CITY OF WOBURN
CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON LIAISON
WOBURN CITY HALL
COMMITTEE ROOM
MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026, at 6:17 p.m.

Voting Members present: President Robert F. Toro Jr. (Chair), Councilor Yano Amara, Councilor Joseph E. Demers, Councilor Jeffrey P. Dillon, Councilor Lou DiMambro, Councilor Robert J. Ferullo, Jr., and Councilor William J. Pappalardo. Absent: Councilor Darlene A. Mercer-Bruen, and Councilor Charles Viola.

Also present: Mayor Michael P. Concannon, Planning Director John Cashell and Economic Development Coordinator Casey Hagerty

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Reading of previous meeting minutes: Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo to waive the reading of and approve the minutes of February 9, 2026; all in favor, 7-0-2.

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Housing Production Plan presentation: Making the presentation for the proposed Housing Production Plan (HPP) was Jenn Goldson, Founder & Managing Director, JM Goldson, 4228 Washington St., Roslindale, MA. Ms. Goldson said the City Council heard a presentation from her several months ago. She said this is as close to final as the Housing Production Plan will get. She said the city's affordable housing stock ratio is above 10 percent and meets the state goal. She said if it goes below 10 percent that city will lose its safe harbor status. She said the city needs to have an approved HPP for certification. She said the components of the HPP include a housing needs assessment, development constraints and opportunities, 5-year goals and a menu of strategies. She said most communities that develop an HPP do not implement all of these ideas and that's okay. She said the city currently has an affordable housing ratio of 10.71 percent. She said there are 3,380 cost-burdened households in the city, which she said is concerning. She said there have been 1,632 new housing units since 2020. She said severely cost-burdened households stand a much greater risk for being homeless or vulnerable. She said the median income for Woburn is lower than it is in other communities in the region. She said most Woburn residents can't afford affordable housing. Among the 5-year goals is for the city to stay over 10 percent. She said another goal is to expand choices for housing. She said she has heard about the need for more starter homes. Councilor Pappalardo asked what the percentage is of communities in the state that meet the 10 percent threshold. Ms. Goldson said most communities are not at safe harbor. She said Danvers like Woburn is just over the threshold. Councilor Pappalardo said there is a fear that the ratio will get increased and that will cause problems for the city. Ms. Goldson said she has not heard the affordable housing ratio is going to be increased. She said another goal is to meet local needs, not just state thresholds. She said she has heard there is a need for rental

