

HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes

Basement Conference Room City Hall

June 17, 2009

12:00 pm

Members:

Charlie Armstrong

Peter Loach

Chris Murray

Richard Spurzem

Sasha Farmer

Reed Banks

Cheri Lewis

Joy Johnson

Natasha Sienitsky

Art Lichenberger

Karen Waters

Dave Norris

Staff:

Melissa Celi

Others:

Edith Good

Meeting began at 12:10.

Introductions: Introductions were made.

Update from the Chair: Mr. Armstrong, Ms. Lewis, and Mr. Norris had a meeting to discuss staffing of the HAC, dedication of City resources to the committee, and what Council would like from this committee in the future. The city housing position is still in the hiring process. Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Lichenberger have sent letters asking for updates. Members wanted to know when this person would start and who would they work under. It was suggested that the position could be part of Economic Development. Some members had concerns that Economic Development does not work well with low-income individuals. Members felt that the new housing person should be completely dedicated to the HAC.

Some members expressed concern that the HAC was not fully involved in the CRHA redevelopment process and that CRHA is not regularly attending HAC meetings. There was a brief discussion about the importance of having lunch at HAC meetings to encourage attendance.

Members were upset that the SRO ordinance was brought to the HAC after language had already been written and was presented for HAC review as opposed to approval. There was a discussion about the need for a process to ensure that any housing related item comes before the HAC for their sign off. It was suggested that the HAC write a list of their concerns (lunch, housing position, etc) and send a letter of concern to Council. It was suggested that the HAC should 'follow the money' and hold Council responsible for

what is done. It was suggested that each member of the HAC be furnished with a notebook that contains pertinent information relating to the HAC.

Update from Staff: Staff reminded the HAC that the Housing Report and By-laws needed to have action taken by the end of the meeting.

Members who were not present at May's meeting wanted clarification on the discussion that took place regarding the status of the Charlottesville Housing Fund and how Council regards the CDBG Task Force. Council has approved funding the Thomas Jefferson Community Land Trust, Virginia Supportive Housing, AHIP, Habitat for Humanity, and Piedmont Housing Alliance for Monticello Vista and Foreclosure Prevention. Funding for Region 10's Step Up program and PHA's downpayment assistance will be decided at a future meeting.

Approval of Minutes: Members were confused by a sentence from the May minutes saying "there were concerns that Council does not have confidence in the CDBG Task Force's ability to recommend funding." This concern was voiced by a single member based on their own observations. Some members of Council have expressed a desire to see a different process, though it is not believed to be the majority. To date, Council has not changed the CHF funding process or the CDBG Task Force's role. The sentence causing the confusion will be changed to reflect that the concern was based on one member's observation and not any action by Council.

Motion to approve minutes as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

Discussion of Housing Report: The Housing Report had been revised since the May meeting to reflect changes and concerns brought up by HAC members. The format of the report currently allows for different scenarios based on the percentage goal and time needed to meet that goal. Members were asked to choose the scenarios they thought were best.

Members wondered whether 20% is the right percentage of affordable housing for Charlottesville. Members were not sure if there is an ideal or optimal percentage or mix that a community should have for affordable housing. Some members were concerned by where/who generated the report. Some members have wanted concrete goals and have been asking for them for a long time and feel this report is a very strong start. Some members felt that the report was more of a template for the HAC to use. There was concern that it is too ambitious to think the HAC can move the report forward after only two meetings. It was suggested that there needs to be two reports; one report saying here is the status of housing and here are our overarching goals, and the other report provide very specific goals. It was suggested that at a minimum there needs to be a one page summary for people who do not wish to read the entire report.

Staff suggested that since it had become evident that no decision would be made at the meeting, that a subcommittee form to address the HAC's concerns between now and the July meeting so as not to further delay action on the report. Ms. Farmer, Mr. Murray,

Ms. Lewis, Mr. Loach, Ms. Sienitsky, and Mr. Lichenberger volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Discussion of the housing report continued.

It was pointed out the preservation of existing affordable units is just as important as creating new units and should be mentioned as a goal in the report. Members wanted to know where the goal of 20% came from, and wondered if 15% would be a more reasonable and achievable goal. Some members pointed out that the Boulder Report only had the goal of 10% and that Charlottesville has already achieved that goal and therefore may not need to set a higher goal for itself. It was suggested that tax credit expiration dates be added to the chart listing tax credit properties. It was suggested that the report contain a reasonable estimate of how much investment would be needed to reach the goals of the report.

Staff mentioned that Boulder did not have a clear definition of affordable in their report or what threshold they used to determine if a unit was affordable. Members felt that it is important to say in the report that only guaranteed affordable units be counted. There were concerns about the role student housing and students may be playing in the data used and how student housing may affect the counts for affordable housing. It was pointed out that if only guaranteed affordable housing units are counted, than it will ensure that only units serving low income households are included.

Discussion of By-laws: Members discussed the by-laws. They extended their thanks to Ms. Lewis and Mr. Lichenberger for their hard work to date on drafting the by-laws. The by-laws are a HAC generate initiative to establish the minimum number of active members needed to function and to resolve confusion regarding voting. Members recommended changes to be made to the by-laws. They felt that having the Secretary keep strict attendance and send out warnings seemed a little too overbearing and policing. It was also suggested that if there is a delinquent member, the Chair would right a letter to Council and recommend next steps or actions/sanctions that should be taken. Some members did not think that the by-laws were necessary or that there should be a policy regarding delinquent members. Ms. Lewis recorded the proposed changes and will redistribute updated by-laws. A motion was made to approve the by-laws as amended, seconded, and approved 8-2.

Other Business: The Housing Report will be added to the July agenda. Ms. Johnson asked that Charles Gardner from South Carolina be brought up to talk about what good mixed income looks like. Members felt that this might make a good special meeting on mixed income where CRHA, Council, Planning Commission and the community are encouraged to attend. It was also suggested the NDS look into having UVa conduct a class that researches mixed income case studies.

It was also suggested that Mike Harvey from the TJPDC Economic Development department speak to that HAC about the connection between employment and the number of units that are needed.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:40.