS AD HOC REVIEW COMMITTEE -
CITY OWNED PROPERTY AT OLD NORTH MAIN ST. AND PARADE ROAD
MAY 22, 2025**

**5:00PM Site Walk
5:45PM Meeting**

**City of Laconia – City Council Chambers
45 Beacon Street, East
Laconia, New Hampshire**

Minutes

1. Welcome / Call to Order

Bill Milner distributed copies of the former meeting minutes and commented that the minutes were not received and/or voted upon.

They were on the website, and Bill Milner did print them for everyone.

He noted that it is confusing who is on the committee and who has voting rights. 3-4 people met after the meetings to try to determine who was who.

He further indicated that the March 11 meeting minutes roll call didn't reflect the correct committee members or their wards.

It was noted that the minutes were inconsistent and votes were inconsistent.

He did not ask to ratify the minutes

It is important to determine who is on the committee and who has the right to vote.

At that time the Mayor called a roll call with clarification of ward and status.

2. Roll call

- Patrick Wood 1 committee member
- James Ollie Anderson 1 committee member
- Catherine Bowler participant
- Kirk Beattie City staff
- Matt Cashman 1 appointed
- Bob Soucy 2 appointed (Cheney)
- Mike Little 4 appointed

- Vanessa Saunders 5 appointed
- Eric Hoffman 3 Chair appointed
- Mayor Hosmer 3
- John Moriaty 4 appointed
- Jason Sproal 3 appointed
- Bill Milner 1 appointed

3. Recording secretary noted

4. Committee Discussion on the Presentation by the Lakes Region Community Developers on April 22, 2025 to RFQ No. Q24-08-08 Proposal for development of City's surplus property parcel No. 332-404-1

Recap done by Eric Hoffman of the RFP and the Process. The result of tonight's meeting will be to make a recommendation to the City Council.

The Mayor further explained that written recommendations should be submitted to Joia Hughes to be forwarded to the City Council.

Bill Milner noted that the public present is expecting a vote by the committee when they leave.

Cashman noted that the public should be allowed to speak and committee members need to note whether they are in favor of the development.

Eric noted that there are still a number of options for the City for the property. At that point there was further discussion about submitting information to the City Council and if that needs to be decision on a RFQ or if it should be further explored as a RFP.

Jason Sproul noted that he thought the committee would make a recommendation to the City Council after exploring the options.

Vanessa Saunders noted in agreement, that she believed the same.

Patrick Wood noted that his belief was the same as Jason and Vanessa noting that the Committee doesn't have the final say the City Council does.

A discussion ensued.

The Mayor noted that LRCD was in the audience and asked Carmen Lorentz what the next step would be if the city council agreed to pursue this proposal.

Carmen Lorentz noted that an agreement between LRCD and the City would need to be made outlining the sale or lease of the land. LRCD would begin the due diligence, architecture, engineering, funding, etc.

This process would include planning, zoning and infrastructure studies including surveys and a site plan.

Mike Little commented that his thought originally was that the site would be considered for single family homes. LRCD noted that subsidy for single family homes was not available but was for rental housing.

LRCD noted that they tried to design a SF project in Wolfeboro and financially the homes would not have been affordable to the first time homebuyer.

LRCD noted that the state's budget does not have single family subsidy funding.

Ollie Anderson noted that there were 3 buildings in the RFQ presented, but there was no guarantee that it would be more. LRCD noted that until a conceptual was submitted to Planning Board it was unknown, but the desire was to have the three as presented.

Vanessa Saunders asked if LRCD would be buying or leasing the land. LRCD noted that the price was a factor in the number of units created to make the project work. The hope was that the City Council would negotiate the price to make the project feasible.

Eric Hoffman asked if a MOU or purchase agreement would be needed for whatever is negotiated. Carmen noted that the agreement would spell out the specifics of what both parties agreed to.

Ollie Anderson asked if the rents were based on MAI, Carmen responded yes. There was further discussion on the census data and the MAI and the affordability to Laconia residents since the MAI is based on Belknap County.

