



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

Approved
MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
VIRTUAL MEETING
MONDAY, JANUARY 11, 2021 – 9:00 A.M.

Cumulative

June 2020-May 2021

| Committee Members | Attendance | Present | Absent |
|---|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Brandon Stewart, Chair | P | 7 | 0 |
| Frances Epstein, Vice Chair | P | 6 | 1 |
| Phallon Bullard | P | 4 | 3 |
| Uwe Cerron | P | 7 | 0 |
| Nancy Daly | P | 6 | 1 |
| Donnalee Minott | P | 5 | 2 |
| Margi Nothard | P | 6 | 1 |
| Edwin Parke | P | 5 | 2 |
| Ryan Wipplinger | P | 3 | 0 |
| Mayor Dean Trantalis/ Scott Wyman, Alternate | P | 4 | 0 |

Staff / Guests

Avis Wilkinson, Housing Programs Administrator/Staff Liaison
Lashanda Elliott, Administrative Assistant
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 9:00 a.m. It was noted that a quorum was present at the meeting.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 11, 2021

Motion made by Ms. Daly, seconded by Mr. Wipplinger, 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 Affordable Housing Trust Fund remains at \$807,831.73, which has not changed from the previous month.

Chair Stewart asked if any reports must be filed by the Committee later in 2021. Ms. Wilkinson confirmed that there are none. There are also no requests for proposal (RFPs) put forth at this time, although later in the year there may be an RFP for Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs).

Chair Stewart noted that the Committee has previously discussed the possibility of expanding the scope of use of monies in the Trust Fund, and suggested that the Committee may wish to revisit this topic in the future.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- **AHAC Workplan 2021**

In January 2021, the Committee saw a presentation by Adam Schnell of the Department of Sustainable Development on the City's efforts to encourage affordable housing. The members came away with three issues they wished to discuss further:

- Compliance
- Equity
- Accessory dwelling units

Regarding compliance, Ms. Bullard recommended that developers be more closely monitored with regard to affordable housing, as compliance addresses multiple issues such as income verification and documentation. She advised that there should be a tracking mechanism to monitor how developers market these units and communicate with prospective applicants. She suggested that safeguards and standards could be established to prevent fraud and hold developers accountable.

Ms. Bullard continued that some affordable housing communities require a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to monitor communication and compliance between developers, prospective residents, and entities that provide referrals for income-restrictive units. This could prevent individuals over the required income threshold from gaining access to affordable units. She also noted that the income verification process can be highly sensitive. Compliance issues may include identity theft, falsification of pay stubs, or other forms of inaccurate income verification.

Chair Stewart asked what the Committee might be able to bring before City Staff with respect to compliance for developers. Ms. Wilkinson advised that Housing and Community Development monitors activities closely, including income certification and use of grant funds. She stated that she would reach out to Urban Design and Housing Manager Ella Parker to determine what other safeguards are in place and bring this information back to the Committee.

Ms. Bullard offered to provide additional information on how compliance structures might be enhanced to prevent fraud or errors, such as reviewing multiple bank statements to determine how much income is flowing through an individual's account.

Chair Stewart moved on to equity, which was also discussed at the January 2021 meeting. Ms. Nothard recalled that in recent months, the Committee had looked at racial equity and fair housing as a potential area of focus. This can include reviewing development through the lens of racial equity. She suggested reaching out to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition or another entity with expertise in this area for further information.

Ms. Wilkinson recommended that the Committee define the term “equity” for purposes of discussion. Ms. Nothard replied that she meant equitable access to housing, particularly within communities of color. These could include ensuring that housing site selection includes thorough communication of all environmental issues.

Chair Stewart observed that environmental issues could also refer to protections that may or may not be in place, either for the community in which a project is located or for individuals who may be applying to that project for a unit. He offered the example of an Ordinance that prohibits landlords from refusing to rent units to applicants based on their source of income, such as Social Security or disability.

Ms. Nothard pointed out that most of the City’s affordable housing has been located in the Downtown area, which affects residents’ access to transportation and work. There is a nationwide tendency to locate affordable housing in historically low-income areas, primarily affecting minority communities. She recommended finding ways to encourage the development of affordable housing outside these boundaries, which would improve the equitable distribution and location of affordable units. This is one of the stated goals of the new presidential administration.

Mayor Trantalis also requested a clearer definition of the term “racial equity,” which may mean different things to different people. One definition may refer to the practice of compensating disenfranchised communities that have experienced racism over the last century. He noted that there are affordable housing developments throughout the Downtown area, as well as low-income projects located mostly in the City’s Northwest area. Many have been rehabilitated by replacing older buildings with newer structures, which allows residents to remain in familiar neighborhoods.

