

Minutes of the February 1, 2024 Meeting of the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee:

Attendance:

Jason Smith
Susan Levy
Mary Gillogly
Tiffany Stuflick
Alirio Estevez
John Foley
Gail Friedman
Sharon Taylor Gray

Andrea Wiley, CPCA
Lindsay Whitson, Central Pines
Jack Watson, Central Pines
Ellen Davis, Central Pines

Meeting moved from Old Agriculture Building to Chatham Community Library meeting room.
Note taped to Ag Building door at 6:05pm. Meeting started at 6:22

1. Susan opened the meeting with a request for introductions and thanks for flexibility on moving locations. Notes that Bryan Thompson is at conference, so there is no county representative present.
2. Public comment: none. Mary states that she watched Commissioner's meeting in which Bryan presented awarded funds. It went very well. Some questions to clarify, but funding was approved
3. Consent agenda: review December meeting notes. Tiffany states that she is not on the attendance list but was present. John moves to add Tiffany to attendance list. Alirio seconds. Unanimous approval of minutes as amended.
4. Elections: John and Susan are moving on from leadership position. Susan states that 2 nominees agreed to have their names put forward to serve, Tiffany as chair, and Sharon as vice chair. Also opens floor for nominations. Mary mentioned she nominated another candidate. Jack clarified that everyone nominated prior to the February meeting was asked about their interest in the position. Prior to vote, Tiffany notes that she needs to disclose that she is in the process of working with John on opening a nonprofit focusing on container homes in the county. She would recuse herself from any votes that may involve a conflict of interest. Susan moves to vote on approving Tiffany as chair and Sharon as vice chair of AHAC. Passed with unanimous approval. Susan and John offer any assistance or guidance needed. Lindsay asks if both Susan and John will still be members, which they affirmed.
5. Goals for AHAC outlined in handout presented by Jack Watson.

Jack points out items I.a.i (documenting existing funding levels) I.a.iii (conducting affordable housing gap analysis, and I.a.iv (Comparing amount of funding need to gaps identified) as items that Central Pines can research.

Susan asked for clarification on gap analysis. Jack responds that this is looking at statistics to compare what is available vs. what is needed. One common metric would be a comparison of permits pulled and units approved to the number of households moving into the county. change in housing stock versus population moving into the county, etc. John adds that in analysis done about 5 years ago, area had much more demand than supply for 1 and 2 bedroom apartments. Jack: we can start developing and bringing in to see what questions there are. County Commissioners are looking for suggestions on housing from AHAC. Would be good to be able to present that information.

Next item addressed is dashboard for public that would demonstrate funding available, what demographic, waitlists for programs. Users could see what services, what volume of applicants. The tool would need to be easy to use format with a defined role to update. Often service providers end up in a cycle of referring service seekers elsewhere without knowing if they will qualify. It would probably need to be housed through Chatham County website.

Discussion and questions about dashboard. Mary gives perspective of frustration of applying for different services and not knowing about qualification or status. John adds that public input will be key. Jason shared that United Way is hiring someone for some dashboard work. Also putting money aside, to add 211 through Greensboro for Chatham County. Calls will be routed to GSO where Chatham County information will be pulled up to give resources. Will help with routing. Also landlord engagement. Alirio asks if they have bilingual services. Jason doesn't know, would think they do.

Discussion about updating process. Jack states that it would make sense for someone at Chatham County to update. It may be a periodic update process where contact is made with each service provider to see what changes have been made.

Jack asks what best format for AHAC is to get things done this year: standing agenda, smaller working groups, or brief updates over course of year?

Tiffany emphasizes that dashboard may need different information for each audience (service seekers, providers, funding seekers). Jack notes that eventually stories from those receiving services and those providing would be a goal for products. Easier to give a face to things when asking for funding. Alirio emphasizes the need for the perspective of people in need of services. That is most important. Not everyone has or can use cell phones. Talk to some of people who need information to see how they get their information.

Discussion moved into increase in homeless population over time and the lack of a shelter in the county. Currently there is a Street Outreach position working part time with funding from the Emergency Solutions Grant and flexible funding from a United Way donor. This position is meant to be the point of contact for people experiencing homelessness and help gain access to services as well as provide for immediate needs (clothing, transportation, food).

Sharon asks about where people go when homeless in the county. Mary says they can go to white flag shelter at Love Chatham when open, they live in cars, temporary hotel vouchers, in woods, by Jordan lake, may sleep in parks.

Andrea Wiley provides some background on situations that have made the problem worse: COVID played a huge role, with people displaced with different barriers: behavioral, mental health, transportation. Many who had nowhere to go have evictions on record which makes it hard to find someone to rent to you. Some landlords also stopped working with programs. It is increasingly difficult to place people and often those who get help are those who put in significant effort into their own behalf. Best Answer is not putting in hotels indefinitely.

Tiffany adds that some landlords sold to make profit which led to displacement which was possible because of exponential growth in county. Sharon mentioned that some of the new developments have been disruptive as well. Also sees some smaller local landowners selling land for a quick profit without finding a long-term solution for their own housing.

Jack states the role of AHAC is not to provide a particular service, but can make funding recommendations to Commissioners, being realistic about what County can do, Expertise is in the room to know what situation and recommendations are. Suggestion: time collecting information to get ideas for presentation, being aware of needs and interests of each audience, including developers.

Jason shares that the United Way is also hiring for a full-time landlord engagement position.

Jason gives an example of a model to begin serving homeless population. Worked in a city in Vermont that began with a small basic needs center with showers and laundry available and onsite case managers to try to navigate system-nonprofit. As developed idea of scope of problem—in 3 years, had shelter for 14 people in the same building to keep services together.

6. Jack gave a brief update on Third Wave solutions from Bryan who will give a full presentation at next month's meeting.

Mobile home subgroup has list of questions for mobile home survey—need plan for how to get it out. Will pilot at one park. Timeline of first survey in April. Jack pledges to provide the list of questions to the full Advisory committee after the meeting.

7. County update: First round of applicants for Leah's position has closed. Range of applications. Sorting through, interviewing. Will repost if necessary.

PIT count for funding for homeless was Jan 31st. Kudos from Andrea Wiley for Melissa Lowell, street outreach. Lots of word of mouth to find connections. Benefit—it can provide small things to build trust. Doesn't give home but does build trust.

Gail asks about preliminary numbers in PIT count.

Jack believes it will probably be 40-50 people, compared to about a dozen last year.

Tiffany mentions that Fayetteville street outreach contact has nonprofit model that might be something to look into. —way to have resources for street outreach to provide some immediate needs. John suggests that the Street Outreach position might be good to between County and grant funding in future. Andrea Wiley shares that she has plenty of clothing to give out, with a full storage unit and lots of donations for those in need.

Meeting is adjourned.