

ESCAMBIA-PENSACOLA AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

November 09, 2021

A regular meeting of the Escambia-Pensacola Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) was held in the Whibbs Meeting Room, 1st Floor of Pensacola City Hall, 420 W. Chase Street, Pensacola, Florida on November 09, 2021 at 9:00 AM.

Committee members present: Ed Brown, Laura Gilmore, Council Vice President Ann Hill, John Ralls, Crystal Scott, Paul Ritz, Renee Wilhoit, and Justin Williams

Committee members absent: Cecily Chundriek, Escambia County Commissioner Lumon May, and Heidi Palmquist

Staff members present: Meredith Reeves, Neighborhood Enterprise Division (NED) Manager, Neighborhood and Human Services Department, Escambia County; Melissa Crews, Escambia County NED; Timothy Evans, Escambia County NED; Clara Long, Escambia County Neighborhood and Human Services Department Director; Marcie Whitaker, City of Pensacola Housing Director; Tracy Pickens, City of Pensacola Housing; Christine Crespo, City of Pensacola Housing

Call to Order and Welcome and Roll Call:

Chair Crystal Scott called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. She proceeded with the introductory roll call of members present, after which she acknowledged that there was a quorum established.

Proof of Publication:

Notice of the meeting was published in the *Pensacola News Journal*. Notice of the meeting was also published on the City & County respective websites.

Board Minutes:

Crystal Scott asked if all present members reviewed the minutes of the October 27, 2021 meeting. Paul Ritz made the motion to accept the minutes as written. Justin Williams seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

County and City Affordable Housing Incentive Plan Report Overview:

Crystal Scott asked Meredith Reeves to review the proposed County Incentive Plan point by point, highlighting the changes recommended in this year's review. On reviewing *Incentive J*, discussion was raised regarding a reasonable time to allow the County staff to develop and review the surplus property list. Justin Williams made a motion to include within the recommendation for *Incentive J* that the list should be available June 2022. The motion was seconded by Ann Hill and passed unanimously.

Paul Ritz then moved for the committee to approve the newly amended County Incentive Plan and forward the plan to the County Commission for consideration. Ed Brown seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The City's draft plan was then presented by Tracy Pickens. Following the point-by-point review of the *Incentives*, there was some discussion of proposing Additional Recommendations for the City of

Pensacola Incentive Plan. There was consensus to recommend the investigation of ‘linkage fees’ attached to real estate transactions to establish a locally-based affordable housing trust fund. There was also consensus to have the City staff review and update the lien release policy, to include making the lien release process available to individuals who purchase property with the intention of building affordable housing (current policy references the lien release as available to for-profit and non-profit developers of affordable housing).

Lastly there was discussion regarding the opportunity for developers of affordable housing to request individual waivers from required compliance with the City CRA’s Urban Design Overlay District in developing new affordable units. Ann Hill made a motion to include such a ‘request for waiver’ opportunity as an Additional Recommendation to the City Incentive Plan. The motion was seconded by Paul Ritz and passed unanimously.

Following the completion of amendments to the City Incentive Plan, Paul Ritz made the motion to approve the amended plan and forward it to the City Council for consideration.

Old Business:

In considering the first two items of old business listed (County Lien Release Policy, County Surplus Land Process) the committee recognized that there had been questions raised in previous discussions which would be best answered by other County department staff members representing specific departments (code enforcement and property). Paul Ritz made a motion to table the items for a later time, and requested arrangements be made for the aforementioned staff to make presentations to the Committee at a future meeting, perhaps after the holidays. Ed Brown seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The last item of Old Business, that of Linkage Fees, is being investigated by Marcie Whitaker. She is aware of other municipalities around the State that have instituted such instruments to establish local trust funds. She will bring results to a future meeting.

New Business:

As there was no New Business on today’s agenda, the Committee reviewed the process for the Public Hearing to review the Incentive Plans. The Hearing is scheduled for next Tuesday, the 16th at 9:00 am in the Hagler Mason Conference Room of Pensacola City Hall.

Public Comment:

A citizen present posed a question with regard to the surplus property list, how many properties have been disposed this year. Meredith Reeves responded that the County has transferred 6 or 7 properties this year.

Another citizen present asked about the meaning of the term, “affordable housing”. Paul Ritz responded that the actual definition of the term as used by the AHAC is defined by statute, and that it varies by household income level and household size. The citizen then asked what the AHAC considered to be the metric for determining ‘success’. Paul Ritz responded again. He stated that the AHAC’s role is to advise the elected officials of the City and County regarding strategies around affordable housing. As long as they have made the recommendations, working in good faith, they should consider the AHAC to be successful.

Another citizen then remarked that the recommendations made by the AHAC may not all be acted upon by the Commission and/or Council. The citizen questioned how there might be greater accountability. Paul Ritz, once again speaking for the AHAC suggested that the citizens themselves have the ability to hold the Council or Commission accountable for whatever progress may be made toward addressing the issues of affordable housing in our community. He thanked those present for their interest evidenced through their attendance at the AHAC meeting and encouraged them to make sure they also speak with their elected officials directly.

A final speaker in the Public Comment section asked for information regarding the *Incentive* recommendations regarding ‘accessory units’, and whether the term had anything to do with general accessibility. Paul Ritz answered that the accessory units discussed earlier are small rental units located on the same property as a single-family home. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are detached from the main building on a parcel. They are allowed within City neighborhoods to provide opportunities for additional affordable rental units for the community’s residents.

The questioner followed the first question with one regarding the issues of accessibility and housing. Paul Ritz replied that such issues are addressed in detail in federal and state legislation as well as in local building code. Further, if there is any public concern over accessibility of housing, anyone could find support with local fair housing organizations, including City and County housing departments.

Announcements/written communications:

The Public Hearing to review proposed initiatives and receive public comment is scheduled for November 16, 2021 at 9:00 am in the Hagler Mason Conference Room of Pensacola City Hall.

Adjournment:

There being no further business or discussion, the meeting adjourned at 9:55 am.

Respectfully submitted by: Timothy Evans

Pending Approval