

Planning Commission Work Session

March 28, 2017 5:00 - 7:00

NDS Conference Room

Members Present: Chairman Kurt Keesecker, Vice-Chair Lisa Green, Jody Lahendro, Gennie Keller, John Santoski, Brian Hogg, Corey Clayborne

Member Absent: Taneaia Dowell

Staff Present: Stacy Pethia, Brian Haluska, Alex Ikefuna

Call to Order: by Chair Keesecker 5:05

Introduction – Brian Haluska, Principle Planner

RCLCO housing report – Stacy Pethia, Charlottesville's Housing Coordinator

Charlottesville will soon double the amount of taxpayer funds used to support the creation of affordable housing units, and on Tuesday the city's Planning Commission was asked to weigh in on several recommendations on how that funding might be used.

Stacy Pethia, Charlottesville's Housing Coordinator said the City Council has a Comprehensive Plan goal of increasing the number of supported affordable units to 15 percent of the housing stock by 2025, and the city is currently supporting about 10 percent of the units that are affordable to families making less than 80 percent of the annual area median income.

Also, attending the meeting was Phil d'Oronzio, the Chairman of the Housing Advisory Committee.

Ms. Pethia stated that the median household income in Charlottesville is \$63,918, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Last year, the City Council received a housing study from the Robert Charles Lesser Company that made several recommendations about how the city could amend its rules and regulations to increase the housing stock within the 10.4 square miles of Charlottesville. Councilors turned to the Housing Advisory Committee to prioritize the recommendations.

Commissioner Keller said we already know we have a housing shortage at all price points for all people, and we have a university that is growing. We have retirees that aren't going to leave and we have new people coming in that will have to live somewhere.

Stacy Pethia said the primary responsibility of the Housing Advisory Committee is to advise City Council on anything having to do with affordable housing.

She said on their first pass, the HAC came up with a spreadsheet with about 40 recommendations. Councilors asked them to further streamline the list.

Mr. d'Oronzio explained the idea was to come up with immediate things that would have immediate results that are immediately within the authority of Council. Mr. d'Oronzio said one recommendation is already in the works. City Council has agreed to double the amount of funding that goes to the Charlottesville Affordable Housing Fund and Council has contributed \$7.8 million to the fund over the past five years and the proposed budget for the next five would increase that contribution to \$16 million.

Ms. Pethia expressed how another of the immediate recommendations would create a landlord risk reduction fund to help cover the costs of wear-and-tear that would ordinarily be covered by a security deposit. She said one of the barriers to a low-income family renting an affordable housing unit is the security deposit. She said residents may have the \$1,100 to rent a two-bedroom apartment, but they don't have the \$1,100 to secure the unit.

Another recommendation brought was to initiate a waiver for developer fees for projects that include affordable housing but Commissioners wanted more information on both the fiscal impact and potential zoning consequences that would come with that change.

Commissioner Santoski asked why the city doesn't acquire land for affordable housing if we're acquiring land for parking. It was suggested the City Manager identify city-owned properties that could be used to build affordable units, as well as existing properties that could be purchased by the city.

Lisa Robertson, Deputy City Attorney, said we are not supposed to be in the business of acquiring property and developing it and added that sometimes surplus land acquired for other purposes can be sold off by the city.

She explained that Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority (CRHA) is a separate political entity from the city but could purchase land to build more dwelling units in collaboration with local government.

Ms. Pethia also said CRHA is our partner in all of this, but they're not at the point where they are ready and able to begin redevelopment.

The majority of the commission's discussion regarded possible zoning changes that might encourage developers to build affordable units.

Commissioner Green asked what mechanism do we have in place to incentivize developers to put affordable housing into the housing stock and to keep them affordable.

Commissioner Keller added they might only be affordable for five years, and they turn back into market-rate units.

Ms. Robertson said that if the city chooses to sell some of its surplus land for the purpose of building affordable units, deed restrictions could be put in place to require their affordability in perpetuity.

She said when you have the most control is when you own it and you have the ability to deed restrict and place conditions. However, she added that many nonprofit housing organizations avoid deed restrictions because they can be seen as too limiting.

Commissioner Keller said she was concerned that increasing the supply of housing through higher-residential densities might not lead to increased affordability. This sense of urgency that we have to rezone, and we have to have more density, does not convince me that that's going to get us the product that we want and that we need and that's not necessarily what a good portion of the public is asking us for.