Mayor Trantalis continued that while government may not be able to address all types of equity, they may be able to take action regarding projects in areas with documented environmental issues. The City has paid reimbursement to residents in these areas who have suffered due to this practice. At present, no project could be constructed in Fort Lauderdale without appropriate environmental reporting. The City looks for ways to partner with developers and encourage them to spend their investment dollars here.

While affordable housing developments are encouraged in areas where they have not been traditionally located, Mayor Trantalis noted that the demographic group intended to live there, with their specific needs and desires, must be taken into consideration. He

advised that development must also be sensitive to surrounding neighborhoods, some of which may not wish to see tall buildings or increased traffic in their communities.

Ms. Wilkinson requested that the Mayor also address compliance at the City level, which was discussed earlier in the meeting. Mayor Trantalis advised that the City's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) includes a division to monitor compliance by ensuring that residents remain within the affordable average median income (AMI) range over time.

Ms. Nothard requested additional information on efforts to make households aware of affordable housing opportunities, particularly in communities that have traditionally had difficulty accessing these opportunities. She asked if Fort Lauderdale is working on ways to educate the public. Mayor Trantalis replied that a representative of the City Manager's Office could attend the next Committee meeting to present information on outreach programs. The City also supports job training programs so households may seek opportunities to achieve a higher standard of living.

Vice Chair Epstein asked if the Committee could be provided with an estimated number of the affordable units needed within the City, as well as potential ways to meet this goal over a set time frame. Mayor Trantalis stated that the City's goal is for 15% to 20% of its housing stock to be affordable. Real estate consultants have determined that roughly 22% of housing stock is already affordable as defined by AMI. The City Commission is currently entertaining a proposal for an inclusionary zoning Ordinance, which would require market-rate developments to provide a percentage of affordable units in order to receive approval. The intent is to set a balance of affordable and market-rate housing in order to offer the amenities necessary for a sustainable urban environment.

Chair Stewart suggested that although the City's real estate consultants have determined that the goal of 15% to 20% affordable units is being met, this still may not be enough to meet the need for affordable housing in Fort Lauderdale. Ms. Nothard added that the Committee should also look into ensuring quality as well as quantity of affordable housing developments. She reiterated the importance of reaching out to historically disadvantaged communities to make them aware of housing opportunities.

The Committee addressed accessory dwelling units, with Chair Stewart recalling that these were not included in the presentation at the January 2021 meeting. Accessory dwelling units had been part of an earlier discussion between the Committee and the City Commission, with consideration of size requirements and restrictions of these units, as well as the neighborhoods in which they could be located. Mayor Trantalis replied that while there had been resistance from some City neighborhoods due to the potential for overcrowding, other communities embraced the possibility of increasing the value of their real estate by adding square footage to the site. He concluded that he would bring more information back at a subsequent meeting.

V. AGENDA TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING

Chair Stewart noted that the following items would be discussed further at the next meeting:

- Outreach to Urban Design and Planning for information on compliance
- Determine if there are opportunities to enhance equitable access to affordable housing
- Continue discussion of accessory dwelling units

Mayor Trantalis recommended reaching out to CRA Manager Clarence Woods for additional information on CRA compliance programs.

The Mayor left the meeting at 10:02 a.m.

Ms. Wilkinson stated that she hoped to schedule a presentation by the City's new Economic Development Director at the next Committee meeting.

VI. GOOD OF THE ORDER

Ms. Wilkinson reported that a City rental assistance program was provided with over \$1 million in governmental funds through the Florida Housing Finance program. These funds were successfully spent by December 30, 2020. Assistance was provided to 245 Fort Lauderdale households that demonstrated need for mortgage, rental, or utility funds from March 2020-December 2020. There is still a great need for rental, mortgage, and utility assistance within Fort Lauderdale. Broward County also received direct funding from the U.S. Treasury for emergency rental assistance.

Mr. Parke asked if the Committee can encourage the City to address the needs of homeless veterans. Chair Stewart noted that United Way's Mission United program provides direct assistance to veterans, including emergency housing, case management, legal aid, and other forms of emergency assistance.

Ms. Wilkinson concluded that the City has not received any State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) dollars in fiscal year (FY) 2020-2021. She strongly encouraged the Committee members, however, to reach out to their representatives and encourage support in FY 2021-2022. SHIP funds create jobs within communities, provide support for low-income households, and fund housing rehabilitation, among other needs. While the Governor has indicated support for full SHIP funding, his proposed budget must be approved by the State House and State Senate.

VII. NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING DATE – March 8, 2021

It was noted that all meetings would be held virtually throughout 2021, with the option to resume in-person meetings if desired.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 10:19 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.]