

Lunenburg Planning Committee

Meeting Minutes: September 25, 2025

Attendees:

Tina Breault, Gary Briggs, Liz Benoit, Nate Brown

Community Members: 9 in-person, 3 zoom

1) One item was added to the agenda and it was discussed immediately:

We were awarded \$48,000 from the 2025 VTrans Bike/Ped Scoping Study Grant that was submitted in July. Town match is 20%; which will be put in the budget that is proposed in town meeting. If the town approves the funding, we will move forward with the study.

2) Approve the minutes of last meeting:

Nate made a motion, Liz seconded. No discussion. All in favor.

3) Housing

Planning Committee invited Patrick Shattuck, Executive Director of RuralEdge to join in an open discussion on housing.

Tina led the discussion using a presentation that was comprised of the following: Housing Issues; Lunenburg Data; Potential Solutions; and Next Steps.

The following is a summary of some of the discussion points. People are encouraged to watch the recording of the meeting to see the full discussions and download the slide deck that was part of the presentation (both of which are on the town website (under Services / Agenda's, Minutes and Reports / Municipal Committee)).

Housing Issues:

- Luke - Suggested adding another issue: rather substantial amount of unused or underutilized, existing housing stock (dilapidated, distressed, blighted properties). Prohibitions to developers coming here, they are not aware of the volume of ready to use housing stock. Housing is classified as seasonal, when it could be completely abandoned. Without constant updates to tax lists, we are missing opportunities for potential properties that could be offloaded to potential developers. Rather large existence of current inventory that is being overlooked entirely; the problem is identification and classification of these types of properties.
- Gary – We do not have a vacant property ordinance. PC wants to write a vacant property ordinance and appoint a vacant property officer to identify and track properties. Would work with Cindy and Health Officer. Town Clerk's office if finding there are properties where the previous property owner is deceased; and they cannot find an heir. Long involved process.
- Kate – What do other towns do? From a legal standpoint, having something considered abandoned is quite a process; we need to ensure that the practices are not predatory.

- Luke – Outlined the process the Town-Owned Property Committee does to recommend properties for a tax sale: minimum 3 years consecutive delinquent, health officer does an onsite and evaluates if the property is dilapidated and distressed; committee will do a title records check.
- Patrick – Discussed the issues of having vacant properties and the benefits of having a vacant property registry and things you can have in an ordinance. Also talked about the potential future of a State Land Bank (large government entity that can acquire and hold property, a central location for vacant properties) and Blight Laws (take title by eminent domain).
- Gary – 2 things to remember as we are discussing: anything we craft cannot include zoning; the Selectboard made it clear the town does not want to own properties or be a land developer. Cindy is doing a great job of staying on top of delinquent tax properties (working to get them current and helping them to not get into that situation again).
- Patrick – Best solution is to prevent a problem before it gets into that state, we have programs to help before a property gets in that state, like the Home Repair Program.
- Luke – This is why it's important to have a central committee focused specifically on keeping up to date information and programs related to housing.
- Linda – Just became aware of a family in Lunenburg, they are disabled and just had the back porch fall off the back of their house. Can anything be done using the emergency repair program.
 - Patrick – Brought material on the RuralEdge programs to leave with us. Accessibility Modifications. Having something done before winter is a pressure point. RuralEdge has temporary ramps that their crew could put in place so someone could get in and out of their house while they work through the process.
- Gary – What if someone needs \$40,000 or are these programs more tailored to something like \$5,000?
 - Patrick - They have a cap of \$30,000, but they have additional funds and can partner with VT Center for Independent Living, Heat Squad and others to find a funding stack. RuralEdge's official hat is as a lender; we do a thorough review for health and safety codes and draft the scope of work. An impediment is finding small contractors. That is where a local committee could really help; get local contractors to give quotes. If these repairs are not made, these people could end up as homeless.
- Tina – Need to add homelessness to the list of issues.

