

## HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Notes

Basement Conference Room City Hall

July 17, 2008

12:00 pm

### Present:

Charlie Armstrong

Peter Loach

Kathy Galvin

Overton McGehee

Chris Murray

Cheri Lewis

Edith Goode

Natasha Sienitsky

Edith Goode

Reed Banks

### Staff

Melissa Celi

**Introductions—guest/visitors:** Caitlyn Roberts, NDS intern

**Update from the Chair:** No Update.

**Update from Staff:** The Charlottesville Housing Fund criteria recommendations will now be going to Council for on September 2, instead of August 18, 2008.

### **Discussion of Sub-Committee Findings:**

- Define Affordability:** Has not yet met. Question whether this subcommittee had a long range or short term mission like some of the other subcommittees. In other words is the need to define affordability pressing? Definition is needed. It is hard for other subcommittees to reach their conclusions without know what is affordable and what the needs are.
- Housing Information Distribution:** Has no new updates since the June meeting. Staff was asked to remind subcommittees of their need to meet.
- Incentives for private sector:** Has met since the June meeting. Revised the list of incentives presented in June to include phasing. Six incentives have been determined to be Phase 1 and three have are Phase 2.

Question was asked about item D in Phase 1 which references ‘neighborhood geography’ areas. Mr. Armstrong explained that the intent of those areas was to function something like an Enterprise Zone where certain areas get tax credits or other incentives for locating affordable housing there. This lead to brief discussion of tax credits and where they are available. Mr. Loach mentioned that there are several

'pockets' in Charlottesville, and he will to get additional information for the group. Suggestion was made that these areas include mixed uses in addition to affordable housing so that economic development can happen and poverty reduced.

Question was asked about the status of the Housing Planner position the City was supposed to have. Staff will look into current status. Additional questions asked regarded whether the position has to be City funded/employed and how does the job relate to the one Mr. Norris discussed at the last meeting? It was suggested that there needs to be an umbrella person who oversees housing and also a specific planner assigned to any project that has a certain affordability threshold. This would also help address the issue of the time balance of money. Overall consensus was that there needs to be a point person who wears many housing hats.

Brief discussion about how Mr. Swartz has been absent from HAC meetings. Questions were asked about the status of the redevelopment plans of CRHA.

Discussion turned back to Housing Planner job. It was suggested that since so many non-profits want a Housing person, then perhaps the funding can come from CHF. Maybe it could be a City/County job. It was suggested that the person hired should be an expert on tax credits and housing finance. Led to questions regarding whether that expertise is needed or the role of a City employee. Some members did not want to create another person/meeting to have to go through in the affordable housing process. The HAC asked staff to provide a copy of the Housing Planner position that was advertised to see the job description. Maybe the housing planner would serve more as an Ombudsman. It was also suggested that the Housing Planner may be better as a TJPDC employee.

The HAC next discussed the expedited review process. One suggestion was that instead of months of short review have one intense day long review session where all parties are at the table. It could be set up so that a developer pays \$2500 and plans a review session 45 days in the future. The question of how can expedited review be attained. It was recommended that Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Tolbert need to sit down with other needed parties and figure it out. Many members believe that it will happen because Council has asked for expedited review; it is just a matter of when and how.

Question was then raised regarding the design standards being classified as a Phase II item. There was concern that if the standards were not listed in Phase I then they could be forgotten. There was some confusion as to what exactly the design standards are/will be. Consensus from the group was that they would be more design goals than set standards. It was pointed out that for affordable units that are part of a larger for profit development, it is to the developer's benefit that the affordable units are designed to match the same quality as the market rate houses in order to insure the market rate units value and fast closing. It was suggested that there needs to be a basic quality standard of construction. This was countered with the fact that City building codes today are much stricter than the past and are a good guarantee of quality construction. Many believed that the overall purpose of the design standards

or goals is to help affordable housing blend in seamlessly with the surrounding neighborhood. Some members were concerned that requiring certain materials, such as metal roofs, would end up burdening low-income families through increased property taxes. The conclusion of the discussion was the agreement of members that the incentives list should be revised to say design goals instead of standards.

The question was asked about how to turn the incentives list into an actual policy or statement. Staff is to talk to Jim Tolbert first to revise the list before presenting it to Council.

- **Criteria for funding:** Ms. Celi spoke on behalf of this sub-committee. For FY 08-09 the criteria for funding to be recommended to Council has not changed since the June meeting. For FY 09-10 the sub-committee has come up with some general project ideas that Council can choose from to meet each of the population needs identified (homeowner, rental, special needs).

There was concern about the income limits (60%) for the homeownership population. Members were afraid that many would fall through the gap because people in the 60-80% category still need assistance. Additionally, there was concern about having a special needs project be completely within the 30% or less AMI because it makes getting other funding sources difficult. Furthermore 30% is not an income unit that other sources use, making it hard to match up. It was suggested that instead of breaking up the criteria by tenure it should be broken up by income limits.

There was a general consensus from the HAC that the key to the criteria and awards is flexibility. It was recommended that Council do not place fixed amounts or percentages on any one criterion, but to allow the Task Force to have the discretion of how to allocate funds.

There were also concerns about the requirement that award monies only go to City residents/workers because especially with the lowest income population it is hard to establish fixed/ residency. This is especially true with the renter population. Also concerns that while geography is not specifically mentioned, it does seem that residency requirements work against the Fair Housing Act.

**Other business:** Members expressed a desire to meet with Jim Tolbert and Dave Norris to discuss the upcoming Charlottesville Housing Fund, specifically how much it will be and where the money comes from. Staff will add that discussion to the August Agenda.

The next HAC meeting is **Thursday July 31, 2008 at 12:00 pm**. The sub-committees are to meet again before the July 31, 2008 meeting if necessary.