

APPROVED
AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FORT LAUDERDALE CITY HALL – CITY COMMISSION CHAMBERS
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE
FORT LAUDERDALE, FL
MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2009 – 7:00 P.M.

Board Members	Attendance	Cumulative Attendance 9/08 through 8/09	
		Present	Absent
Chair Peter Henn	P	7	0
Vice Chair Rebecca Jo Walter	P	7	0
Margie Alexander	P	6	1
Tam English	P	5	2
William Isenberg	P	5	2
Carolyn Jones	A	0	7
Jonathan Jordan	P	6	1
Rene Lepine	A	2	5
Janet Riley	P	5	2
Greg Stuart	A	3	4
Patricia Hale	P	3	0

As of this date, there were 11 appointed members to the Board, which means 6 would constitute a quorum.

Staff

Susan Batchelder, Interim Liaison, Community Development Division

Angelia Basto, Clerk/Typist II

Hilda Testa, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Call to Order

Chair Henn called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

1. Pledge of Allegiance / Roll Call

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Roll was called and a quorum was present.

2. Board / Staff Introductions

Ms. Batchelder, Assistant Manager for the Community Development Division, informed the Committee that she will act as interim Liaison until a new Liaison is appointed.

3. Approval of Minutes Summary – December 15, 2008

Motion made by Mr. Isenberg, seconded by Mr. English, to approve the minutes of the December 15, 2008 meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

4. Review of Resolution Adopting the Report to be Forwarded to State

Ms. Batchelder informed the Committee that State officials have requested a Resolution from the Board in addition to their report. Chair Henn noted that, however, the Resolution states that the report is being adopted, and asked if the Board needed to ratify the action it had already taken or if new action was necessary. His understanding was that the Committee must appear before the City Commission with the Resolution.

Ms. Batchelder explained that a vote by the Committee to approve the Resolution would be sufficient in the eyes of the City Attorney's Office.

Motion made by Mr. English, seconded by Mr. Isenberg, to approve the Resolution adopting the Committee's report. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

5. Other Business

Chair Henn advised that on March 17, 2009, four of the City's five new officials could be completely unaware of the Committee's work. He hoped that Staff would inform them, through the appropriate channels, that the Committee wished to continue its service, and the outgoing City Commission had made this recommendation.

Ms. Batchelder stated that her understanding was the Committee would continue to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss any issues that had arisen in that interim. Today's meeting would serve as the first of these quarterly meetings. The decision would ultimately be made by the Committee as to whether they should move forward with that schedule.

Chair Henn observed that the Mayor-elect, in a recent interview, had responded to a question about affordable housing by asking if this particular challenge might be "solved" by the recent decline in real estate prices. It was the Chair's understanding, however, that there was a difference between low and very low cost in housing; furthermore, although there had been a drop in real estate prices, any "trickledown" that resulted from this decline would most likely not address all the City's affordable housing needs.

The Mayor-elect had continued by stating he would investigate the issue more thoroughly in April to assess the situation. Chair Henn asserted that he hoped the actions of the Committee would clarify that lower real estate prices do not adequately address the need for affordable housing. He felt the Committee could continue to make recommendations about this issue, and hoped Staff would assist in communicating this to the City's incoming officials.

Ms. Batchelder affirmed that she would raise this issue, and that most likely it would first go to the attention of the City Manager. She expected the Committee would be asked to present information to the City Commission as well.

Chair Henn noted that the Committee is expected to appear on a conference agenda workshop in late April or early May 2009, which he felt would be an appropriate time to state that the Committee feels more work should be done.

Mr. English advised that April 21 would not be the best time, due to many other items already scheduled to appear on that conference's agenda. He suggested that May would be the earliest time the Committee might be able to have a meaningful discussion with the City Commission.

He continued that there is an ongoing need for affordable housing in the City, which is not adequately addressed by any current committee. He cited the Neighborhood Stabilization Plan, which had not gone forward over a period of three to four months, as an example. He felt the Committee might be able to "keep their eyes on" this program of neighborhood stabilization funds available from the Federal government, adding that is not presently known whether the City plans to apply for these funds.

There are more grants available that address similar issues, he added, such as attempts to "recover and rehab" foreclosed properties for prospective sale. Mr. English suggested that the City should give the Committee the opportunity to oversee any such grants and ensure funds are spent wisely.

Chair Henn recalled that the Committee had focused on the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) report, and had attempted to take advantage of these and other funds rather than use the City's tax dollars.

