

Planning & Sustainability • City of Northampton

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Housing Partnership 5:30 PM, Monday March 2, 2026

Members

Bev Bates, Chair		Gordon Shaw	X	
Hannah Shaffer, Vice-Chair	X	Ben Wood	X	
Richard Abuza	X	Chris Bryson,		
Councilor Gwen Nabad	X			Staff: Keith Benoit X

1. Notice that this meeting is being recorded

Hannah Shaffer opened the meeting and confirmed that the session was being recorded.

2. Roll Call

Hannah Shaffer conducted a roll call to establish attendance. The following members were present: Hannah Shaffer, Gordon Shaw, Richard Abuza, Councilor Gwen Nabad, and Ben Wood. A quorum was established based on the presence of the majority of the formal Housing Partnership members.

3. Public Comments

Hannah Shaffer opened the floor for public comment. Yakov Kronrod introduced themselves as a potential nominee for a vacancy on the partnership and stated they were attending the meeting as an observer. No other members of the public offered comments.

4. Approve Minutes from Feb. 2, 2026

Approval of minutes from February 2, 2026, motioned by Hannah Shaffer and seconded by Richard Abuza, and approved unanimously by a roll call vote.

5. Discussion with Carolyn Misch, Director of Planning & Sustainability

Carolyn Misch provided an overview of the current housing development landscape in Northampton, noting that high labor costs, material costs, and interest rates remain significant



barriers for market-rate projects. Carolyn Misch shared a map highlighting 266 units of approved market-rate housing that are currently "frozen" due to these economic factors. Conversely, Carolyn Misch reported that 189 units of affordable housing are moving forward, including 60 units on Bridge Road currently being occupied and 30 units behind City Hall for very low-income individuals. Carolyn Misch also discussed the potential for 95 units at the former courthouse and efforts to extend sewer lines to Chapel Street and Evergreen Road to facilitate future affordable developments. Regarding regulations, Carolyn Misch highlighted a recently adopted ordinance that reduced parking requirements to one space per unit and another that incentivizes the conversion of historic accessory structures into residential units. Carolyn Misch informed the partnership of upcoming zoning amendment proposals, including a reduction of side setbacks in urban residential districts from 15 feet to 10 feet to allow more flexibility on small lots and an exemption for two-family homes from site plan review to further reduce development impediments. There were some discussion on the challenges individual homeowners face when building accessory units, with Ben Wood noting a state loan program that offers up to \$50,000 for such modifications.

6. Resource Brochure

Hannah Shaffer presented a draft of a tri-fold housing resource brochure designed to assist community members. Richard Abuza commended the visual design and accessibility of the draft. Gordon Shaw questioned the intended audience, suggesting the focus should be on those at risk of homelessness or facing utility pressures. Councilor Gwen Nabad shared a public suggestion to include a link to HousingNavigatorMA.org. Ben Wood recommended consulting the Division of Community Care to identify high-value information and one-stop-shop resources. Hannah Shaffer stated they would create a second draft incorporating this feedback, investigate translation options suggested by Richard Abuza, and look into printing costs and distribution locations like supermarkets and doctor's offices.

7. Project Update: As Needed

Keith Benoit provided an update on the Evergreen Road parcel, stating that a designer is finishing the final sewer design and construction is expected to be completed in the summer, making the site ready for two affordable homeownership units.

8. Other business not anticipated

There was no further business discussed.

9. Adjourn

Motion by Hannah Shaffer, Second by Gordon Shaw at 6:30 PM.