



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

Approved Minutes
AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
VIRTUAL MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2020 – 9:00 A.M.

Cumulative

Committee Members	Attendance	June 2020-May 2021	
		Present	Absent
Brandon Stewart, Chair	P	3	0
Frances Epstein, Vice Chair	P	3	0
Phallon Bullard	P	2	1
Uwe Cerron	P	3	0
Nancy Daly	P	3	0
Patricia Hale	A	0	3
Irv Minney	A	1	2
Donnalee Minott	P	3	0
Margi Nothard	P	3	0
Edwin Parke	P	3	0

Staff / Guests

Avis Wilkinson, Housing Programs Administrator/Staff Liaison
Lashanda Elliott, Administrative Assistant
Rachel Williams, Housing and Community Development Manager
Jamie Opperee, Recording Secretary, ProtoType, Inc.

Communication to the City Commission

None.

I. ROLL CALL / DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Chair Stewart called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. It was noted that former member Mitchell Rosenstein had resigned from the Committee.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 3, 2020

Motion made by Ms. Minott, seconded by Ms. Daly, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

III. OLD BUSINESS

• Affordable Housing Trust Fund Balance Update – Avis Wilkinson

Ms. Wilkinson reported that the current Affordable Housing Trust Fund balance is \$242,007.16. This includes a deposit that is most likely from the sale of a City property,

as well as accrued interest. She pointed out, however, that roughly \$122,000 has not yet been removed from the Trust Fund for the Fort Lauderdale Community Development Corporation (CDC) project(s).

The following Item was taken out of order on the Agenda.

- **AHAC Workplan**

Chair Stewart recalled that prior to the interruption of meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, City Staff gave a presentation on affordable housing policy at a City Commission Conference Agenda meeting. Copies of the presentation were circulated to the Committee members at the Chair's request. Chair Stewart stated that he hoped to add members' ideas regarding racial equity as applied to affordable housing. Once the Workplan has been completed, they would revisit this presentation from City Staff and draft recommendations to be passed along to the City Commission.

Ms. Nothard requested additional information on a way to reallocate funds and realign the City's budget to increase affordable housing resources, particularly how this change would address racial inequities. Chair Stuart explained that the Affordable Housing Trust Fund is currently limited to revenue from the sale of certain City properties. Due to the limitations of this source, the Trust Fund often does not increase for significant periods of time. He hoped to identify opportunities other than these sales which could be used to increase the Trust Fund and provide greater flexibility in its use.

Chair Stewart addressed the issue of community land trusts, recalling that these were first discussed by the Committee up to two years ago. Because there has been significant turnover in the Committee's membership, he hoped to further discuss this option and determine whether or not it offers a way forward. Vice Chair Epstein recalled that community land trusts can lend funds for down payments so first-time homeowners can purchase properties. This process has been used in Miami to provide a solid base of single-family homes for qualified buyers.

Ms. Nothard also addressed the impact of racial inequality on rezonings, for which some cities conduct impact studies related to ongoing inequities. Rezonings can have significant impacts on adjacent neighborhoods, which can be detrimental to those communities.

Chair Stewart concluded that over the next few meetings, the Committee would seek to further refine the recommendations included in the Workplan and ultimately present them to the City Commission.

Motion made by Vice Chair Epstein, seconded by Ms. Nothard, to adopt the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee 2020 Workplan. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Mr. Cerron advised that he has compiled data related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on renters and landlords, both of which may be struggling financially at present. He felt this provided an opportunity for affordable housing providers to acquire distressed assets at a discount, possibly repurposing properties for affordable and/or workforce housing.

Chair Stewart encouraged Mr. Cerron, Ms. Nothard, and any other members with information or resources they wished to share to send them to Ms. Wilkinson's office for distribution to the Committee at large.

- **Affordable Housing Recommendation Updates – AHAC**

Chair Stewart noted that the Committee had already touched upon a number of these recommendations, such as community land trusts and the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. He noted that City Staff's presentation to the Commission included adoption of zoning incentives, such as a change to have items available for call-up by the Commission rather than automatically going before them for approval. Another change could increase what is permitted by right for certain types of projects.

Ms. Nothard emphasized the importance of addressing how the affordable housing entitlement process is reviewed. It can be extensive and onerous, and affordable housing development is not provided additional assistance or consideration when going through this process. She suggested that there may be ways the City could streamline approval aside from changes to by-right development, such as preparing a concierge process.

Vice Chair Epstein requested further clarification of the term by-right, expressing concern that an increase in by-right development could lead to a lack of community input and oversight. Chair Stewart advised that this means if a specific set of standards are met during the planning process, the developer has met the necessary threshold to move the project forward, which cuts down on additional costs. Requirements may differ depending upon the zoning district in which the project would be located.