Mr. Isenberg noted that there are different "brackets" of affordable housing, including workforce housing, low-income, and very low-income housing categories. He addressed the idea that the decline in real estate prices had had a great effect on the individuals whose needs fell into these categories, pointing out that data was necessary to determine how many individuals in these particular brackets had not been affected by the price drop.

Chair Henn added that many of the individuals in those brackets might experience difficulty in financing a home, which would mean the demand for affordable housing had not changed significantly for them.

Mr. Isenberg suggested that in the absence of other data, they might look at the number of titles or deeds recorded at a particular price level to determine the effect that declining home prices might have had. Mr. Jordan advised, however, that many of these might be rental properties, which would not give an accurate measure.

Mr. English added that small single-family homes are currently “almost impossible to sell,” as most banks will not finance them to potential buyers. Banks are also “having second thoughts” about lending to individuals with lower incomes, regardless of their credit ratings. Banks are similarly reluctant to lend money to buyers of small homes, as they fear they would not be able to sell these properties in the event of possible foreclosure.

Ms. Riley asserted that the state of rentals is as important as the state of sales, and advised that many renters have displaced by foreclosures. Furthermore, rental prices had not experienced a decrease. She offered to try to come up with applicable data for the Committee.

Chair Henn concluded that the Committee is aware that affordable housing remains a problem in the City, and affirmed that they should remain focused on this issue. He suggested that they might make a motion to be placed on a conference agenda so they could address the newly seated City Commission and let them know there is still work to be done.

Mr. Isenberg asked if City Staff might be able to get sales and rental data for the Committee. Ms. Riley pointed out that she could look into the availability of studies by the Schoenberg Center, although she was not sure how current this information might be. Ms. Batchelder noted that while the data on this entity’s website extends only through 2007, more recent data might be available through other sources. She added that she would ask Staff to find out what additional information the City might have.

Chair Henn advised that there is a growing concern in the City concerning its homeless population, which seems to be on the rise. He felt if the state of affordable housing is not addressed further, the individuals currently struggling with affordable housing “might become tomorrow’s homeless.”

He continued that when the economy was stable or growing, “workforce housing” had been identified as an issue for the City, as they assessed the housing situation for civil service workers, teachers, firefighters, and others with similar

incomes. Mr. Isenberg noted that, for example, roughly 85% of police officers do not live inside the City, a statistic that has not improved in recent years.

Ms. Riley asserted that foreclosures of both homeowners and renters were exacerbating the problem of displacement and adding to the homeless population. Mr. English confirmed this, stating that some of his employees are currently homeless. He added that many younger individuals are homeless and “bouncing” from one family member to another while seeking an affordable place to live.

Chair Henn asked Ms. Batchelder if the City was attempting to fill the position of Community Development Division Manager, as Ms. Margarette Hayes had recently retired. Ms. Batchelder stated that an offer has been made and an individual is expected to take over this position in April.

She informed the Committee that the City has received \$887,000 in stimulus funding for homelessness prevention.

Chair Henn proposed that the Committee try to have “15 minutes” of a May conference agenda to address the City Commission, if scheduling could be arranged. Ms. Batchelder agreed to take this to her supervisor in Planning & Zoning, who would in turn present it to the City Manager’s Office. She advised that she would be in touch via email to inform the Committee of a date.

Ms. Batchelder asked if the Committee would like to schedule their next meeting at this time, or if they preferred to wait until they had been informed of the conference agenda date. She reminded the Committee that it had been suggested they meet on a quarterly basis.

Ms. Walter felt they should meet again before presenting any information at a conference. She continued that meeting on a monthly or bimonthly basis seemed more appropriate than quarterly meetings.

Ms. Batchelder pointed out that further meetings required the approval of the City Commission.

Chair Henn felt they should obtain direction from the City Commission, as the Committee is a “carry-over” from a previous City Commission’s appointment and would need to be reinstated or reappointed. The new City Commission would, in addition, need to agree with the Committee’s Resolution that they continue to serve. The current Committee’s term extends through June 29, 2009.

Ms. Batchelder agreed to look into this before the next meeting, as the Committee had pointed out they would need to meet again prior to appearance at a City conference.

Chair Henn felt it would be “ideal” if the Committee could present the City Commission with information regarding the different levels of affordable housing needed, as well as a summary of where the City stood in terms of their housing situation, before they could expect guidance from the City Commission.

There being no further business to bring before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]