

Exeter chamber honored with Housing Partnership award

By Jennifer Feals

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EXETER — The Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce was awarded the Pro Bono Publico Award Tuesday from **The Housing Partnership**, for its work in the fields of work-force and affordable housing. Awards were presented Tuesday, May 13 at the Sheraton Harborside Portsmouth Hotel and Conference Center, to individuals and organizations who fit the Partnership's vision of a Greater Seacoast that offers housing for everyone, its mission of creating diverse housing opportunities and using innovative approaches to development, and its core values of economic sustainability, economic and social diversity and smart growth.



Thom Kraus, right, president of the Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce, accepts the Pro Bono Publico Award from Dick Ingram of The Housing Partnership. The award was presented because of the chamber's work on the issues of work-force and affordable housing. Jennifer Feals photo

"The chamber and its Economic Development Committee, since almost day one of Thom Kraus' arrival as president, have jumped on this and have really gotten involved in a very significant way," said Dick Ingram, executive director of The Housing Partnership. "They are committed to figuring out how they can engage the community and businesses and point the way toward advances and solutions that will make a difference."

An excellent example of affordable and work-force housing is Exeter's Squamscott Block apartments on Front Street, Ingram said. "When business people get together in a concerted way they can make a difference," he said.

Kraus said the chamber and its Economic Development Committee are committed to making affordable and work-force housing a priority.

"Our EDC has been working very closely with people like The Housing Partnership to educate our members as well as the community about work-force housing but also take on an advocacy role with local and state organizations on the need to provide some mechanism that will promote affordable housing," Kraus said. "We are in it for the long haul."

Ingram said **The Housing Partnership's** goals in the coming years include providing 150 new units of housing and preserving 100 units of existing affordable housing. He mentioned the Bethesda House in Kennebunk, Maine, that will include approximately 41 two- and three-bedroom rental units that will be affordable to families earning no more than 50 to 60 percent of the area median income, and the Rye Airfield Retirement Community in Rye, that will create 22 units of affordable senior rental housing on a 10.5-acre parcel of the old Rye Airfield. This will be the Partnership's first rental community designed specifically for senior residents.