Chair Stewart noted that another proposal by City Staff addressed accessory dwelling units, of which the Committee has been in favor. This may also be by-right development in specific areas. He reviewed the list of AHAC recommendations:

- Allowing other revenues to increase the Affordable Housing Trust Fund
- Discussion of community land trusts
- Rezoning impacts on communities
- Expanding by-right development
- Accessory dwelling units

Vice Chair Epstein stated that another issue is community awareness and developer understanding. She explained that greater awareness is needed throughout the Fort Lauderdale community regarding the need for affordable housing for the City's workforce, many of whom cannot afford to live in the City and must spend significant time commuting.

This is of particular importance for individuals working at the City's barrier island residences and hospitality developments. She concluded that the goal should be more balanced and inclusive communities throughout Fort Lauderdale.

Chair Stewart commented that the Committee has discussed creating greater awareness of these needs through incentives and processes to which developers and community members have access. He cited the sale of City-owned properties as an example, noting that while there is some marketing of these properties, more steps could be taken to ensure the broader community is aware of them.

Ms. Nothard proposed that the Committee seek to work with City Departments other than the Planning Department. She pointed out that the need for healthy communities is an economic development issue as well as an affordable housing concern. She recommended including a brief segment in the Workplan to show that addressing racial equity through affordable housing would be a positive step toward a healthier, stronger community.

Chair Stewart concluded that he had asked Ms. Wilkinson to reach out to City Staff for more information on forthcoming projects. A representative of one of the City's Community Redevelopment Agencies (CRAs) will provide a presentation in October on affordable housing projects in the pipeline for this area.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- **City's Policy for Disposition of HOME Program Income from CHDO-Related Projects – Rachel Williams**

Housing and Community Development Manager Rachel Williams explained that affordable housing projects are brought forward through a variety of portals in the City, including CRAs, elected officials, or the City Manager's Office, among others. She suggested that the Committee may wish to include a Workplan recommendation for a centralized portal for these projects, which would make it easier for both Staff and the Committee to be aware of the projects that are coming forward.

Ms. Williams added that the City funds not-for-profit organizations for public services, which also come through various points of entry. A Staff work group recently determined that the Budget Advisory Board would serve as the single entry point for these services.

Ms. Williams advised that federal funding sources, such as Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) funds, are very limited. The City's programs are designed to make these limited sources more sustainable so they can better serve the community. With that in mind, the Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) program was designed so these proceeds would be returned to the City in the form of program income. This made the program sustainable on two levels: Staff would be able to use a portion of these proceeds to continue administering the program, and the remaining

program income could either be returned to CHDOs with already-prepared projects or be returned to another affordable housing project.

At present, most CHDO contracts include either a clause requiring that these funds be returned to the City, or two clauses that state a readily available project that meets program criteria can be retained and monitored as a HOME project. If funds are returned to the City because no ready project is available, those dollars are returned to the City as HOME funds.

Ms. Williams advised that the project which led to questions being raised about HOME and CHDO funds was not handled differently from other CHDO projects in the community. At present, there is one active CHDO project, and four additional agencies are certified to undertake CHDO projects throughout the current fiscal year.

Ms. Williams stated that she would not recommend changing these rules, as they provide the City with the flexibility and accountability that are required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The City has chosen to use the strictest level of accountability in order to sustain and stretch HOME dollars for ongoing support.

Chair Stewart recalled that at a previous meeting, the Committee was asked to recommend changes to this process to City Staff. Ms. Williams proposed that the Committee review the current rules adopted by the City and objectively consider why these rules were written. She again emphasized the element of accountability as required by HUD, pointing out that the burden of monitoring and compliance is on the City to ensure that entities using funds for HOME-eligible projects are properly documenting their activities.

Ms. Williams noted that some CHDOs may have proposed a project or projects that ultimately stalled. If these funds did not remain with the City, where they would be available for quick reprogramming for more viable projects, the City would have no access to them. Another consideration is that CHDOs are allowed a developer's fee above and beyond the use of CHDO proceeds. If an established CHDO is struggling, the City considers why this might be the case and tries to address any issues through technical assistance rather than simply through more funding.

Ms. Wilkinson agreed with Ms. Williams' assessment, noting that each municipality adopts different processes for the use of these funds. Fort Lauderdale feels the most prudent way to address HOME funds is for the City to retain the responsibility of overseeing and guiding CHDOs in the use of these funds.

V. AGENDA TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING

Chair Stewart reiterated that the Workplan recommendations would be provided to Ms. Wilkinson's office for dissemination to the Committee members. He encouraged any

members with additional information or resources to send these materials to her office as well.

VI. GOOD OF THE ORDER

None.

VII. NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING DATE – October 5, 2020

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 10:24 a.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, ProtoType, Inc.]