

**CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP
WITH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

March 2, 2010

Present: Mayor John P. "Jack" Seiler
Vice Mayor Bruce G. Roberts, Commissioners Charlotte E. Rodstrom,
Bobby B. DuBose and Romney Rogers

Affordable Housing Advisory Committee Members Present:
Chair Rebecca Jo Walter, Vice Chair Janet R. Riley, Tam English,
Jonathan E. Jordan, Jim Jordan, Bradley Deckelbaum, Margie Alexander,
Roosevelt Walters and Peter J. Henn

Also Present: City Manager – George Gretsas
City Auditor- John Herbst
City Clerk - Jonda K. Joseph
City Attorney - Harry A. Stewart

Absent: Greg Stuart

Mayor Seiler called the meeting to order at 12:09 p.m. in the 8th floor conference room of City Hall. Introductions were made.

1. Call to Order; Opening Remarks
 - a. Definition and criteria for affordable housing
 - b. Affordable housing update
 - c. Workshop objectives

Chair Walter explained the importance of affordable housing including the definition of affordable housing. She called attention to the collection of studies conducted in the last five years provided to the Commission and quoted statistics that accentuate the need in the county. The committee is seeking the Commission's approval to continue to meet on a monthly basis. They would like to create a list of priorities from the areas of focus shown on the agenda that has been derived from the studies. Finally, the main goal today is to agree upon one tangible action-able goal that the committee could accomplish by the end of this year. They request that the ordinance be amended regarding meeting on a regular basis, expanding the committee's scope, possibly creating an at-large position and extending the membership's terms.

2. Committee ordinance; appointment requirements

Jonathan Brown, Housing and Community Development Manager, drew attention to his memorandum (10-052) provided to the Commission that outlines the ordinance and state statute for the committee. He outlined the requirements of the committee. The committee's 2008 report has been submitted. The committee will be meeting with staff that could provide insight on processes.

3. Committee Background

- a. Role of the Committee 2008-2009
- b. Revisions to current ordinance
- c. SHIP (State Housing Initiatives Partnership) report highlights

Former chair Peter Henn stated that housing is needed for police officers, firefighters and teachers, but also for the people who clean hotels, retail employees and others. If the City does not get this right, there will be unintended consequences. Without mass transit and more affordable housing downtown, people will be pushed out west and that will cause more traffic congestion. There are people today that have to take two buses to get to work in Fort Lauderdale. It is important to be able to live and work in a city.

Mr. Henn outlined the committee's mission in 2008. He emphasized that the need is clear; there is no need for further study. One can purchase something that is good, better or the best. The committee's work has tried to get City to good and today, the goal is to get to better and strive to have the best standards. There needs to be a genuine commitment from the top. The committee wants to do more.

4. Next Steps

- a. Expedited permitting

Tam English understood that expedited permitted is contained in the ordinance (statute), but it has been less than effective. It did not work for the first phase of Dixie Court. It was not explained during the process. Mayor Seiler commented that often the problem is with the submission and its completeness and not the review. Mr. English noted one example of plans on a desk for two weeks because the individual was on vacation and no one else looked at the plans. In response to Mayor Seiler, Greg Brewton, Director of Planning and Zoning, advised that the Unified Land Development Regulations has a provision addressing expedited permitting. Because it has been so long since such a project was submitted, staff depended upon the applicant notifying the City of the project being for affordable housing. This has been corrected. In response to Commissioner Rodstrom, Valerie Bohlander, Director of Building Services, noted the expedited permitting for affordable housing projects is separate from another expedited permit review in place. She acknowledged there were some issues in the beginning but they have been addressed which she elaborated upon. Vice Mayor Roberts concluded the City is well on its way to accomplishing this first area of focus. No one was certain as to when Section 9-344, expedited review process, was enacted into the code. Mr. Brown clarified that the committee's suggestions do not call for any change to be made to the City's ordinance on this topic (Section 9-344). Chair Walter confirmed the committee is not looking for an amendment to the ordinance, but rather to look for areas of improvement and to continue to monitor the process. Commissioner Rodstrom concluded with the staffing increase, it should be helpful.

Ms. Bohlander responded to Mayor Seiler's question of identifying affordable housing project applications at the onset by noting her plan to revise the permit checklist.

- b. Dedicated sources of funding

Chair Walter explained that this relates to housing trust funds and impact fees. The City currently does not have any dedicated sources of funding.

