

# **AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, March 28, 2024**

The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee conducted a virtual meeting on **Thursday, March 28, 2024**, via Communications Media Technology (CMT).

**CALL TO ORDER** by Cheryl Cioffari at 10:05 a.m.

**ROLL CALL** by Cheryl Cioffari

### **AHAC MEMBERS**

Commissioner Craig Cates	Present
Tim Root	Absent
Kurt Lewin	Present
Chris Todd Young	Present
Doug Mader	Present
Joseph Scarpelli	Present
Joe Walsh	Present
Catherine Felton	Present
Paul Caceres	Absent
Pam Caputo	Present

### **STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT**

Cheryl Cioffari, Assistant Director of Planning  
Nathalia Mellies Archer, Assistant County Attorney  
Debra Roberts, Senior Coordinator Planning Commission

### **CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

None.

### **AGENDA ITEMS:**

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion:** Joseph Scarpelli made a motion to approve the December 12, 2021 and December 22, 2023 minutes. Douglas Mader seconded the motion. There was no opposition. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **REVIEW AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO SECTION III LHAP INCENTIVE STRATEGIES VIA A RESOLUTION PURSUANT TO F.S. 420.9076; DISCUSS INCOME RANGE AND DISCUSS SETBACKS AND PARKING FOR WORKFORCE AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The LHAP (Local Housing Assistance Plan) was shared with the committee as background information for additional discussions regarding alternative ways to facilitate and improve affordable housing.

Cheryl Cioffari invited comments and suggestions from the Committee regarding the LHAP and suggestions on how to improve the affordable housing process. Joseph Scarpelli explained a situation that he is currently dealing with, where the legal review process of the affordable housing deed restriction has taken months and remains ongoing. Even with the County's deed restriction templates provided, it is still a lengthy process. Ms. Cioffari asked for examples of comments received from the legal review in order to discuss it with the attorney and find possible solutions to streamline the review for affordable projects. Joe Walsh agreed to these challenges and asked to explore ways to streamline and expedite this process and avoid unnecessary delays and complications. Mr. Scarpelli added that even something as simple as a fillable document will be very helpful. Ms. Cioffari mentioned that this directly ties in to expedited permitting, which is a provision included in the LHAP.

Ms. Cioffari asked for additional comments from the Committee and used an example of the Density Flexibility strategy. A couple of years ago the County had provided Goal 111 to increase density, however that Ordinance failed, and have since seen an increase in site specific text amendments to the Comprehensive Plan to allow for affordable housing. Mr. Walsh mentioned that some of the affordable housing developments are looking at the Live Local Act as having preempted the County, in terms of density strategies.

Mr. Walsh stated that at present, the Inclusionary Housing process is a revenue generator for when you develop non-affordable housing or change a use that you have to add in affordable housing or pay a fee etc. Mr. Walsh inquired if there is a way for a developer to apply for those inclusionary money or rely on those funds to be used to help build affordable housing units. He understands that this is not currently an option, but wanted to know if it should be.

Commissioner Cates expressed his support for that suggestion. Commissioner Cates would like to pursue this option, to determine a legal way to implement it. It will help develop more affordable units and will assist with smaller development projects. Ms. Cioffari clarified that it would only apply to new developments, as well as developments that have market rate units. There could potentially be a funding mechanism that the property owner applies to that will indicate the economic benefit of selling off their market rate units or putting restrictions on the existing units. Commissioner Cates used the example of Wreckers Cay, where the County allowed them to sell off their market rate units for affordable units. Unfortunately, the county does not have the units anymore. This will avoid building more units that will require more employees to operate.

Chris Todd Young mentioned that the Habitat for Humanity board have been discussing their option, considering how little allocation are left, and are interested in being able to use funding to purchase properties that are already built. This is an option for them to continue to build affordable housing, since they won't be able to build new projects on vacant lots.

Ms. Cioffari summarized this discussion as funds that could be applied for to be used to incentivize a property owner, to deed restrict their market rate property for affordable housing. Commissioner Cates confirmed that that was exactly the intension. It would allow to bring the private sector in and keep the government from purchasing property and then trying to work with a developer.

Ms. Pam Caputo mentioned that she does not necessarily understand all of the terminology within this discussion, but as a teacher, this is a very important conversation to have, as there is a desperate need for affordable housing. They are constantly losing teachers and families because they cannot

afford to live in the Keys.

Ms. Todd Young stated that there needs to be a mindset change within the governmental systems, in order to make it easier to allow for affordable housing. To make affordable housing a priority. Ms. Cioffari explained that there are many factors involved including density, zoning restrictions, State restrictions etc, but understands the need to make affordable housing projects happen. Commissioners Cates stated that when it comes to density, there will always be complications, not everyone is in favor of affordable housing, but it is important to come up with ideas and systems to assist with affordable housing.

Catherine Felton stated that we need to change the narrative of affordable housing and remind the public who the community members are who would qualify for affordable housing. Commissioner Cates and Ms. Todd Young agreed with that statement.

Doug Mader asked why we are not looking into additional options that are actually safe, secure and affordable, for example container homes. These homes are built to withstand category 5 hurricanes. Ms. Felton mentioned that there may be some resistance to the aesthetics of the container homes. Ms. Cioffari asked why we are not seeing these structures in the Florida Keys and asked if there is a section in the Florida Building Code that restricts it? Committee members will do additional research on this option.

Mr. Walsh mentioned that a lot of developmental fees are waived for affordable housing, however, variance fees are not waived. Waiving these setbacks and parking variance fees will be a good starting point. There should some flexibility with the parking and setback criteria when it comes to affordable housing (i.e.. require fewer parking spaces etc.). Commissioner Cates stated that there has been ongoing conversation about Dormitory style affordable housing developments. Ms. Cioffari will do further research on the parking requirements for Dormitory style housing.

Mr. Scarpelli mentioned that public transportation directly ties into the parking situation around affordable housing developments, when justifying the reduction in parking spaces. Ms. Cioffari suggested inviting Mr. Richard Clark, Executive Director of Monroe County Transit, to speak to the Committee about the upcoming projects and improvements throughout the County.

Ms. Cioffari will send out options for the next meeting, shortly. Ms. Scarpelli inquired what the process is to move forward on some of these ideas. Ms. Cioffari explained that a resolution will be executed by the Commission, making a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. The BOCC will then review these recommendations and direct staff on any tasks moving forward.

**ADJOURNMENT: 11:40 A.M.**