

# AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Monday, April 22, 2024

**CALL TO ORDER** by Cheryl Cioffari at 1:11 P.M.

**ROLL CALL** by Cheryl Cioffari

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

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

**STAFF:**

Cheryl Cioffari, Assistant Director of Planning  
Nathalia Mellies Archer, Assistant County Attorney  
Ilze Aguila, Sr. Administrator, Operations, Planning & Environmental Resources

**CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

None.

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion:** Kurt Lewin made a motion to approve the March 28, 2024, minutes. Douglas Mader seconded the motion. There was no opposition. The motion passed unanimously.

**DISCUSSION WITH RICHARD CLARK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MONROE COUNTY**

**TRANSIT:**

Richard explained that there are two different ways to think about affordable housing. Simplicity – especially for those areas that are more densely populated, you want to have very easy access to transit. The USDOT shares great mechanisms for the development and growth of affordable housing within a community. Monroe County does not have set “hubs” today, so it requires more forethought when determining where a transit hub is needed. There is a 2-mile zone within that hub that allows access to a funding mechanism “Tax Increment Financing Corporation”. Not only is the interest rate something that is appealing to developers, but the paper, unlike a traditional note that requires refinancing, this funding

can extend between 30-50 years, for the life of the facility that you build. The County serves as the “flow through” for the developer to receive the funding. The biggest challenge is to decide where a transit hub should be located for the development of affordable housing, since we are so limited with property. Transit-oriented development is the single most desirable thing for USDOT to provide funding for.

Commissioner Cates mentioned that it is good to know that public transportation can be added after a development project has been approved. It does not already have to be there. Joseph Scarpelli stated that he would like to see the public transportation system be better utilized throughout the County. The more buses are available, the more public transportation will be used, and it will help alleviate traffic concerns, especially when it comes to larger affordable housing developments. It will also help with parking challenges for these large projects.

Mr. Clark stated that they had just completed the Existing Conditions study, which takes about a year to complete. Intuitively, we know what the problems are, i.e. the service is disconnected, it’s not very frequent etc. We see that Miami-Dade is doing to the bare minimum to secure their funding, and the City of Key West is going above and beyond, however, neither have the ability to really do what is necessary. Ideally you want to see 15 minutes wait times at the bus stop, and we need local service that can transport people from local bus stops to the main transit artery. We have our first local service from Stock Island to Key West, starting in the next 60-90 days. We have applied for a \$5-million Federal Grant, to implement on-demand style local service throughout the Keys. The Commuter service will take time, money and effort, but we have a plan in place. On a good day, you currently see 9 buses going up and down the Keys. Based on what we saw, we realistically need 22 buses.

Mr. Scarpelli mentioned that the general assumption is that with affordable housing developments, there is an increase in traffic. He mentioned it would be interesting to see if an *Easy Pass* toll on the 18-mile stretch would assist in collecting funds for our transit projects. Mr. Clark responded that that approach would require changing some rules in Tallahassee, as we would be tolling U.S.1 which is a state road, and the State likes to keep the funds that they collect.

Mr. Clark explained that, today, all of their Capital Program funding is coming from FDOT and USDOT, and the occasional matching approved by the BOCC. FDOT has asked that we take over the Miami-Dade Service, however, we are not ready yet, but once we are, we will immediately take that over and FDOT will help with the funding of that transition. Before even proposing legislative change, that will require conversations with all the Cities and our community members, as we figure out funding long term.

### **CONTAINER HOUSING UPDATE (COMMITTEE MEMBER DOUG MADER)**

Doug Mader received an estimate from Chris Gratton of Key Contracting Services, Inc. Mr. Mader warned not to be alarmed by this estimate. It is a very preliminary estimate. Mr. Mader also reached out to Vesco, a company that specialized in container homes. One of the owners has offered to attend an AHAC meeting to share more information with the committee.

Mr. Mader also reached out to Back Country Containers. They are currently building container homes in the Bahamas. The estimate provided by Back Country Containers for elevation alone came in much lower than expected. Mr. Mader pointed out the difference in disparity between the two quotes. Mr. Mader will do more homework and come back with more information to share with the committee.