Bob Soucy if the process were approved, how long would it take? Carmen noted that it takes a few years before construction due to the funding sources needed and the competition to get those funds. Recent projects have taken up to 5 years.

John Moriarty noted the incomes restrictions on property and rent control. It was asked whether the price of the property has been discussed. What is the highest and best use of the property?

Eric noted that the committee was tasked to find a use for the property that helped housing concerns and not necessarily the dollar value of the property and a future CC may decide to sell the property for the highest bidder.

LRCD noted that they expect to pay for the property, typically \$25-\$25k per unit created.

Mike Little noted that DPW and Community Center need new locations was this land considered?

Eric Hoffman agreed that this may also be considered. Kirk noted this also has been considered for DPW but that the site is a little smaller than needed and it could create noise.

Vanessa Saunders asked if there is a set use of the land or can the City sell it.

Because the land has performance zoning it could be sold for substantial profit.

Mayor noted that the sale would also create tax revenue but that previous administration wanted the land to benefit the public. The City was approached at one time by a grocery store for that property and the City said no.

Olle asked with 36 units, what is the expected turnover on the units. LRCD compared this to Wolfeboro property (LIHTC) and that property has very low turnover, maybe a couple units per year.

Bill brought up how the zoning got changed. 3 public hearings. He mentions that if it was still zoned residential things were different. He notes that the public hearing was not noticed correctly and abutters were not noticed.

The Mayor noted the times and dates that the public hearings were heard and noticed. The Mayor noted that there is an opportunity to improve this process. The Land at that time was owned by the State.

Olle noted that the value of the properties in that neighborhood would be negative affected by the development of this property. Realtors have confirmed this to him.

Pat noted that a similar thing was discussed when the prison was installed.

Jason has done research on this and found studies that indicated no negatively financial impact on surrounding properties and sometimes a positive.

Olle noted that he has concerns about the development pending across the street and the traffic, the impact on infrastructure and school system with 700+ more kids. He noted that there would be a negative impact on the City taxes.

Eric noted that this is outside the scope of this meeting and that they City Planning Department will review this and that there will be a steady roll out not all at once.

Bill noted that there was a meeting before the RFQ and Housing Champion with Kirk, Matt and him. The City is currently not losing money on this property. He noted that there is no need for development of this property at this time and that the City should wait.

Bob noted that Bruce Cheney asked him to relay the message that the development of that property should wait.

Jason suggested that the project proceed to an RFP process and that it should be noted that it is to address the affordable housing crisis. He noted that the unknowns about the State School property should not hold up a project that could have a small positive impact on the housing problem.

Eric commented that it would be interesting to look further into a program that promoted homeownership.

Bob asked if the Laconia Village proposal include affordable housing? Kirk noted that there is proposed a full range of housing options. Eric asked if this is a stipulation of any agreement? Kirk noted that nothing is in writing yet, but it was discussed.

Pat asked if the property sold the property yet? He expressed concern that the State contract might address some of the concerns of infrastructure?

Kirk noted that a traffic study is underway. The City already looked at infrastructure. The rest of the conversation is between the seller the State and the Buyer Pillsbury group during the due diligence process. Kirk noted that there have been and will be more discussions between the City, Planning Board and the developer.

Bob noted that the developer will need to do all the site improvements.

Eric called for final thoughts from the committee.

Jason noted that affordable housing should be included in the Laconia Village development and we should make sure that the developer is aware of this. He noted further concerns with efforts at the State level to create zoning reforms statewide.

Vanessa asked LRDC what they would pay for the property about \$720,000. Vanessa noted that this is way below market value and is the City a philanthropist.

Mike said that there are 120 units of affordable housing units coming online.

Cathy noted that that included some of LHRA units that have been completed and occupied for a while. The waitlist is very long and some applicants are homeless.

Olle noted that existing housing is not available to low income households but that it exists.

Cathy noted that LHRA operates in Laconia and a 7 mile radius of it.

Mike noted that Laconia should not have to bear the burden of the surrounding towns.

5. Public Comments

Dave Dixon – against location due to the effect on property values.

