

## Orange County Affordable Housing Advisory Board Minutes

Tuesday, September 14, 2021 at 6:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

**Members Present:** Mae McLendon, Arthur Sprinczeles, Jenn Sykes (Chair), Olivia Fisher, James Eichel, Dion Graham, Tim Woody, Holly Meschko, Allison Mahaley, Paul Voss

**Members Absent:** Saru Salvi (excused), Adejuwon Ojebuoboh (excused), Gio Mollinedo, Keith Cook

**Staff Present:** Corey Root (Housing and Community Development Director), Maria Dewees (Acting Housing and Community Development Manager), Anna Blanchard (Housing and Community Development Specialist) Melvyn Blackwell (Civil Rights Specialist with Orange County Human Rights and Relations Department)

### Public Present:

I. **Call to Order/Introductions.** Chair Sykes called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

II. **Approval of the August 10, 2021 Meeting Minutes.** AHAB unanimously voted in favor of approving the August 10, 2021 meeting minutes, with the correction of one misspelled name.

III. **Board Member Updates.**

Ms. McLendon inquired if any board members attended the March for Affordable Housing held on August 28 in Chapel Hill. Chair Sykes noted that the event had a strong turnout and that additional marches will be held in the future.

Ms. McLendon announced that new Orange County Commissioner Anna Richards will host an informational listening session with residents.

IV. **Manufactured Housing Strategy Action Plan presentation and discussion –Corey Root, Director**

Director Corey Root presented The Manufactured Homes Strategy plan, a document created in collaboration with Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough, and Orange County governments.

The plan's main objectives are to preserve of manufactured home parks, minimize resident displacement when communities are redeveloped, and create a relocation assistance package for residents facing displacement.

Strategic Objective 1: Preserve manufactured home communities

- Support efforts to create resident-owned communities.
- Pursue acquisition opportunities of manufactured home communities
- Explore land use policies that support manufactured home communities
- Implementing the county's land banking program: this pot of funding was set aside a few years ago for land banking and infrastructure improvements in manufactured home communities. The funding is relatively flexible. Some of the funds allocated were used for affordable housing bond projects.
- Rehab and repair for homes in manufactured home parks
- Create an early warning system to identify communities at highest risk of redevelopment

Ms. McLendon asked if there is an expiration date on the land banking funds.

Ms. Root responded that the land banking fund is a multi-year fund that will not expire, but the funds should be put to use in the community. Future funding decisions for the land banking fund would be determined by the Commissioners.

Strategic Objective 2: Minimize resident displacement due to redevelopment

- Pursue onsite and off-site home construction as part of redevelopment. This would require collaborating with developers.
- Explore land use and regulatory policies that can be applied to redevelopment of manufactured home communities
- Implement master planning processes to create development plans that minimize displacement.
- Use publicly owned land to minimize displacement impact

Strategic Objective 3: Creating relocation assistance if folks are facing displacement.

- Proactive engagement to connect residents to resources.
- Provide housing search assistance. Ms. Root noted that the Housing Access Coordinator at OCHCD works with landlords to increase participation in the County's housing programs and maintains a list of affordable housing.
- Identify manufactured home communities with open lots
- Financial assistance to relocate homes
- Financial assistance for residents to secure new housing

Director Root noted that the Orange County Emergency Housing Assistance program provides security deposits, rent, utility deposits for people exiting homelessness, among others.

The Manufactured Housing Strategy Action Plan lists out the resources that are available to help with these various strategies as well as different groups and community organizations & partners that are working on this plan.

Ms. McLendon asked how manufactured homes and mobile homes are defined since the terms are used interchangeably.

Ms. Root noted the definitions in the key terms section of the draft plan: manufactured homes are built after June 15, 1976 while mobile homes were built prior to June 15, 1976.

Ms. Mahaley asked if Orange County is working with ROC USA. They have created a resident-owned community in Asheboro, North Carolina

Ms. Root confirmed that OCHCD is working with Carolina Common Enterprise, a ROC USA affiliate. Thomas Beckett of Carolina Common Enterprise presented at the Local Government Affordable Housing Collaborative as well as the Orange County Affordable Housing Coalition.

Ms. Fisher asked Ms. Root to elaborate on the scope of the plan, the number of households the plan will target and if there are any barriers to accessing the resources highlighted in the plan such as criminal offenses.

Ms. Root replied that the draft plan is a proactive countywide strategy that covers all county residents. Barriers such as incarceration history present major challenges to stable housing. The county seeks to create programs and policies that do not exclude people from housing.