Commissioner Green noted that none of the new developments on West Main Street come with affordable housing units on site. Instead, developers paid into the housing fund.

Commissioner Santoski commented that there were no recommendations to help boost the amount of workforce housing. That term refers to housing for families with household incomes between 80 and 120 percent of the annual area median income.

Ms. Robertson said federal and state guidelines do not allow money in the city's housing fund to be used for that demographic.

Councilors have asked that the recommendations come before them by July to help inform how the affordable housing fund will be used in the next fiscal year. The Planning Commission will revisit the issue at a future meeting.

Community Engagement

Chairman Keesecker said there is power in a weird way to where the conversation is even held. Choosing a good location is important.

Commissioner Green said people are angry because they are not at the table. What Wes is saying is we are not reaching everyone and even the community engagement plan we have, while we are trying to go out and do different things, other groups are already getting together meeting saying this is a bad thing. They are against form based code noting that it is going to make the housing go away while we may or may not agree with that, the thing we have to do, if we want to do proper community engagement is reach out to those people. People don't trust us no matter how much

pizza you give them. The people want to be heard. We have got to build that trust. If we get them at the table, they will go back to their list and then people will show up.

Commissioner Clayborne said he thought the City talked about creating a task force where we could hand pick people to be advocates.

Commissioner Green said no, we have to build that advocate base before we go out and have these 4 large community meetings.

Lisa Robertson said you will have to define sooner rather than later, what will you be talking about. This is not your year to re-do the whole Comp Plan. You are looking at very specific things, how can we re-do the Comp Plan that will help us with affordable housing, what we do in the Comp Plan to address our neighborhoods, particular ones that backup against ones who want to develop. Define what you are going to talk about before your four community meetings. First of all you guys are not doing form based code. She said we need to update our ordinances: affordable housing, how to get places to look how we want them to look and you need to define what you want to talk about before you have these meetings.

Alex Ikefuna said he is working with Councilor Wes Bellamy who is planning a meeting for the African American community to discuss the comprehensive plan update and what it is. The meeting in the African American community will be held in their neighborhood on May 11, and Wes Bellamy will be responsible for coordinating that.

Chair Keesecker said two things he remembered from the last meeting were that the four meetings were to be an equalizer, informative, generally and the first round of listening was our intent. We thought we had constructed a vehicle to do that which is fair to everybody.

Brian Haluska talked about everyone having a smart phone so we could give everyone the web link and they can do the survey themselves because there is no way we can do these centralized meetings in enough places. We've got to think of other decentralized ways to reach the community.

Commissioner Clayborne said we need to go out to the people at Friendship Court Community Center and Westhaven center. He said we need to go out to them which would be more effective.

Lisa Robertson said there's a whole another community, look how Rose Hill turned out for the one zoning issue that was really important to them and that was kind of a density/development issue. There are other parts of the community that could legitimately affect the entire city; even segments like a low density neighborhood which

we know are the ones with the most opportunity. She said you need to decide what kind of meeting to have.

Commissioner Keller said we are worried about how is it going to function.

Commission Santoski said the main thing is affordability across the whole city but sometimes when we are looking at those things we don't see those things, Council does. It depends on what Council has in place. Do we need to change it or do we do something differently.

Mr. Ikefuna also said that Council appropriated \$100,000 dollars for the Planning Commission to accomplish this task.

Commissioner Keller wants to put housing in the Comp Plan not just affordable housing.

Chair Keesecker said we want to get back to community engagement which is going to try to be place based and the survey being more narrative. If we go with the idea that there are these places around town that we have started to identify could we give people online and meeting in a box; a tool that says a series of maps similar to what the Belmont Bridge survey did.

1. Outcome needed: groups/individuals to contact for the pre meetings
2. Advance planning will allow for these outcomes to be achieved so we can keep moving forward.
3. Here are some issues: density and housing are the two main issues.

Brian Haluska said the survey used in Austin TX used an actual mile of paper for its distribution.

Commission Clayborne said he would be happy to work with developing questions now that we have our themes.

1. Housing
2. Density (Height)
3. Mixed use area
4. Jobs

Meeting Adjourned at 7pm.