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## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** Brunswick Town Council

**FROM:** James Mason, Shelter Task Force Chair  
Alison Harris, Shelter Task Force Member  
Kathy Wilson, Shelter Task Force Member

**DATE:** October 1, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Shelter Task Force Recommendations

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On April 17, 2018, the Town Council asked the Homeless Shelter Task Force to start the process to begin to revise our zoning code to address the omission of definitions of homeless shelter housing from our town's zoning ordinance. As part of this process, we were also asked to offer recommendations as to the appropriate zones for shelter housing and whether to develop standards governing the performance and operation of shelters.

Since that time, the Task Force has met over 15 times, including site visits to shelters in Brunswick and in Waterville. Throughout this process, we have directed our planning staff to put together a proposal on how to address the Task Force's charge from the council. Drawing on their expertise and understanding of our zoning ordinances, they have worked diligently to put together a document reflecting the questions and concerns raised by not only task force members, but members of the community and those affiliated with Tedford Housing. The document attached is the culmination of those meetings and is the staff's best efforts at putting together recommendations that meet the ideas expressed during this process and to put forward possible solutions based in the structures of our zoning ordinances.

This document is not a unanimous recommendation of the Task Force. Like any process, the Task Force has both areas of agreements and disagreements, though the areas that divided us were far exceeded by those uniting us. However, given this process has taken nearly six months to get to this point, the Task Force believes no more time should be taken trying to resolve these differences between just three members of the Council. Rather, it is time for the Town Council and, hopefully the Planning Board, to take this issue up for discussion and ultimately a decision.

We are in agreement in the following areas:

- The displacement of people from stable housing is a pervasive problem locally, regionally and nationally. Members of our community are dealing with homelessness. This is not a problem just facing "other people."

- Displacement from stable housing has ripple effect on the lives of individuals and families beyond just the absence of shelter. It can affect access to family and friends, employment, education and support services.
- Shelters and their operators can play a critical role in transition those displaced from stable housing by providing temporary shelter, facilitating access to social services, and offering counseling in life skills and employment readiness.
- One of the leading causes of displacement from stable housing is the lack of affordable housing. With the increase in the value of real estate over the last several years, housing prices and rentals have exceeded the reach of many in our community. The Town Council needs to prioritize in the next several years efforts to explore efforts to encourage the availability of affordable housing and to support measures to keep stable housing obtainable for all.
- It is important we have an application process for potential shelters that is clear for all applicants and is an open and transparent process for other interested parties to be heard with respect to that application.

The Task Force did have areas of disagreement or areas of concern with respect to certain areas of this proposal.

- The staff recommended making homeless shelters only available as a permitted use with a conditional use permit. In so doing, this ensures all applications will go before the Planning Board, rather than being decided by staff only. The downside of this absence of zones where homeless shelters are “permitted” however, could give a negative impression over how Brunswick views homeless shelters.
- Staff’s recommendation on which zones should allow for the three types of shelter uses is based on their analysis of our existing zoning ordinances and applying it in a consistent manner to all zones. This approach allowed all three uses in six mixed-use zones (GM1, GM3, GM4, GM5, GM6 and GM7), the Industrial Zones (GI) and one of the residential zones (GR6). In other zones, only one or two of the uses were allowed. The Task Force felt the zones suggested by staff were appropriate and shouldn’t be limited further, but there was also some opinion that this list could be expanded to add more zones where various types of shelters are permitted.
- The Task Force discussed but did not come to a consensus as to imposing limits as to the maximum number of beds a shelter operator could have. Instead of have one maximum bed limit applied to the entire town, the staff proposed a single number of four residents per dwelling unit, and applying that number to each zoning district to determine density. However, while this is a way to ensure uniformity in density limits across districts, by having a single number to control density there are wildly varying maximum sizes when applied to specific lots in various zoning districts and there was no consensus on the Task Force as to whether those numbers are either too small or too big.

- The Task Force considered but did not ultimately chose to adopt any licensing or performance requirements. There was disagreement on the Task Force on whether and how much regulations should be established to govern the daily business operations of an operator of a homeless shelter.

The Task Force believes many of our disagreements are now best resolved at the Planning Board and Town Council level. We would encourage an open discussion between both bodies and the public to answer some of these questions and to do so in the most expedient, but thorough process as possible. The Task Force hopes we do not need to use the entire time of the Moratorium Extension to revise our zoning ordinance. With the approach of winter, those members of our community who have or will be displaced from stable housing need a warm place to go and providers, like Tedford Housing whose mission is to support those members of our community, need ultimate resolution on this issue.

The Task Force wants to especially note the hard work of our planning staff, Matt Panfil and Jared Woolston, who have put countless hours into this project, and Kristin Collins, for all her insight and counsel. We also thank the many members of the public who attended these meetings and provided valuable input, especially the staff and representatives of Tedford Housing for their involvement and opening up their facilities to the Task Force.