



# Mayor's Housing Commission

## City of Norfolk Meeting Minutes

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November 17, 2025, at 4:00pm  
Norfolk City Hall, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
810 Union Street, Norfolk VA 23510

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The following Commission Members were present: Councilman Carlos Clanton (Co-Chair), Councilman Jeremy McGee (Co-Chair), City Manager Patrick Roberts, City Attorney Bernard Pishko, Commissioner Deborah Stearns, Commissioner Fred Napolitano, Commissioner Earl Fraley, Commissioner Simon Scott (telephonically), and Commissioner Vilma Corbin

Absent from the meeting was Commissioner Georgette Houchins

### **I. AGENDA OVERVIEW** by *Councilman Carlos Clanton and Councilman Jeremy McGee*

The meeting opened with Councilman Carlos Clanton thanking the commissioners for their ongoing commitment and expressing confidence in the commission's progress. He then turned the floor over to Councilman Jeremy McGee.

Councilman McGee acknowledged Commissioner Scott's remote participation. He noted that City Manager Roberts would lead the main presentation and encouraged commissioners to actively engage.

After opening remarks, Councilman McGee addressed the approval of the previous meeting's minutes, confirming that a draft had been shared and asking if commissioners were ready to proceed. Commissioner Napolitano requested an addition, referencing a prior commitment to gather information related to development, with Commissioner Stearns also volunteering to assist.

This led to clarification from Councilman Carlos Clanton regarding the makeup of a consolidated subcommittee covering preservation, development, and finance. Commissioner Napolitano was confirmed for development, Stearns for both preservation and development, and Commissioner Corbin for finance. It was agreed that all three areas were now part of a single subcommittee.

With these updates noted as amendments, a motion to approve the minutes as corrected was made and passed unanimously by roll call.

### **II. REVIEW OF SECTION 5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Councilman McGee introduced City Manager Roberts, who began his presentation by referencing the commission's founding resolution, particularly Section 5, which outlines its core responsibilities.

City Manager Roberts reviewed the commission's progress, noting that several tasks—such as assessing the percentage of affordable housing and the ownership-to-rental ratio—were complete, with supporting data provided. He described the work as a preliminary analysis rather than a full study.

He then addressed more complex topics, including the fiscal impact of housing, the relationship between housing and education, and the use of Section 8 vouchers. He explained that whether vouchers are better used for mortgages or rent depends on the intended outcome—either promoting homeownership or increasing mobility.

City Manager Roberts also discussed the effects of expanding affordable housing supply, referencing prior studies to support the commission's understanding. A commissioner asked whether the resolution also required determining the ideal balance between ownership and rentals, which City Manager Roberts confirmed would be covered in the next part of his presentation.

### **III. FISCAL IMPACT OF HOUSING** *by City Manager Patrick Roberts*

City Manager Roberts continued by highlighting that Norfolk has a disproportionately high share of affordable and rental housing—about 50% rentals compared to the national average of 36%—which he argued limits homeownership and wealth-building opportunities.

He emphasized the link between housing and education, noting that family-oriented housing increases school enrollment and that concentrated poverty negatively affects educational outcomes.

On the topic of new housing supply, City Manager Roberts reiterated that addressing poverty concentration requires a regional strategy. He cautioned that if only Norfolk builds affordable housing, it may attract residents from across the region, increasing competition for limited units.

This led to questions about regional data. Commissioner Stearns asked whether there was evidence of other municipalities' affordable housing efforts. While City Manager Roberts admitted the current analysis lacked migration data, he maintained that demand would naturally follow supply. Commissioners cited regional disparities, noting that Virginia Beach lacks project-based vouchers and that Suffolk may have eliminated its last public housing site.

City Manager Roberts shifted to a preliminary fiscal impact analysis of eight multifamily housing properties, representing various types such as senior, family, market-rate, affordable, supportive, and mixed-income. He emphasized the data was illustrative and not comprehensive, developed collaboratively across departments.

The analysis compared annual tax revenue per unit with municipal service costs, focusing on calls to Fire-Rescue, Police, and Norfolk Cares. Results showed wide variation in service demand. For example, Tucker House (Senior, Affordable) had 200 medical calls for 126 units, while Ghent Village (Market-Rate) had the lowest call volume. Church Street Station (Supportive, Affordable) also showed high demand, with nearly one medical call per unit.

Commissioner Stearns analyzed the data by calls per unit, noting Tucker House had the highest ratio (2.5), while Ghent Village had the lowest (0.414), indicating a significant disparity in service burden.

Commissioner Stearns raised the issue of cost recovery for medical calls, asking whether insurance reimbursements were factored in. City Manager Roberts agreed this was an important

consideration and suggested a deeper analysis could clarify the city's actual costs versus recoverable expenses.