## **DISCUSSION ON HOW TO BEST FACILITATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN MONROE COUNTY:**

### **a. Pay property owners to deed restrict exiting market-rate housing.**

Ms. Cioffari mentioned that she reached out to Chrisine Hurley, Executive Director of the Monroe County Land Authority, who shared some information on how to extrapolate out a potential amount of a buydown price. Ms. Cioffari will look into this information further and come back next month with more details for the committee. One of the things that Ms. Cioffari noticed was the difference between the market rate rents today, vs the numbers used a few years ago when this exercise was done. Ms. Cioffari will work on the calculations and come back with a realistic proposal / calculation for buydown offers. Kurt Lewin asked if we knew how many units throughout the county will have their deed restrictions going away in the next couple of years. Mr. Lewin suggested that there is an opportunity to buy it for a longer term, for the benefit of affordability. Mr. Cates asked Mr. Lewin, a Commercial lender, what he would look at, when approached about a project with a deed restriction on it. Mr. Lewin replied that it all comes down to whether or not the development can provide cashflow. Mr. Lewin mentioned that density is a big problem. If we can add more units because of the affordability, it will help make the economics work better or the development. The developer will collect less rent but if there can be more units, it will balance out. Mr. Lewin mentioned that another approach would be to remove the ROGO units and height restrictions for an affordable housing project, as it will make it easier for developers, if they don't have to find and purchase ROGO allocations. Mr. Lewin confirmed that there will be no concerns if there were deed restrictions on a property.

Ms. Cioffari had a few follow-up questions for the committee following this conversation: Will affordable housing be exempt from ROGO? With regards to deed restrictions in perpetuity, we are currently deed restricting for 99 years. Joe Walsh expressed his concerns regarding the economics around buying down a 99-year deed restricted property. Commissioner Cates stated that the values will have to be more realistic.

### **b. Waive fees for application types.**

Mr. Walsh mentioned that there did not seem a lot of support for any change to the Variance procedures. Commissioner Cates stated that it was also discussed to prioritize affordable housing projects to help speed up the process. Ms. Cioffari summarized the discussion by stating that it appears that the committee is interested in, through direction by the BOCC, revising the requirements for off-street parking spaces as it relates to affordable housing and to modify setbacks. Mr. Walsh stated that he still believes there is an opportunity for dormitory style, as it is in some cases, an appealing project and much more affordable to build, however, at present, the County Code does not allow

that. Ms. Cioffari clarified that is it not prohibited; however, each room of the dormitory is considered its own ROGO, and that may potentially be prohibitive for a developer to use all of those units to build a dormitory. Commissioner Cates inquired about how many families will be allowed in each ROGO unit. Ms. Cioffari stated that it is not based on families, it is primarily based on the number of adults who are earning an income. Commissioner Cates stated that we should be able to find a balance for a dormitory style project, still using the income scale. ROGO's will be the main restriction on this. Mr. Walsh stated that affordable housing is currently prohibited in V-zones, which is another challenge. He mentioned that since a development will have to elevate structures regardless, he does not believe that the FEMA insurance rates will be a factor, which was the main reason why this prohibition was enforced. Ms. Cioffari will look at the code and do some additional research on this.

### **c. Exemption from ROGO for Affordable Housing**

A committee member suggested the committee consider the exemption of affordable housing from the County's ROGO. Ms. Cioffari clarified that this request would exempt affordable housing developments from ROGO requirements and allocation procedures. Commissioner Cates mentioned that this will all be discussed during the upcoming ROGO workshops. Mr. Cates stated that when we request or accept allocations from the state, we could always request more of those units to be allocated as affordable units. Ms. Cioffari mentioned the ROGO presentation by Emily Schemper at the last BOCC hearing and said that the Committee needs to think about the categories for these potential units, and also consider if those allocations should go to individual sites, i.e. neighborhood infill or if they should be prioritized to more dense affordable housing. This should be tied into the conversation that was just had with Richard Clark as it relates to transportation and establishing transportation hubs.

### **d. Parking for affordable housing.**

This was discussed earlier in the meeting, but Ms. Cioffari is doing some additional research on dormitory style parking and what the standards are.

The next AHAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 22, 2024, at 1 P.M.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No comments received from the public.

**ADJOURNMENT** 2:14 P.M.