Ms. Mahaley noted that federal dollars can be limiting in this area.

Ms. McLendon asked if there a deadline for submitting comments on the plan. Ms. Root noted that time can be allotted on at the October AHAB meeting agenda for more comments and questions.

**V. Fair Housing Presentation – Melvyn Blackwell, Civil Rights Specialist with Orange County Human Rights and Relations Department**

Mr. Blackwell gave a presentation reviewing the Fair Housing Act, common Fair Housing violations, and the process for filing a fair housing complaint. Individuals interested in filling fair housing complaints can contact Mr. Blackwell at 919-245-2487 or [Human\\_relations@orangecountync.gov](mailto:Human_relations@orangecountync.gov). Complaints can also be filed online.

Mr. Blackwell gave an overview of the Fair Housing Act and the federally protected classes. Orange County has an ordinance to protect additional classes: age (older than 40) and veteran status.

Common Violations include making housing unavailable by refusing to rent or sell a home, eviction termination, or refusal to renew; different terms and conditions when negotiating a sale or rental, municipal services or during a tenancy; falsely representing availability and steering; failure to grant reasonable accommodations or allow reasonable modifications;

discriminatory advertising; coercion, intimidation, quid pro quo threats and harassment.

Complaints can be filed online, in-person or over the phone with the Human Rights and Relations Department. Once a complaint is filed, both parties are notified and the complaint is assigned to an investigator who will interview the parties. Complainants are protected from retaliation. The complaint must allege a discriminatory act based on a protected class. There must be cause for the complaint to proceed. The case will be dismissed if there is no evidence supporting the allegation.

Parties in the fair housing complaint process can settle the issue through conciliation. If discrimination is discovered, a finding of "Reasonable Cause" is issued. The case may be heard by an administrative law judge or the complainant may elect to have the case heard in Orange County court.

## **VI. Old and New Business.**

**A. Update regarding the September 9, 2021 Affordable Housing Opportunities and Incentives Presentation to the BOCC – Maria Dewees, Acting Community Development Manager.** Individuals interested in viewing the presentation in its entirety can do so online. The presentation was a collaboration between the County Attorney's Office, Planning Department, and Housing and Community Development Department. Our department presented recommendations by short-term, mid-term, and long-term as well as by complexity. The county commissioners are especially interested in the missing middle housing strategy and the revolving loan program.

Chair Sykes asked if the presentation will be given to the individual Town boards. Ms. Dewees noted that it will not but that the Chamber's Big Bold Ideas Committee is putting together recommendations that will be presented to boards around Orange County.

Mr. Voss said he was pleased to see attention to the missing middle housing and noted that the missing middle is really expanding with the cost of the housing in recent years.

Mr. Sprinczeles commented that the housing market in Orange County seems inaccessible for residents in need of affordable housing.

## **B. Update on Collins Ridge, CASA Affordable Housing Development – Maria Dewees**

CASA is working with the developer of Collins Ridge to identify the location of future affordable homes. CASA hopes to have the site location finalized by December 2021.

Chair Sykes noted that there is concern in the community that the affordable units will not be integrated with the market rate housing that the developer plans to build. Mr. Sprinczeles voiced concern about noise, since the housing will be near the train tracks. Ms. Dewees noted that she will keep the AHAB apprised of the development progress.

**C. AHAB vacancy update – Maria Dewees**

Ms. Dewees announced that there is an open seat on the AHAB. Staff are working with the County Clerk’s Office to confirm if current applicants are still interested in the seat. The Clerk’s Office will put out a call for applications to the position.

Staff asked the AHAB whether they would like to review the applications on file or wait for more candidates to apply. Mr. Sprinczeles noted that he would prefer to wait until the end of the year, as it is difficult to onboard new members virtually.

Ms. McLendon noted that some applications the board has reviewed in the past were a few years old. She suggested exploring if there is new interest and then if there are previous applicants who are still interested they can be considered.

**D. Follow-up on Olivia Fischer’s question at the August 10 AHAB meeting – Maria Dewees**

At the August AHAB meeting, Ms. Fischer inquired about the potential for adaptive reuse of vacant office and retail space into affordable housing.

Ms. Dewees gave a brief presentation discussing the zoning obstacles, building conversion logistical challenges, and market forces that influence adaptive reuse developments.

**Adjournment.** Meeting adjourned at 7:28 PM.

Submitted by Maria Dewees, Acting Housing and Community Development Manager