



Affordable Housing Advisory Commission Meeting

February 19, 2020

7:00 PM

Town Hall



Present: Chairman Quinton Harper, Cain Twyman, Terri Buckner, Betty Curry, Rebecca Buzzard, Staff Liaison
Absent: Council Member Damon Seils, Gabe Viñas, Amy Singleton
Guests: Erika Brandt, Orange County Housing and Community Development Manager, Rachel Eberhard, Principal with Apiary Community Consulting, Corey Root, Partnership to End Homelessness Director, Ron Garcia-Fogarty, Interpreter, Jim Yankaskas, Community Member

I. Welcome

Chairman Quinton Harper welcomed everyone and guests introduced themselves.

II. Consider Approval of January Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Terri Buckner and seconded by Cain Twyman. Voted all in favor.

III. HOME Presentation and Feedback

Erika Brandt introduced herself and provided an overview of HOME. The Consolidated Plan is a five-year document required by HUD and is intended to guide the use of HOME funding. It sets priorities and goals and earmarks resources. (Slides were attached to the agenda item on the advisory commission section of the Town's website.) Brandt noted that public comments received during their presentations will be addressed directly in the Plan. The AHAC discussed how HOME funds interact with the AHSRF funds and budget as well as the intricacies of applying for HOME funds.

Rachel Eberhard then led the AHAC in an activity to solicit their feedback which will be addressed in the Plan. Buckner asked how they will get survey responses from those who don't use computers or don't speak English. Eberhard responded surveys are available in Spanish and Burmese. Translators are available at presentations. They are also widely distributing the survey through the Towns and Libraries, and all housing and non-profit providers. Betty Curry complimented the staff on addressing the refugee community. Brandt said the survey is designed to be short and those taking the survey should be able to quickly fill it out. Buckner countered that she felt the survey could take 30 minutes for some individuals. Buckner noted that Orange Literacy could review the surveys to let organizers know if they are community appropriate. Eberhard also said that the draft Plan will provide opportunity for additional community feedback.

IV. Presentation from Partnership to End Homelessness

Corey Root presented the Partnership to End Homelessness' data report and stated that their mission is focused on getting people into housing. (Slides were attached to agenda item on the advisory commission section of the Town's website.) Root noted in her presentation that the IFC shelter is at capacity – the average stay is over 400 days. If they could decrease the stay to 40 days, the shelter could serve 10 times as many people.

Root also presented the funding gap for all homelessness services. Buckner asked if gap funding – of which the Town’s share would be over \$200,000 in the first year – would come out of the Town’s Affordable Housing Special Revenue Fund. Rebecca Buzzard explained that in FY19-20 a little over \$35,000 was provided to the Partnership to End Homelessness. Buckner said she was concerned that an increase in funding to support the Partnership to End Homelessness would come from the AHSRF, which currently does not have sufficient funding to support the gaps, and other community affordable housing projects. Root replied that the lack of affordable housing is the leading cause of homelessness and that homelessness is an affordable housing issue. Buckner said that the AHSRF provides funds to support households at risk of losing their housing as well as to provide housing to those who currently do not have secure, affordable housing. Root acknowledged the importance of the current use of AHSRF funds. She added that there are many studies about ending homelessness which show a clear path to success. However, studies on homelessness prevention are less clear on best practices and the path to success.

Harper asked for more detail about the Youth Host program – which identifies housing for teens who have been displaced, specifically the teen LGBTQ population. Root explained the Youth Host program and said that the Durham LGBTQ Center operates it. Buckner then asked how much it would cost to fund the proposed Memorial Program. Root responded the program would cost \$5,000. Buckner volunteered to work on getting grants to help set up the Memorial Program fund.

Harper asked about federal funding sources for affordable housing. Root replied that current sources – TANF, CDBG, CSBG— are currently maxed and that robust communities braid these funding sources together. Twyman inquired about the cost of Rapid Rehousing. Root responded Rapid Rehousing would cost over \$1M a year.

Curry stated that homelessness is a direct result of owner/landlord and tenant disputes as well as a lack of compassion. She added that new developments often displace low-income people – she asked if Root has a program to help people affected by displacement. Curry added that stipulations (such as making 3 times your pay check, eviction history, etc.) for displaced people trying to acquire new housing make getting housed very difficult. Root affirmed Curry’s comments and said that Coordinated Entry staff work with County and Town staff and their respective funds to stabilize housing. For instance, the AHSRF funds are used for rental/utility deposit assistance. She also noted that the Housing Access Coordinator position, which the Town helps to support, works to engage landlords and develop relationships with them. These relationships can encourage the landlords to work with tenants before launching the eviction process.

Twyman asked how the AHAC can help with homelessness, outside of the identified budget items. Root said that there is strong regional collaboration but that talking about the gaps and sharing information is very important. Messaging is important. Buckner asked if Rapid Rehousing is established, where would people be housed? Root responded that if the program is fully funded it is possible to have enough housing in Orange County and surrounding counties.

V. Fair Housing Workshop Update

The AHAC discussed final details about the Fair Housing/Housing Discrimination workshop. Buckner circulated the work plan sign-up sheet for distributing workshop information. In addition, Buzzard will email flyers and invite attendees. The AHAC discussed having tables available for interested nonprofits and discussed which nonprofits have been contacted. Harper and Viñas will reach out to interpreters.

Singleton was assigned to the kids and food tables and Curry will work the registration table. Harper said that IFC Project Activate can volunteer as well.

VI. Prioritizing Affordable Housing Strategies – Mobile Home Park Displacement

Due to time constraints this item was touched on briefly and deferred to a future meeting.

VII. Additional comments/updates/questions

An affordable housing review is possible on the Historic Rogers Road HR-MU in March. CASA will request renewal of their CUP extension for the Merritt Mill Road development on February 25th and appointments to the AHAC will also occur at the February 25th Town Council meeting.

VIII. Next Regular meeting on March 18, 2020

Twyman made a motion to adjourn. Buckner seconded the motion. Voted all in favor.