

Affordable Housing Committee
February 4, 2020, 1:00-2:00 pm
30 Valley Street

DRAFT MINUTES

Committee Members Present

Joe Belcher, Amanda Edwards, Brownie Newman

County Staff Present

Jennifer Barnette, Matthew Cable, Donna Cottrell, Brandon Freeman, William High, Nate Pennington, Amanda Stratton, Sybil Tate, Don Warn

Discussion

- Commissioner Newman called the meeting to order.
- Commissioner Belcher motioned to approve the minutes from the January 21, 2020 meeting and Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Review of Select Affordable Housing Services Program Components: Emergency Repair Program

- Donna Cottrell provided an overview of the Emergency Repair Program and its history.
- Commissioner Edwards asked for the initial year of the program, which staff indicated was 2010.
- Commissioner Belcher was concerned with program changes as the repairs as essential to many residents.
- Commissioner Edwards expressed a desire to expand the program, and a wished to maintain the program at current levels at minimum.
- Commissioner Newman expressed a desire to see the program continue, and to expand it as necessary, possibly ensuring the program is maintained given inflation. He added that maintaining the fund as it stands now is an increase over the typical history of the program. He called for maintaining the program and growing it modestly over time.
- Commissioner Belcher commented that the program allows smaller investments to be utilized and keep residents in their homes and, in the process, avoid a larger investment of needing to provide a new unit.
- Commissioner Newman asked what the supply of housing is doing at the moment, and whether the supply was declining. He asked Scott Dedman, Mountain Housing Opportunities, Inc. Executive Director, how the condition of the housing supply was operating. Mr. Dedman indicated that there are situations where units are being lost due to poor condition of the unit. He added that this was particularly an issue for homes that needed new roofs.
- Donna Cottrell added that programs have been in place in the past to aid residents who need multiple repairs in order to stay in the homes. The program has previously required a 5 year lean on repairs that were greater than \$10,000; however, she mentioned that such a lien has not occurred in recent repairs.
- Matt Cable added that emergency repairs for units helps avoid full rehabilitation need.

- Commissioner Edwards asked if there was an estimate on how many units need to be rehabilitated and which would not be eligible for repair. Donna Cottrell deferred to Scott Dedman. He indicated that this was relatively rare.
- Commissioner Newman said he was open to adding to the program; however, he requested there be continued conversation about the best way to use these investments.
- Matt Cable indicated this will be an ongoing conversation during future meetings.

Review of FY15 – FY20 Affordable Housing Services Program Activities (Contracts and Units)

- Matt Cable provided an overview of the various Affordable Housing Services Program Activities conducted between FY 2015 and FY 2020.
- Commissioner Newman indicated there should be greater clarity on the unit costs during the committee retreat. He added an appreciation for the five year lookback, and the increased understanding of what level of investment is required for many of these programs.
- Commissioner Belcher added that the Commission will likely need a greater cost per unit understanding in order to allocate the additional funds appropriately.
- Commissioner asked how much of the additional funds would be used to provide units, and how much of a project would be funded.
- Matt Cable indicated that funding could be used as a year one payment for larger projects that will require larger amounts of funding over multiple fiscal years.

Announcements

- March 3, 2020 Affordable Housing Committee Meeting Rescheduling so that there will be no meeting on this date.
- March 17, 2020 Special Called Meeting, Affordable Housing Committee Retreat, 11:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
- Cynthia Fox-Clark retired from the County. Her appointment on the consortium is proposed to be filled by Matt Cable.

Public Comment

- Van Vogel, Chair of Homeward Bound. He announced that HB has made great progress in key areas including: (1) Renovation of their AHOPE facility; (2) purchase and renovation of 11 units on Short Michigan Ave; and (3) continued progress on the Asheville Buncombe House with active discussion with two additional properties.
- Greg Borom, Director of Advocacy for Children First, commented that Children First hopes the County will continue to keep affordable housing as a goal in FY 2021, and that the County will commit to invest \$5 million in affordable housing. He also hopes that same level of funding commitment would continue over future years. He asked the County maintain this level of funding in order to attract additional investment in affordable housing.
- Andy Barnett, Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity Executive Director, wanted to look at finding an improved method of identifying housing inadequacy rather than using a waiting list. Using national averages he would estimate that there are problem 6,000 units in the county that are substandard.

- Scott Dedman, MHO, Inc. Executive Director, echoed the hope the Commission will “think big.” He hoped to see at least one 9% tax credit project per year in the County, and that the 4% tax credit projects in coordination with the City would be possible every other year.

Commissioner Newman made a motion to adjourn the meeting and all voted in favor.