Lisa Morin - she presented a letter from the Laconia Conservation Commission asking for the land to be undeveloped.

Sean Cardinal – changing the zoning should require a notice to abutters. The LRCD funding may not be sufficient to keep the aesthetics complementing to the neighborhood. He noted that this area is better suited for a single family. Concerned that workforce housing is a buzz word and not the positions that were originally discussed.

Rev. Judith Wright – noted that she is talking as a resident and not on behalf of her congregation. She is often approached by residents for financial assistance. She shared a few stories of people she has worked with. She stressed the need for affordable housing.

Doug Robinson – workforce housing is needed. The City has already approved more units than area needed per LRPC and the State School Property hasn't started. Concerns about the City becoming overbuilt and property values going down. Concerns TIF districts and large single family vacation homes. This process should be slower.

Tom Seagal – concerns about Laconia Village starting in August 2025. Kirk said no it's 2026. The 911 building needs to be able to move to new location. There was a clarification on how TIF districts work and how the funds remain in that district.

Brendan Florio – he's against this project, not against affordable housing, just the location. It's not the right location. Interest in how the Laconia workforce will be the occupants of the development. How many projected residents/children/vehicles would this development create? What is the cost of infrastructure to the City? How does impact Lake Opechee? Will the amount of taxes collected be sufficient for City's costs. Concerned about the City's process for changing the zoning.

Discussion about the use of the Sunrise Towers and the residents being elderly. LHRA clarified this. It was noted that the building has a drug problem by the resident.

Paul Lang – He grew up here and it's not in the character of the neighborhood. Appalled that the City is buying buildings downtown. Concerned that the City will need that land for future City use. Concerned that the Bay Street development was \$2.1 million and has 16 units. Concerned the City is gambling with the residents in this neighborhood largest investment, their homes.

Eric asked that committee members get their recommendation to Joia within one week.

The mayor noted that the committee was to gather information and share information, but that the Council is who will vote. Eric noted that the statements from the committee members will be included in the report to Council.

Discussion ensued about the need for a vote on the recommendation.

Milner noted that he is against the LRCD proposal.

Discussion ensued about having another meeting or extend the comment period for two weeks.

The public made comments.

It was noted that the committee should have a say, and a vote. What was the three meetings for.

Bob Soucy will not make a decision until the State School is developed.

Mike Little noted that he thinks the process should be put on hold and maybe an RFP.

Vanessa indicated that the development should be put on hold and not sold at below market value.

Eric noted that the City should work with the developer on developing the land and maybe not this model, but he doesn't want the land sold on the open market. It was noted by a member of the public that the committee spent a lot of time on this and should have a say.

Pat Wood noted his concern about housing insecurity and younger people who want to live and work in Laconia and elderly who want to downsize. He doesn't want to give up on an idea that might create sorely needed housing.

Olle wants to wait until more is known about the Laconia Village development. He would also like to see the 79E zoning removed from the property.

John Moriarty – notes that the 36 units will have far less impact on the community than the Laconia Village development. Recalls discussion on the performance zoning ordinance being accepted, and thought it was just a commercial property ordinance. He is concerned that the zoning change wasn't understood. He would like to not go forward with this proposal.

Jason – no further comment

Bill Milner - The abutters were not properly informed of the zoning change and quoted the Mayor as stating that the character of the neighborhood should be considered. He thinks the Laconia Village might likely be built before this proposal ever would.

The Mayor thanked everyone for their participation. He hoped that everyone became better informed during this discussion. In the four years since the City got the land it was always discussed it would be housing.

The Housing Task Force research noted the need for affordable housing and the long commute times for our area workforce. He noted the need to address the "missing middle" and the loss of units during covid. The demographic of most concern is the elderly demographic. He noted the desire to keep the character of the area, and property values at the same or even better. Although this may not be the right place for housing, we need to do something.

He noted that Phase I of the Laconia Village development is likely commercial/retail. He stated that we need to do something and that further

information is needed. He noted that he hopes that when the right development comes along the community will be open to it and continue the discussion to create affordable housing.

6. Next meeting date - None

7. Adjournment