



**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
501 North Anderson Street, Ellensburg WA 98926**

MINUTES OF ELLENSBURG CITY AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMISSION

Date and Time: Affordable Housing Commission meeting, August 5, 2020 - 4:30 p.m.

Place of Meeting: Remote meeting held via Zoom

Present: Mayor Bruce Tabb, Hannah Tower, Dolores Gonzalez, Charli Sorenson, John Perrie (joined at 4:41 pm)

Absent: Sarah Bedsaul, Nathan McQuinn

Others Present: Planning Manager, Jamey Ayling; Community Development Director Kirsten Sackett, representatives from Habitat for Humanity

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Tabb called the meeting to order at 4:33 pm.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Gonzalez made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Tower seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – July 15, 2020

Commissioner Sorenson moved to approve the minutes of July 15, 2020. Commissioner Tower seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

4. NEW BUSINESS

a. Introduce Habitat for Humanity Program serving King and Kittitas Counties

Chairman Tabb welcomed staff from the newly merged Habitat for Humanity program. Those in attendance introduced themselves, including Brett D'Antonio, the Executive Director of Habitat, Bill Grady, Patrick Sullivan, Ryan Donahue, and Delano Palmer who moved over from the Kittitas board.

D'Antonio provide a brief introduction to the Habitat program. He said they do have a land trust program, and they have sweat equity program for all their projects. Most of their programs serve 80% AMI and below. He shared some capacity numbers, with over 400 new construction units, 246 repairs, 59 resales, and 185 homes in the pipeline. He also shared some of the facts specific to Kittitas County Habitat prior to the July 1 merger. D'Antonio explained that the partnership has one single board of directors to oversee both areas. This merger will be a great savings to the organization, as it has allowed them to

consolidate all of the overhead, including admin, accounting, legal, loan origination, construction and project development, fund development. The cost savings will go towards home production. There will still be two separate logos, as they still have two separate organizations registered with the State. July 1 is the fiscal year start. D'Antonio shared some of their goals for the first year:

- Acquire property to build affordable land trust homes
- Leverage public funding with private local donors
- Relocate store to larger location to better serve the community
- Launch an expanded home repair program – critical home repair, home preservation and aging in place.

Sullivan said that they are very excited to merge the two counties and develop new opportunities to create new affordable housing.

D'Antonio said they will build whatever density is allowed by the zoning, including townhomes, and multifamily, etc.

Palmer said that the local group is pretty excited for the opportunities to go after some grants, and want to be able to step up to the plate when opportunities arise.

Commissioner Gonzalez asked about their 12 month goals. She wanted to know what else they were looking to do. D'Antonio responded that they are close to finalizing a staff position for an Area Director in the Kittitas area. The position will focus on outreach and fundraising. Sullivan and Grady will be looking for new properties, and they are also looking to develop the repair program.

Commissioner Sorenson asked if the real estate will be looking for any properties in Upper Kittitas County – Cle Elum, Roslyn, Ronald, as there is a great need up there. The response from D'Antonio is that they will look everywhere. Tower asked how COVID has impacted the work that they are able to do, especially with sweat equity being such an important part of the program. D'Antonio said that Affordable Housing has had a waiver from the beginning to continue the work, however, the number of volunteers has been much lower.

Gonzalez asked if they have looked into Tiny Homes. They have not done that, but other affiliate have done that. If it is something that is permitted, it is something that they would be happy to look at. Gonzalez said she would like to have them back for future meetings.

Tabb asked about their recruitment and outreach for finding eligible applicants. That will be spearheaded by the new Area Director. As soon as the position is filled, they will launch that aspect of the program.

Tabb thanked the Habitat representatives for their attendance. With the impact of COVID, the cost burden for folks in Kittitas is the second highest in the state. There is a major concern here in the County about how to keep folks in their homes.

5. OLD BUSINESS

- a. Review an information sheet for applications outside of the formal RFP process.**

Planning Manager displayed on the screen the brochure that he had developed after the feedback he had received at the last meeting. The Commission had decided to retain the old application form that they had developed for the RFP process. The intent of the brochure is to provide a brief explanation of how funding will be made available for potential projects.

Tabb said that we are looking for feedback for what is included. Is it concise? Is it understandable?

Gonzalez asked if it will just be on the website? Will it be a handout page in itself? Ayling said that it could be easily made available on the website, with a hyperlink that takes you directly to the application. He could also create a handout.

Gonzalez said that one thing that worked really well in the past was to hold a pre-application meeting with the applicants prior to actual submittal. She thinks it might be a good idea to add that to the summary.

Sorenson said she is a little concerned about the term used to describe the application form. She wants to cut out the verbiage “city sales tax funding”. It doesn’t really matter for the applicants where the money comes from.