Housing Data:

- Kate – Is the bump in residentials due to reassessments?
 - Linda – Started out as seasonal but became year round. Could have been the wrong category and it was corrected.
- Gary – How do we or should we be tracking ADU's?
 - Linda – under residential
- Linda – I went out with the crew during the reappraisals and was surprised by how many residentials are actually rentals. Not able to capture that separately.
- Chris – Something she has not heard mentioned so far is house share option, she knows of at least one person in town that has a house share situation where she has someone come in and share her house with her. They each have their private space, and then there's communal space. This was set up through the Agency on Aging.

- Patrick – We have a great model in this state for home share - HomeShare Vermont does this service. Matches people who need services with people looking for housing. Goal is for them to operate state wide.
- Tina – I've been in contact with HomeShare Vermont. They are currently looking for a case manager for Essex County and would like to work with us once they have a case manager in place.
- Patrick – Seasonal Housing isn't able to be occupied year round. Different than a year round home that has been taken off the market because it is a second home. Second homes change the dynamic of the community.

Solutions:

- Patrick – Mobile homes are not the same as they used to be. RuralEdge operates Shattuck Hill Mobile Home Park, a 55 and older park, located next to the super Walmart and is very popular. Have onsite services, community building with SASH services. Includes 10 stick-built homes as well. Extensive waiting list because of the success of the community. Example – they have an energy efficient mobile home for ~\$90,000 and if they qualify, can get up to \$30,000 grant towards that. Has the third lowest lot rent in the state \$238 month includes all services.
- Kate – Not sure if it was mentioned if any of the programs for ADU's can be used for water/sewer.
 - Patrick – VHIP can be used for water/sewer upgrades for doing ADU's. And can be used for new development. Grants up to \$50,000 for ADU's.

Next Steps:

- Tina – We are looking to see if we want to apply for an MPG grant for a housing study.
- Patrick – Best thing a community can do is market itself. You can compete for buyers - people have not heard about Lunenburg. You are talking about a housing subcommittee but part of what you will be doing is marketing your programs and your housing resources.
- Linda – Should look into when people actually pay their taxes, some wait until they get their income tax returns. Different reasons behind the why, how and when people pay their taxes.
- Kate – In supporting our taxpayers, is there a sense on how many residents with homestead declarations take advantage of putting their tax return towards the tax bill? The best advice she ever received, is to check the box to put their state income tax returns towards their property tax.
- Linda – Property taxes are due in October. Some taxpayers don't receive their homestead property tax credit information from the State until after the due date for our property taxes. This is why we should do further research into why people delay making payments.
- Gary – People can pay taxes on a monthly basis (they do it based on the previous year bill). Only 2 people take advantage of this. Need to make more people are aware of it.
- Tina – Town-Owned Property Committee was created by the Selectboard for a specific purpose and was made up of specific people (lister, etc.). That committee has a function that is needed. Whether or not the current members of that committee still want to be on that committee or if any of the members want to be on the housing subcommittee needs to be determined.
- Gary – We need a Town-Owned Property Committee. The community has asked what do we actually own and there is no one that can tell you 100% what properties the town owns.

- Gary - Will reach out to the Selectboard to put the Town-Owned Property Committee and the Housing Subcommittee on the Selectboard October agenda.

Gary made a motion to create a Housing Subcommittee of the Planning Committee. Liz – seconded. Further Discussion:

- Liz - Who will set the goals for the housing subcommittee?
 - Tina - Suggest we look to have the Selectboard approve the subcommittee and then the Planning Committee and the Housing Subcommittee will work on the goals to propose to the Selectboard. We have a Town Plan for guidance driven by the community and approved by the Selectboard.
 - Kate - As a community member, glad to hear that. The Planning Committee gave us that beautiful town plan and like that is what you are going with.

Motion was approved by all.

4) Next Meeting

- October 23, 6pm: NVDA Rep. Cathlin Lord will present, review and gather feedback on town FLU (Future Land Use, Act 181).

5) Community Comments

- Chris Lingley – Wanted to thank Patrick Shattuck for joining and sharing so much information with us.
- Nate – Regarding Monthly tax payments – can we look into an App to be alerted?
 - Gary – Will look into further abilities of Municipay. Need to do more research into potential Apps that could be used.

6) Meeting Adjourned at 7:44pm