



Affordable Housing Advisory Commission Meeting

December 18, 2019

7:00 PM

Town Hall



Present: Chairman Quinton Harper, Betty Curry, Terri Buckner, Cain Twyman, Gabe Viñas, Amy Singleton
Also present: Council Liaison, Barbara Foushee; Town Liaison, Rebecca Buzzard, Town Staff, Anne-Marie Vanaman

Guests: Omar Zinn and Adam Zinn of Parker Louis Development; Deanna Overman, Piedmont Sundial

I. Welcome

Chairman Quinton Harper welcomed the AHAC and guests and noted that this was the last meeting for Town Council Liaison, Barbara Foushee. She will now represent the Town on the board of Community Home Trust. Council member Damon Seils will serve as the Board Liaison to the AHAC. He thanked Foushee for her service.

II. Consider Approval of November Meeting Minutes

Terri Buckner made a motion to approve the November 20, 2019 meeting minutes. Amy Singleton seconded the motion. Voted all in favor to approve.

III. Guest Omar & Adam Zinn

Omar Zinn provided background about his experience with building affordable housing in Carrboro. In 2001 the Larkspur development was the first inclusionary zoning community in Carrboro. The market for these single-family Community Home Trust homes was strong. However, when the market collapsed in the 2008 Great Recession, their affordable Community Home Trust units in the 78-lot Claremont subdivision were slow to sell and their company lost money.

When Claremont South was being built, they chose not to utilize the land trust model but instead built size-limited homes (1100-1350 square feet or less) as required by the Town's LUO. These homes would be more affordable at initial purchase due to their smaller size. He noted that their current community, Kentfield, took 2.5 years to rezone and will have 5 size-limited homes. He also noted that it is difficult to sell land trust homes in smaller neighborhoods, such as Kentfield.

Buckner said that she did not believe that new construction was the answer to the affordable housing gap due to its high cost. She would prefer to see more efforts being made to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing, including apartment complexes.

Betty Curry raised her concern that the term "affordable housing" was used too loosely, especially in relation to size-limited homes. She questioned how African-Americans, who suffered under restrictive housing policies, were affected, and whether their only options were public housing and Section 8. She also spoke about who is entitled to affordable housing.

Harper agreed that "size limited housing is not affordable," and Adam Zinn asked for his definition of affordability. Harper replied that housing is affordable if it costs no more than 30% of the gross income for households earning 60% AMI or less.

Omar Zinn said that with the right incentives, they can build affordable housing developments but that it doesn't work with their business model; they can't make enough money. He suggested increasing the density bonus, allowing for an expedited review process for builders of affordable housing, and adding fee and permit waivers.

Singleton asked if these incentives would persuade them to build housing with ground leases to ensure affordability. Adam Zinn replied yes, if the incentives were enough to drive down the construction costs.

Discussion turned to Carrboro's review process. Omar Zinn said the Town's process is slow and bureaucratic which translates into higher costs. He suggested the Town consider streamlining the process as well as consider granting funds to private builders of affordable housing.

Omar Zinn said he and his brother came to present the perspective of a for-profit builder of homes and neighborhoods and how they can be encouraged to build more deed-restricted affordable housing. He reiterated that early on, they could afford to create affordable homes, but after 2008, it was no longer financially viable for their company. They would prefer to build affordable housing versus size-limited, but they must look in the "toolbox," i.e. incentives, to see how feasible it is. Harper thanked them for coming and the Zinns left the meeting.

IV. Consideration of Rental/Utility Assistance Short Form application

Anne-Marie Vanaman presented the short form application for rental and utility deposit assistance for nonprofits applying for on behalf of individuals. The short form application would ensure the Town receives the information it needs while streamlining the process for nonprofits. Buckner made a motion to approve the short form application. Viñas seconded the motion. Voted all in favor to recommend that the Town Council consider approving the short form application.

