

Asheville Affordable Housing Advisory Committee
November 13, 2014
Meeting Notes

Attending Members: Laura Simmelink, Barber Melton, Randall Barnett, Mae Creadick, Robin Raines, Jay Gurney, James Matsrogiacomo

Guests: Laura Collins, Paul Reeves, Greg Borom

Attending Staff: Jeff Staudinger, Heather Dillashaw, Sandra Anderson, Shannon Capezzali, Alan Glines, Jonathon Jones

Meeting Notes

Robin Raines made a motion to approve the October 2, 2014 meeting minutes. This was seconded by Mae Creadick, and unanimously approved.

Updates

Housing Trust Fund Report: There will be a projected \$213,922.25 available at the end of the year. Program income was higher this month, as a few annual interest payments were received.

The Pisgah View/Deaverview Road mediation scheduled for Friday, November 14th with a trial date in December.

Unfinished Business

Housing density in commercial districts: Staff is interviewing developers regarding housing density in commercial districts with positive feedback. Presentations will be made to HCD on Thursday, November 20th, P&Z during the first week of December and City Council later in December.

Council Work Session: Jeff debriefed the Committee on the recent City Council Work Session dedicated to affordable housing. He reported that the Council is committed to making affordable housing part of a strategy to break the cycle of poverty and unanimous on all action items. Management is looking for the advisory committees to have active work plans. The previous AHAC work plan focused on outreach, but objectives and recommendation need to be established to inform Council's strategic planning process for the coming year.

Jeff led the Committee in reviewing the action items.

1. *Are we ready to strategically prioritize the relocation of City facilities to pursue mixed-use project and affordable housing developments?*

Jeff reported that Council feedback was in the affirmative and that this mainly involves internal processes. Mae Creadick affirmed that the item is one of AHAC's highest priorities, allowing the City to make properties useful by selecting developers with focused plans for affordable one bedroom units. The Committee's previous recommendation was for an RFP process by the City when a site is ready. Randall Barnett pointed out the possibility of Buncombe County and Asheville City Parks Maintenance merging at some point.

2. *Are we ready to consider UDO and other regulatory changes to increase housing density and otherwise encourage affordable housing production?*

Jeff stated that Council's consensus was, "Yes, in every zoning district." Barbara Melton expressed caution about where to increase density and in which neighborhoods. It would work in some, but not others.

Jeff mentioned Council member Pelly's statement on including infrastructure such as sidewalks in any plan to increase density. Barbara responded that sidewalks were good, but that not everyone wants them and that there is more to infrastructure than sidewalks. Laura Simmelink pointed out that that density increases does not mean dumping hundreds of people into areas. Mae affirmed that density increases helps create mixed income communities and serves as another high priority.

Alan Glines, Interim Planning Director shared that neighborhood are now seeing infill. Few are involved in extra units for rental as most increase is in demand for creating single family units.

Jay advocated changing setback restrictions for accessory apartments. Barbara stated that vacation rentals are also a concern related to accessory apartments. Jeff pointed out that the forthcoming market analysis will help inform that priority and allow the evaluation of housing need beyond lines on a map.

3. *Are we ready to focus financial and staff resources to maximize the return on housing production?*

Jeff shared that Council responded in the affirmative. With the local economy in an upswing, they are moving toward fully funding the HTF. Right now, though, \$1 million provides about 100 affordable units, so non-cash incentives for developers have become more important. In a hot market like Asheville, affordable housing does not happen without some sort of subsidy.

4. *What are the attributes we seek in development?*

Jeff answered Randall's question as to whether the desired attributes would become policy by stating that establishing tools like an RFP process to encourage competition, diversity and specific outcomes. Suggestions from the group included providing living wage jobs, environmental justice, hiring locally or committing 5% of units to house homeless individuals. Jay recommended further brainstorming to detail those preferred attributes.

5. *Are we ready to move to adopt standards to guide the City resource contributions to affordable housing development?*

Jeff stated that there is no consensus on this. The question becomes a matter of who can afford the units and how long are they going to be affordable.

6. *Should we strengthen incentives that will result in affordable and "workforce" housing development in our Innovation Districts and other locationally efficient areas in the City?*

Jeff shared that Council is really embracing this. They want to “grow up, not out,” in a way that is both diverse and financial viable. Mae asked whether the current density incentives are working and what could be improved. Jeff responded that the AHAC should review those and that there is consideration to separate green building incentives from affordable housing. Other changes include removing the requirement in the Land Use Incentive Grant to hold the City harmless and linking infrastructure improvements to development projects.

7. *Are we ready to consider strategies to prevent gentrification such as community land trusts, live-work housing, cooperative housing and strategic land banking?*

Jeff stated that Council is glad to partner with the community, if the community initiates the activity. Mae asked about the City’s role as a property owner pursuing these activities. Jeff noted that there would be caution in doing so due to political challenges, citing the failure of a cohousing project that is now Carney Place.

8. *Are we ready to move forward with policy decisions regarding the impact of short-term rentals on affordable housing, as soon as sufficient data and evidence is available to guide that policy?*

Jeff reported that Council is ready to move forward, but they want more data and the research shows that other cities simply have diverse responses to short-term rentals.

New Business

Outreach and CAN meeting: Jeff shared that Gordon Smith has asked about the next public engagement opportunity and suggested that the HCD is looking for input on targeted outreach. Barbara agreed that AHAC’s PowerPoint contributed to civil and productive CAN meeting. Jeff proposed that the Committee consider where to present the PowerPoint next and how this might dovetail with the outreach happening during the current Consolidated Plan process.

Next Meeting. Thursday, December 4, 2014.