properties in Woburn. She said another goal is to align growth and capacity. She said the city does not want to be inundated with growth it cannot accommodate. She said another goal is to align, coordinate and connect. She said the city can coordinate a lot of things like economic development, transportation and sustainability. Regarding a menu of strategies, she said she has provided in the handout three descriptions of strategies: Planning and policy tools, local action and housing programs, and community engagement and capacity building. She said among the planning and strategy tools are revisiting zoning options. She said among the local action and housing programs that can be undertaken are exploring options with what the city can do with its own property. She said community engagement and capacity building involves strengthening of cross-sector housing coordination. She said of the seven policy and planning tools she has outlined; the city does not have to implement every one. She said an idea for local action and housing program would include the Anderson RTC being transformed into a mixed-use transit hub. She said another option would be to revitalize key sites with redevelopment, like the former Sonesta hotel site and the downtown area. She said the city could advance the redevelopment of the Lexington Street and Park Street sites through a Ch. 30B-compliant land disposition process. She said another option would be to adopt the Community Preservation Act for affordable housing, preservation and recreation. She said the city could explore the creation of a starter home program to leverage city-owned parcels for small-scale, attainable homes for first-time buyers. She said the city is doing a great job of continuing to strengthen cross-sector housing coordination. She said the city could look into launching a housing communications strategy. She said the next steps involve discussion tonight. She said any comments would be reviewed by the Planning Board and the City Council, and then the City Council would vote to approve the HPP. She said after that is goes to the state. She said her firm has done about 100 of these in the past six years. She said they know how to get an HPP approved by the state. She said once it is approved, the city gets safe harbor status from the state. Councilor Dillon said he feels like the city has done a lot with housing. He asked how the city rates to comparable cities. Ms. Goldson said Woburn has done a lot to increase housing production. She said this plan will help the city focus on local needs. Councilor Dillon said the city has not talked about housing for veterans. He asked if that is something the city can look at. Ms. Goldson said that is something the city can certainly add. Councilor Dillon asked if putting 900-square-foot pre-fab homes on land the city already owns is an option worth looking into. Councilor Demers said the city has added 1,600 housing units over the past several years. He asked if that is on par with other communities. He said city officials were told the prices will come down if more units are built. He said it seems like that's not happening. He said the trend seems to be toward luxury apartments. Ms. Goldson said there is a lot of talk of YIMBY. She said one community cannot solve the problems of an entire state. She said Massachusetts has been behind on housing production since the 1970s. Councilor Demers said the states to which Massachusetts is compared to do not have as much open space and land. He said Massachusetts doesn't have the tracts of land where single-family homes can be built. Ms. Goldson said New England as a whole has that problem. He said the idea is to get away from single-family homes because they eat up so much land. Councilor DiMambro said New England is a very expensive area. He said it doesn't make much sense to build 1-bedroom apartments at $3,400 per month with extras for amenities and all other living expenses. He said a single ADU of 900-square-feet could cost as much as $300,000-$350,000. He said what the city is finding is there is a lot of vacant commercial space for lease. He said the reality is the city is moving in two different directions. He said it is not cost-effective to continue to build residential and try to sustain it if there is no commercial component. He said he thinks

this plan needs to be fully vetted. Ms. Goldson said the market realities are that most people can't afford these rents. She said this plan does not solve those issues. She said this plan involves gentle strategies. She said the plan does not address massive developments. She said the plan emphasizes the development of affordable units. Councilor DiMambro said it's almost like it's a serious balancing act. He said if there is a boom the value of houses in Woburn could double. He said it is a very sensitive, tricky economic situation. Ms. Goldson said she does not think Woburn can solve that problem. She said this plan gives the council an idea of what Woburn needs. She said the city is not required to implement any of it. Councilor Demers asked if this is like a shield. Ms. Goldson replied it can be. Director Cashell said with the current zoning ordinance there is not threat the city is going to drop below the 10 percent threshold. He said any new development has to provide an affordable component of at least 10 percent. He said there is a threat the state could increase that number to 12 percent, but he has not heard anyone say that. He said the next census is in 2030 and the 10.7 percent ratio will remain static until then. Ms. Goldson said that is true unless something falls off. Director Cashell said Woburn doesn't have any really large tracts of land left for single-family homes. He said the average household size is 2.7 people and that is shrinking. He said the largest segment of new household size is a single person. He said the city getting close to a peak for population. He said Baby Boomers are retiring to different places and young people are not having children. He said he does not think Woburn or Massachusetts are going to see any crazy increases in population. He said New Hampshire prepared for that but there has only been an increase in population of 1 percent over the past 20-25 years. He said he does not think the city should ignore the potential impact of ADUs. He said there needs to be legislation that recognizes ADUs as affordable housing. He said the city really needs to address that particular issue. He said the state is talking about redoing lot size and frontage, but he does not know yet if it is going to be done by referendum or through the legislature. He recommended the City Council take this plan into consideration. He said adoption of the plan doesn't force the city to do anything but it does bring the city up to speed. Councilor Demers asked what the timeline is. Ms. Goldson said there is a comment period. She said anyone with comments should submit them to the Planning Dept. within a couple of weeks. Ms. Hagerty said the Planning Dept. will be drafting an order to submit to the City Council.

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MOTION made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo to adjourn, all in favor, 7-0-2. President Toro adjourned the meeting at 6:59 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST:

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees