

Minutes of the Affordable Housing Council (AHC) Meeting
Tuesday, March 9, 2021
2:30-4:00 pm
Virtual via WebEX and
Facebook Live on Frederick County Boards and Commissions Facebook page

Minutes of Meeting

Call to Order: Vice-Chairperson Hugh Gordon called the meeting to order at 2:31 pm and reviewed virtual meeting practices and protocol. He stated: Public comments will be accepted on the AHC live portal located at www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/Commissions, or by calling toll-free 855-925-2801, entering meeting code 9813, and leaving a voicemail comment to be played back to the board or entering into a queue to give live public comment. Written comments and transcribed voice messages will be included in the AHC record and minutes. Please note that personnel matters are confidential and cannot be received through this kind of forum. At the start of the meeting, Emily Blackburn took the place of Ryan Trout as the operator of WebEx and Facebook Live pages.

Roll Call: Roll call was taken by Diane Bill via the WebEx sign on list and introductions.

Members Present: Angie Liddiard, Diane Bill, Hugh Gordon, Kandy Alexander, Kimberly Ashkenazi, Linda Duckett, Malcolm Furgol, Mark Long, Mary Ellen Mitchell, Tiffany Fossett

Members Absent: Bruce Zavos, Jason Wiley, Patricia Galloway

Staff Liaisons/Public Officials: Milton Bailey, Director DHCD; Ryan Trout, DHCD; Christine Kay, Director Citizens Services; Susan Brown, FC Housing Program Manager; Jessica Fitzwater, FC Councilperson; Marc DeOcampo, CoffCAO.

Guests and Visitors: Layton Field, Director CARITAS program MSM; Diana Fulchiron, Director Community Foundation; Roger Sobkowiak, Human Relations Commission; Shannon Bohrer, Housing Frederick; Joyce Hepner, Housing Frederick; Ron Cramer, Ex. Director Habitat for Humanity; Ashli Morris, Habitat for Humanity; Maria Jimenez, Housing Frederick; Assan Sosseh, Habitat for Humanity; Ari Edwards, Intern United Way; Kara Norman, Director Downtown Frederick Partnership

Agenda: Malcolm made a motion to accept the agenda as presented. Mary Ellen seconded the motion. The agenda was unanimously approved.

Minutes of February 9th, 2021 Meeting: Kimberly made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mary Ellen seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Mary Ellen proposed that each person could join the meeting on Facebook Live using the Frederick County Boards and Commissions page during the meeting to promote more exposure to our meetings.

Update from Councilperson Jessica Fitzwater was moved up on the agenda due to her having to leave the meeting early. Jessica shared that the County Executive announced today that

Frederick County will receive \$7 million from the CARES act for emergency rental assistance. The county will again partner with The Religious Coalition to distribute the funds. Also, the county budget season is underway. The CE is putting together a budget to present to the county council on April 15th. The CE welcomes input from community members. A virtual budget public hearing will take place on March 22nd. Also, there is an interactive budget survey on the county's website. Jessica encouraged everyone to participate in this public input.

Presentation of Housing Survey Results: Mary Ellen Mitchell, Housing Frederick, and Layton Field PhD, Director CARITAS MSM, presented the results of their collaborative housing survey. They surveyed housing organizations and conducted focus groups in the spring of 2020 which resulted in a 29-page report to be shared in the future. The survey's objectives were to inform the community what housing services are offered, define what makes housing programs successful, share what collaboration among organizations looks like, and discover how Covid-19 has impacted housing organizations. While conducting the survey they discovered the complexities of the housing needs of peoples of Frederick County. The housing services and organizations seem to be meeting these needs by focusing on person centric success and that this idea should be used in forward messaging. Data showed that, although there is competition for funding among housing organizations, collaboration was supported and that they hoped to continue to do so in the future. Some obstacles to housing program success are affordable housing stigma, NIMBYism and the ability to provide housing stability. Data showed how the pandemic has impacted most housing organizations because of the decrease of the volunteer force, inability to deliver services and greater financial strain. The pandemic is also creating new housing needs for area housing organizations to address. The full Housing Survey report will be shared soon in hopes that it will be used as a tool to bring more housing funding into the Fredrick community.

