

HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Notes
September 28, 2006

Present:

Noah Schwartz
Theresa Tapscott
Reed Banks
Art Lichtenberger
Cheri Lewis
Natasha Sienitsky
Theresa Deese
Charlie Armstrong
Carol Clarke
Overton McGehee

Absent:

Joy Johnson
Dave Norris
Stu Armstrong/Peter Loach

Staff:

Jim Tolbert
Amy Kilroy

Summary of Meeting Notes:

- Introductions of everyone in the group, explanation as to why it took so long to get the group together and now up and running. All current slots have been appointed, several new slots were proposed at this meeting, and their slots will be filled as soon as possible.
- Review of the Charge set by City Council to the Committee – discussion of the charge being almost two years old...leaves room for a revisit and to better prioritize the list. List seems too long and could provide more direction for the group.
- Jim mentioned that Council sees this committee as being a “watchdog” of sorts to advise Council on what other communities are doing, as well as what is working or not working in and around our community – an advisory group on affordability issues.
- There was discussion about also broadening the scope of our focus beyond just affordability so as not to limit ourselves too much. There are other housing issues present too, should try to be as comprehensive as possible. As the demand for urban living conditions continues to increase, new strategies are needed to keep pace with these trends.
- Another item of discussion is the increasing rates of property assessments and sale prices. Overton mentioned that Habitat houses built in Fifeville have tripled in value over the past four years. Other neighborhoods are seeing similar drastic increases in price. The question arose as to whom would be able to afford living in the units that are being built.

- Suggestions were made to have representatives from Albemarle County’s Housing office and the University’s Off-Grounds Housing office join the committee to offer additional resources. Staff will check on their availability for our next meeting. It was noted that as the University continues to increase its levels of enrollment, more students are moving off-grounds into the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Noah posed a question to the group as to whether we’re talking more about a “housing options” issue than an affordability issue? Broadening the scope of our housing stock to meet a greater range of needs beyond how much the houses cost – and because some of the stock is not meeting the needs of those looking for units, affordability is becoming more of an issue.
- Noah will give a brief presentation about the Housing Authority’s units, vouchers, resident base, waiting list etc. Jim will give a brief presentation which was recently given to Council about the (residential) development projects currently underway or in the pipeline across the city.
- Jim talked about how in Virginia we cannot mandate that affordable units are part of developers’ projects. Brief proffers discussion. What makes a reasonable incentive – land, structures or cash?
- Reed mentioned the topic of subsidies and how it is important to try to keep residents where they already are – don’t necessarily need to build them new units....bring the subsidies to them directly could do a greater service.
- Questions mentioned during the meeting for future thought and discussion –
 - What housing stock is available to residents making different percentages of the AMI?
 - What are the demographics of those working in Charlottesville and where are they commuting from?
 - How many residents commute out of the city to go to work?
 - Is there a list of services currently available within the city and surrounding areas – want to see what we need and what we already have so as not to duplicate our efforts.
 - How to better examine housing as a regional issue rather than just for the city?
 - How to look broader than just serving low to moderate income residents?
 - How to get business community more involved in housing related discussions?
- **Discussion of future meeting dates:** Thursdays – October 26th, November 16th and December 21st at 12:00 noon. Locations to be announced.
- **Discussion of future agenda items:** Follow-up discussion with Dave Norris about the Housing Trust Fund meeting with Mary Brooks (Oct. 10th); Presentations by Jim and Noah, Discussion of Habitat’s Tax Relief proposal by Overton McGehee.