Tabb said the money spent is constrained to serve specific populations. At what point in the conversation would this come up in the conversation? Ayling said this is important and would want to share it up front. He said they could add a “Who is Eligible” or “Populations Eligible” to rent. There was discussion on the need to be really clear that this is not an application to find affordable housing. This is to build or renovate affordable housing. Tabb asked if there have been conversations about retaining affordable housing. Sorenson said that they have had conversations about this, but the Commission has heard of little interest from the local community to convert market rate housing into affordable. There was discussion on what the funds can actually be used for.

Tabb liked that it was one page and fairly straight forward and wouldn’t overwhelm someone looking at it.

Gonzalez thinks that the previously-developed matrix should be referenced in the summary. Those points will be used to evaluate applications – so they know up front how the applications are weighed. There was discussion on perhaps having a link to the scoring matrix, and Gonzalez said the matrix was already found at the end of the existing RFP application.

Tower thinks it could be helpful to reference it, but it could be part of the initial discussion with staff. She does think there should be reference to the specific populations that need to be served.

Tabb asked the commission what they would like to do at this point and if staff intends to utilize pre app meetings as part of the application process. Director Sackett explained how these were addressed during the 2019 RFP process in terms of the meetings with just city staff initially, not outside agencies, and bringing the applicant in for a meeting to discuss the project specifics. It is thought that this was very helpful to the applicant and keeps them from getting too far into a project that isn’t feasible and staff would expect to continue offering these meetings with future applications.

Sorenson asked if there is a need to include the date that the voters passed the ballot measure. Ayling said not necessarily, but it was just to provide a statement of the commitment to provide affordable housing. If more room is needed for other stuff, this information can be minimized. Sorenson asked if this is intended to go on the Affordable Housing website. She believes that the background information is already found on the website. We could just link over to that page.

Tabb summarized that we could simplify the brochure by taking out information that is found in other locations.

Gonzalez asked the question about how many applications were submitted on line vs physically dropped off to the office last year. Director Sacket answered her question that it was believed that all applications were submitted in person. Sackett did reference that the department has since changed to more electronic submittals since the department began working remotely due to the pandemic. Online submittals have made things much simpler for the office.

Tower said it could be beneficial to have less text and only include the most important information to save more space. It is more important to give developers a sense of how much money is available. Hot links and bullets might be more effective. Gonzalez suggested we should just delete the information from this form that is already on the existing website.

Tabb said that the form references “attainable” when it should be “affordable”. For clarity sake, and to match the RCW, the term should be “affordable.” Tabb also said he wasn’t sure if there was anything that would jump out at him to say “I can just submit an application.” Perrie said that we need to do outreach if we want to get anyone from the private sector to participate. He feels that a lot of this information is like a foreign language, so we need to do outreach.

Gonzalez agreed with Tabb’s point that the form needs to clearly point out that you can apply. Tower said the fonts can be changed. Ayling said that the verbiage can be rearranged, and text sizes can be changed, etc.

Gonzalez asked about just incorporating the pertinent information from the column on the left, and incorporate them into the right column. Tabb asked if Gonzalez and Sorenson would be willing to work with Ayling to create the revised version before it sent out for the next meeting and both agreed.

6. CITIZEN COMMENT

7. STAFF UPDATE/DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. 2019 RFP award project updates.

Ayling said that the contract for the Hopesoure project – Addison Place – has been provided to Hopesource. It is now in their hands for review by their own legal counsel, which brings it one more step towards being finalized.

Gonzalez asked if there were any updates for the Crytyl project, and Ayling said we are still in the back and forth dialogue to determine if the project is feasible with the prevailing wage numbers being taken into consideration.

Gonzalez wanted to remind staff that the Commission would like to receive updates from the awarded developers on project status. Director Sackett mentioned that yes there would likely be a joint staff and developer update provided at some point when the developments are under contract. Gonzalez asked if that could happen with both Crytyl and Hopesource projects. Tabb asked if it would be okay to receive written updates. She also asked about the prevailing wage issue that was discussed at the last meeting and if it was a concern for Hopesource and Crytyl. Ayling answered stating that it wasn't necessarily a concern for Hopesource. Hopesource revised their application and came back with refreshed numbers and showed they could still develop the project with the funds they needed. Sackett provided a brief summary of the status of the Crytyl project and the challenges he has run into with this project.

7. COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE

Sorenson said that she is on the committee to provide rental support, and they are out of money. She wondered if the City has any means to provide any additional funding. Tabb said that one of the issues the City is facing is what is happening to sales tax revenues. Finance is projecting the sales tax credit money to be less than allocated for the year, so the City likely does not have the financial ability to provide any additional funds. Tabb said we have already exhausted the money that is available for rental assistance, and the City doesn't have flexible dollars. Tabb said that there will be some CDBG funding coming into the County to help offset the impacts. The COG will be looking at how to allocate the money, and Tabb feels that rental and mortgage assistance will be highly considered. The application does not get submitted until September 3, so we probably wouldn't see the money until late September or into October.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Tabb thanked everyone from Habitat for participating in the meeting. He also thanked the Commissioners for their discussion at the meeting tonight. The next meeting will be held September 2. Tabb adjourned the meeting at 5:46 pm.