V. AHAC Chair and Vice-Chair Annual Election

Harper began the election with calls for nominations for the AHAC vice chair position. Buckner nominated Amy Singleton. Twyman nominated herself. Harper nominated himself.

Singleton expressed that she would be honored to serve out her last term on the AHAC as vice chair and cited her experience at Community Home Trust. She also stated her desire to achieve a cohesive, inclusive process in the creation of affordable housing.

Twyman indicated a desire to dive deeper into affordable housing and to focus on putting processes into practice. She wished to focus on homelessness and creating and stabilizing housing for those who earn 50% AMI or less.

Harper acknowledged that his service as Chair thus far has been a labor of love but wished to step down from Chair so another can step up. He cited his focus areas: (1) developing priority affordable housing strategies with the help of AHAC subcommittees; (2) assessing the current LUO as a vehicle to encourage affordable housing; and (3) advocating for senior affordable housing.

Viñas seconded the nomination for Twyman. Curry seconded the nominations of all three candidates. Harper seconded the nomination for Singleton.

Harper called for a vote on the vice chair position. Buckner, Singleton, and Curry voted for Singleton. Viñas, Harper, and Twyman voted for Twyman. No votes were cast for Harper. Since the 7-member AHAC currently has only 6 seats filled, the vote was tied.

The AHAC decided to turn to the chair election. Harper called for nominations for the position of chair. Viñas nominated Harper and Twyman seconded the nomination. Singleton nominated Buckner and Curry seconded the nomination. Harper reiterated his desire to step back to support new leadership but said he believed he had the experience and leadership to serve as chair again. Buckner stated that she does not want the position, leaving Harper as the only candidate.

Harper called for a vote. All voted in favor of Harper for the chair position.

Discussion returned to the two remaining candidates for the vice chair position and another vote was called. The votes remained the same and the AHAC decided to break the tie with a later vote, when the new, 7th AHAC member is on board.

VI. Community Conversations for Fair Housing Workshop

Curry and Buckner presented information about the Fair Housing Workshop they have been developing. The Fair Housing Project of Legal Aid NC will conduct the workshop and provide materials while the AHAC will handle logistics and publicity. The workshop will target tenants throughout Orange County, including public housing residents. After discussion, the AHAC determined that Saturday, March 28th from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm at the Carrboro Century Center was the best date and location for the workshop.

The AHAC also discussed the agenda and materials. Both Curry and Harper expressed their hope that the workshop would be inclusive for Spanish speaking attendees. Buzzard noted that the Town has translation equipment, and Viñas volunteered to look into having a translator, trained in simultaneous translation, to assist.

Harper wanted to ensure that participants would have the opportunity to share their experiences and have sufficient time to have their questions answered. He also wanted to ensure that the workshop materials were accessible to differing learning styles and abilities.

It was agreed that the 2 hour workshop would be offered in English, with simultaneous Spanish translation, and that the agenda and materials would be shared with the AHAC prior to the workshop.

VII. Review of Draft Affordable Housing Quarterly Report

Buzzard shared the template and content for a quarterly Affordable Housing report which will be included on the Town Council agenda in January. The AHAC discussed briefly and Harper thanked staff for their work on the report.

VIII. Review of Prioritizing Affordable Housing Strategies Exercise Results

Buzzard presented the top 3 results from the exercise last month: mobile home displacement policy, Town-owned land, and a rapid acquisition process. Due to time constraints, Harper asked to table the discussion for the next meeting.

IX. Additional comments/updates/questions

Harper recapped items for the February agenda: AHAC housing expert position, housing priority discussion, debrief from conversation with Omar Zinn, review of funding applications.

Census 2020

Buzzard announced that there is an outreach committee for the upcoming Census. Outreach is being conducted to ensure historically undercounted populations are aware of the 2020 Census and have the opportunity to be counted.

Twyman made a motion to close the meeting. Viñas seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The meeting ended at 9:02 p.m.