

## Orange County Affordable Housing Advisory Board Minutes

Tuesday, August 8, 2021 at 6:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

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

**Members Absent:** Douglas Boemker (Vice Chair), Allison Mahaley, 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)

### Public Present:

- I. **Call to Order/Introductions.** Chair Sykes called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.
- II. **Approval of the June 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes.** AHAB unanimously voted in favor of approving the June 8, 2021 meeting minutes.
- III. **Board Member Updates.**
  - A. Ms. Salvi shared that Town of Hillsborough water rates have increased and that the minimum charge has increased.
  - B. Ms. Sykes asked OCHCD staff if the developer of Collins Ridge has modified their affordable housing proposal in response to comments they received at the Hillsborough Board of Commissioners meeting in April regarding their updated plan to move the site of affordable units to Daniel Boone Village. Commissioners expressed concerns about connectivity and a desire for the affordable units to be integrated into the neighborhood. Ms. Root will inquire with Town of Hillsborough officials regarding the status of the amended proposal.
  - C. Ms. Meschko reported that her affordable apartment community for seniors, Eno Haven, has five current openings. Ms. Meschko expressed concerns with the property management's waitlist practices and concerns about fair housing issues with the waitlist. She has filed fair housing complaints and said her outspokenness about fair housing issues has caused some friction with the property manager. Ms. Sykes recommended that Ms. Meschko reach out to staff to follow up on the situation. Ms. Root will share the information about openings with the Department's Housing Access Coordinator.

- D. Mr. Eichel shared information regarding an event last week hosted by Ridgewood manufactured home community residents in southern Orange County. Ridgewood was recently purchased and residents have expressed concerns about the new property owner, rent being raised, and infrastructure and maintenance issues. U.S. Congressman David Price attended the event and his office is working on a mobile home bill of rights. Mr. Eichel expressed concern for the residents and encouraged the board to stay informed around manufactured housing issues.
- E. Ms. Root noted that OCHCD is working with staff from different jurisdictions with local funds to put together a manufacture housing action strategy plan, but that staff not aware of any federal funding that would fund mobile home park conversions to resident ownership. Ms. Root also noted that ROC USA's North Carolina affiliate, Carolina Common Enterprise, is presenting on August 19 at the Local Government Affordable Housing Collaborative meeting and AHAB members are invited to attend. The discussion will focus on collaborative ownership and buy-outs of manufactured home parks as a strategy to address displacement threats.
- F. Ms. Fischer asked about barriers to repurposing retail and office space into affordable housing. Ms. Root noted that staff will research this topic and provide an answer at the next AHAB meeting. Ms. McLendon expressed interest in Ms. Fischer's question and noted that innovative solutions may exist, such as the project at University Mall.

#### **IV. Department of Housing and Community Development (OCHCD) Updates.**

- A. **Introduction of new OCHCD Director.** Ms. Root introduced herself as the new OCHCD Director. Prior to this role, she served as the Manager for the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness.
- B. **OCHCD Presentation.** Ms. Root led a presentation about the Departments structure, programs, and recent accomplishments (presentation attached).

OCHCD has three (3) primary divisions:

- 1. Orange County Housing Authority
  - i. Maintains 500 Housing Choice Vouchers
  - ii. Current focus on exiting people from homelessness: 172 vouchers issued since Oct. 2020 and 94 used them to find help OC residents find stable housing
  - iii. Orange County is receiving an additional 19 vouchers from the American Rescue Plan specifically for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and people fleeing domestic violence.

These new vouchers also include a \$3,500 service fee to assist the tenant with finding housing.

2. Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness
  - i. The division includes work on system coordination, funding, and direct service, in addition to coordinating the annual Point-in-Time Count and other data collection. Has federal Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and Continuum of Care (CoC) funding. OCPEH has secured \$11.2 million for homeless services since 2005. There was a huge bump in ESG funding last year as part of pandemic relief.
  - ii. Direct Programs:
    1. Housing Helpline: Anyone in housing crisis can contact by phone, email, or in person to get people connected to help and resources. The Helpline has 2 full time staff and 4 temporary staff.
    2. Housing Access Coordinator- Christopher Jackson, recruits landlords to make units available to participants in the Department's housing programs.
    3. Rapid Re-housing provides housing assistance funds combined with services and case management to transition people from homelessness into housing.
    4. Street Outreach Program (SOHRAD): 3 full time staff who work with people who are living unsheltered and connecting them with housing and other resource.
3. Community Development
  - i. Home Repair and Rehabilitation Programs
    1. Orange County administers urgent repair and single family rehabilitation programs
    2. Works with and contributes to the Orange County Home Preservation Coalition
    3. The 2020 Urgent Repair Program served 12 homeowners in 9 months, half at 30% AMI; 14 additional previewed for next year's grant
  - ii. HOME Investment Partnerships Program is the largest federal block grant for the creation and preservation of affordable housing.
  - iii. Affordable Housing Bond
    1. \$5 million approved in 2016, half awarded in 2017 and half in 2020 to affordable housing projects.
  - iv. Emergency Housing Assistance
    1. Rent, mortgage and utility assistance program that has been a main focus for the Department since the pandemic began.

2. In 2021 so far, the program has served 736 households and distributed ~\$2.6 million with an average rent award of \$6,020 and an average utility award of \$850
  3. Current CDBG-CV funding source allows us to help shore up housing stability for future rent for 3 months in addition to rental arrears
4. Some programs cut across the three (3) divisions:
    - i. Landlord Incentive Program: provides funds for landlords participating in the Housing Choice Voucher and Rapid Re-housing Programs.
    - ii. Risk Mitigation Fund: Covers the costs of damages/evictions and costs not covered by the security deposit, up to \$5,000.
    - iii. New program launching in the fall to assist property owners who experienced tax increases during the 2021 reevaluation.
  5. Affordable Housing Landscape
    - i. In recent year, the department has seen a pivot towards partnership, collaboration and communication. Ms. Root highlighted a few of many community partnerships:
      1. Orange County Affordable Housing Coalition is comprised of service providers, staff from all jurisdictions, developers, and advocates attend monthly meeting.
      2. Chapel-Hill Carrboro Chamber of Commerce's Big Bold Ideas Initiative
      3. ONE Orange/GARE/racial equity: ONE Orange is the government association for racial equity. Housing and racial equity go hand in hand, and we must also view this work through a racial equity lens because of historic and current racial discrimination as well as current racial differences in housing, homelessness
    - ii. Oft-discussed affordable housing topics include:
      1. Tiny homes,
      2. The "Missing Middle"
        - a. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
      3. Housing supply/demand due to the growth in the Triangle
      4. Covid-related housing impacts
      5. Emergency rent and utility assistance

C. **Discussion.** Ms. Root asked AHAB members how OCHCD staff can make AHAB's monthly meetings most useful.

1. Mr. Sprinzeles noted that affordable housing is becoming increasingly difficult to find in Orange County as the population of the Research Triangle grows.

2. Ms. Sykes noted that typically in late winter or early spring, AHAB members would review grant money. Previously, AHAB has asked organizations that have received funding to provide updates.
3. Ms. McLendon requested a glossary of affordable housing terms.
4. Ms. McLendon also noted that she and other AHAB members recently experienced difficulty accessing the Google Drive. Ms. Dewees will look into the issue and ensure all members of the AHAB and the general public can access the Google Drive.

**V. Old and New Business.**

- A. Update on Adoption of Updated AHAB Policies and Procedures.** Ms. Dewees reported that the County Attorney advised that Section III.B.2 of the AHAB's policies and procedures must remain as written.
- B. Shared AHAB Google Drive.** Ms. Dewees noted that the shared AHAB Google Drive must be publicly accessible to provide transparency.

**Adjournment.** Meeting adjourned at 7:22 PM.

Submitted by Maria Dewees, Acting Housing and Community Development Manager