



February 15, 2024

Housing Champions Advisory Committee

**January 26, 2024, 4:00-5:30 PM
Meeting Minutes**

Committee Members Present: Representative Josh Yokela (NH House), Commissioner Taylor Caswell (BEA), Deputy Director Benjamin Frost (NHHFA), Executive Director Katherine Easterly Martey (CDFA), Jesse Rounds (NHMA), Executive Director Jen Czysz (SRPC), President Shannon Saunders (NHPA), Stephen Buckley (NHMA).

Attendees: Deputy Director Chase Hagaman (BEA), Noah Hodgetts (BEA), Deputy Director Cynthia Harrington (BEA-DED), Jeannie Forrester (BEA), Andrew Dorsett (BEA-DED-InvestNH).

Committee Members Not Present: Senator Rebecca Perkins-Kwoka (NH Senate)

Agenda:

- Introductions
- Housing Champion (HC) statute and program overview
- Discussion of initially drafted rules
- Next steps for Committee and process

Commissioner Caswell opened the meeting and made introductory remarks, providing an overview and described this first rendition of HC rules as an initial draft as attempting to design a program with a balanced approach able to be utilized by municipalities and meet legislative intent.

Chase Hageman gave a presentation providing an overview of the draft rules (slides attached) and facilitated a discussion around the key points of the presentation.

Summary of discussion topics and key takeaways:

Statutory timeline and potential alternatives considered, should additional time be needed and permitted.

Program impact on housing demand. Minimal program financial capacity available for municipal infrastructure make-ready improvements compared to demand for these high-cost improvements. This moved to discussion of linking program to potential external funding sources, strengthening HC Designation through recognition in outside agency scoring matrixes.

Explored ability to utilize existing InvestNH Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) program to accomplish municipal make-ready planning and regulatory changes needed for HC designation. If possible, would allow maximum distribution of the \$5 million available in funding to be made available for the HC designee eligible grant programs. With limited funding in HC program, aligning the existing HOP program to accomplish the technical assistance aspect of HC program could be helpful overall.

Benefits and drawbacks of including exceptionally detailed program administration parameters in administrative rules draft. Benefits described as providing specific details for clarity to municipalities considering pursuing housing champion component programs. Presentation of concept of balanced detail in rules paired with further program clarity in a related program guidance document that could potentially be more easily revised, if needed, described as allowing future rounds to adapt to small program changes for greater program impact, increased program responsiveness, all within the parameters of administrative rules and publicly posted.

Explored perceived legislative intent versus strict interpretation of statute in required scoring components for housing champion designation.

Potential barriers smaller municipalities may experience competing with those with greater resources (infrastructure and technical). Exploration of options for small municipality program such as amount set aside, initial round with cap community size.

Committee will reconvene in February after receiving updated draft rules and draft guidance document.