The discussion turned to the financial strain on emergency services. City Attorney Pishko noted the city had recently funded 24 new paramedic positions but was still struggling to meet demand, highlighting the growing impact on the operating budget and warned of upcoming legislative changes that could increase emergency room use and reduce reimbursement potential.

City Manager Roberts clarified that the current cost analysis was preliminary and did not include full operational expenses like overhead or equipment maintenance. It was described as a high-level estimate rather than a comprehensive financial model.

When asked about funding sources, it was confirmed that real estate taxes contribute to general fund services, including emergency response. However, real estate taxes cover less than half the cost, with the remainder coming from other local taxes.

Commissioner Corbin asked whether any of the analyzed properties received tax abatements. It was confirmed that at least one did, but whether the revenue figures reflected those abatements required follow-up.

The commission continued its review of housing's fiscal impact. It was noted that Harbor's Edge received at least \$30 million in city subsidies, which were not included in the earlier analysis. This raised concerns about how financial incentives like tax abatements reduce general fund revenue and should be factored into evaluations.

City Manager Roberts addressed the core question of how much a housing unit must generate in assessed value to cover its service costs. The answer varied, but education was identified as the largest expense, with the local per-pupil share rising to \$5,760 in 2024—double the 2017 figure.

Of the eight properties analyzed, only four—Harbor's Edge, Tucker House, Ghent Village, and Granby on 400—generated more revenue than they cost. These were primarily senior and market-rate properties. The rest, including affordable and supportive housing, operated at a fiscal deficit.

School consolidation was discussed as a potential cost-saving strategy, though any savings would likely be redirected to debt service for new facilities. The Military Circle redevelopment was cited as an example of how housing decisions influence infrastructure needs.

Commissioner Fraley inquired whether affordable housing developments could be limited to Norfolk residents. City Attorney Pishko stated that the city can set conditions when selling land to private developers, legal and practical challenges—such as limited applicant pools—make enforcement difficult.

#### **IV. NEXT STEPS TO INCLUDE SUBCOMMITTEE LOGISTICS**

The commission will have two subcommittees:

1. Development, Preservation, and Finance
2. Equity and Community Engagement

Commissioner Fred Napolitano volunteered to address development, Commissioner Deborah Stearns for preservation, and Commissioner Vilma Corbin for Finance in the Development,

Preservation and Finance subcommittee. Commissioner Simon Scott, Commissioner Earl Fraley, and Commissioner Georgette Houchins will participate in Equity and Community Engagement.

City Manager Roberts and his team, possibly with Civic Lab support, were tasked with exploring a more detailed analysis of medical service calls, including transport status and reimbursement rates. Additionally, a review was requested to confirm whether tax revenue figures for certain properties accounted for active abatements.

The planning department expressed support for identifying regulatory barriers as part of the commission's work. Short-term rentals were briefly discussed, with differing views on policy direction and a call for clarity. The commission also committed to investigating neighboring municipalities' investments in affordable housing and Section 8 programs.

Deputy City Clerk Barberis asked the Commissioners to encourage those providing input to the subcommittees to submit applications through our website at:

1. Development, Preservation, and Finance

<https://norfolkva.granicus.com/boards/forms/554/apply/4647638?code=53b633d3-6c1f-45d2-99ae-930fb73ca80e>

2. Equity and Community Engagement

<https://norfolkva.granicus.com/boards/forms/554/apply/4647641?code=20e86298-d673-489a-8bcd-54ea88ef0da1>

#### **IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND ROUND ROBIN** *by Councilman Clanton and Councilman McGee*

Councilman Clanton announced that the full commission would not meet in December. Instead, subcommittees would convene, tentatively on the third Monday of the month in breakout sessions.

Commissioner Napolitano was asked to share contacts from a recent industry roundtable focused on development, as well as challenges like resilience standards and utility fees, with Deputy Clerk Barberis or City Clerk Allan Bull to include them in the subcommittee meetings.

City of Norfolk staff was thanked for their work and asked to expand the cost-of-service analysis to include single-family and other housing types.

Commissioner Stearns emphasized the need to include middle- and upper-income housing in the commission's scope, noting its absence in current drafts, suggesting these housing types be included in future fiscal impact studies.

Councilman Clanton noted that the committee work will now transition from data gathering to actionable ideas. Subcommittees are expected to meet at 4pm on Monday, December 15, 2025, in the 10<sup>th</sup> Floor Council Conference Room at Norfolk City Hall.

*The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.*

**Next Meeting:**

***Monday, January 26, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.  
Norfolk City Hall – 10th floor Council Conference Room***