Committees:

Messaging: Hugh stated they are focusing on greater exposure for Frederick County housing resources and services. Exploring ways to achieve awareness through promotion of a central online site where most of the available services would be accessible.

Policy: Malcolm reported they are working on creating a list of recommended new priorities for the Affordable Housing Council. This list will be reviewed and approved by the AHC and provide future direction.

FCCH Update: Mary Ellen reminded us she is now serving as the AHC liaison to the Frederick County Coalition to the Homeless. She reiterated that The Religious Coalition is helping to distribute \$6.5 million for eviction prevention available beginning March 15th through September 30th. The Religious Coalition is adding an 800 number and more navigators to help provide assistance. They can now provide up to 12 months of rent in arrears and up to three months of future rent. Monies are also available for utility payment assistance. Mary Ellen told us she is serving on FCCH's housing subcommittee.

Updates from Ryan Trout, Housing Program Manager, DHCD: Ryan shared the news from County Executive that Frederick County received \$7.758 million from Emergency Rental and Utility Assistance Program. \$6.5 million will be for rental assistance and \$600K for utility assistance. Both can be used for up to 12 months of arrears. In order for FC people to be eligible they must be at or below 80% AMI, show financial hardship due to Covid-19 and provide demonstrated risk of homelessness or housing instability. These funds can be used for Section 8 and subsidized housing for the tenant portion of rent and utilities. The funds will be available March 15 at 8 am, must be earmarked by September 30th, and used by December 31, 2021. Questions were raised regarding these funds covering moving expenses or motel housing. It was recommended and emphasized that all should contact The Religious Coalition and/or Legal Aid in helping to provide funds and services. Please email Ryan or Mary Ellen for more in depth information.

Staff Liaisons/Public Officials Updates:

Milton Bailey: Milton Introduced Susan Brown as acting director of DCHD. She has been serving in the department for almost 10 years in many capacities. She will officially take the reins on March 15th. Susan spoke about her background and connections to Frederick County. The senior buydown program is getting finishing touches with Milton waiting for feedback from area builders. He is working on DLP projects, transitioning with Susan Brown and the HIF presentation to the county council. He will share the HIF presentation at the next meeting.

Kimberly Ashkenazi on behalf of Ramenta Cottrell: Ramenta is the Director of the City of Frederick's Housing and Human Services. Housing is a sub department of this entity. Ramenta has created two new positions for the housing division; grants manager and assistant director. The grants manager will run the CDBG program and oversee management and administration of other grants as well. The assistant director will be the head of the housing division, oversee the CDBG manager and the weatherization program. The housing division AD will report to Ramenta along with two other division ADs. Ramenta will be looking to the housing AD to develop growth and vision for the housing department. AHC members wondered how the housing division will be reporting to the AHC. Kimberly was unsure at this point. Kimberly also reported that the city is underway with the CDBG annual action plan for fiscal year 2021.

Jessica Fitzwater: She gave her report at the beginning of the meeting.

Marc DeOcampo: Mark has been working with Derek and the planning department on the proposed ADU ordinance. He also is working with Alderperson Donna Kuzemchak on rental licensure program. Mark Long pressed Marc DeOcampo on when the ADU ordinance might be further workshopped or voted on. Questions arose about the square footage on existing spaces that might become an ADU. Marc stated that the specifics will be determined.

Public Comment: There was no public comment at this time

Council Member sharing/sharing: Malcolm said the United Way of MD is conducting a survey of the financial impact of Covid-19 in March. He asked all to participate. VITA is completely booked. Kandy asked for more info to help guide people in regards to filing taxes after receiving Covid-19 stimulus checks.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 pm. Our next meeting will be April 13th 2021 at 2:30