Mayor Seiler inquired about the status of State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) funding. Mr. Brown provided an update.

In response to Commissioner Rodstrom, Mr. Brown explained that generally funding types that become available are not traditional; it is more that sought by housing authorities and developers. For tax credits, as an example, a project under construction is necessary. It may not preclude partnering but he was not sure that is something the City would want to do.

Commissioner Rogers advocated a land trust. The City has escheated vacant lots. He wanted the committee to develop a comprehensive plan showing what has happened successfully, what other partnerships might be part of the equation and whether there is a financial piece that needs to be examined.

With respect to dedicated funding sources, Mr. Walters did not think the City should rely upon anything that they have to apply to receive. Tallahassee has money for this purpose but has not released it for two years. Mayor Seiler felt the only source of funding in this economy is the federal government; the timing could not be worse. He did not think there would be any money released this year. He asked that inquiries be made to other housing authorities to see what they have identified as dedicated funding sources. In response to Commissioner DuBose, Chair Walter indicated the committee discussed impact fees as a potential source, but understood they are not popular.

In response to Commissioner Rodstrom, the City Auditor commented that the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) has funded park impact fees for some of the affordable housing projects. This is the only fee assistance program with which he was aware. Commissioner Rogers commented there was a push at one time for project in Lauderhill for teachers that included tax waivers, but it never came to fruition. If it is the right project, taxes could be waived to make the project feasible.

c. Housing for the blue collar workforce

Janet Riley emphasized the need for those people who will be homeless if they do not receive assistance. She noted that when public housing is converted to low income tax credit property it is not a gain in affordable housing, but a break even at best. Current Broward rent is at \$1,203. People in this area who are extremely cost burdened have increased from 20.8% to 29.79%, according to a 2009 study by Florida International University provided the Commission. She elaborated upon the challenges they are facing and other facts in this study with respect to fair market rent costs in Broward and income levels needed to meet them. Housing rental costs have not fallen enough to help this income group. With foreclosures and bankruptcies, there is more of a demand on the housing market. As to the future, the projected fastest growing jobs are not at levels that could sustain housing. There needs to be an intentional plan to make sure housing is being built that can include the low income group.

Commissioner Rodstrom felt that tackling this problem must include discussion with Broward County for a cooperative effort with all of the cities in the county. Each city needs to provide their share. Ms. Riley agreed.

Commissioner Rogers felt a housing strategy must address the full spectrum. One problem is the lack of coordination county-wide. He felt the City needs to work on organizing its strategy.

d. Expansion of existing programs and creation of new programs

Chair Walter referred to the 2007 Broward County Affordable Housing Market Update and Municipal Scorecards, prepared by the Florida International University Metropolitan Center for Broward Housing Partnership, Inc. and noted that the document speaks to creating an employer assisted housing programs and partnering with community-based organizations for the production of workforce and affordable housing. These ideas feed into the next item that Mr. Walters will address.

e. Building capacity and partnerships

f. Additional sources of funding

Roosevelt Walters emphasized the need to coordinate with Broward County and other municipalities. As unincorporated areas are annexed, the City should go after money available for housing in those areas. Affordable housing should be scattered throughout the city. There is a need for partnerships with both the public and private sectors so that the burden is equally shared. Concerning the City's inventory of land and buildings, the committee needs specific information as to locations. He questioned if there are some properties where multiple family could be built. With limited capacity, height will come into play. Infrastructure is a factor. He advocated making use of existing structures including foreclosed housing. He drew attention to the homeless. Homelessness affects education and then the prison population.

Commissioner Rodstrom asked about the neighborhood stabilization program. Mr. Brown advised that this program serves the very low, low and moderate incomes, however it is focused on single family homeownership.

g. Site selection

Margie Alexander commented that as a nurse, she wanted to emphasize the need for housing for people infected with HIV/Aids. In response to her question about funding for this need, Commissioner DuBose noted there is some \$8 million in HOPWA funding.

Chair Walter felt this category as well as Item h. Recommendations for the coordinated infill strategy for single-family, are self-explanatory. She suggested moving to the open discussion portion of the agenda.

5. Open Discussion

Concerning the committee's recommendation in the 2008 report of adopting the Broward County Plan for allowance of density bonuses, Vice Mayor Roberts questioned if the City should consider evaluating this plan. Mr. Brown noted that this report has already been approved by the Commission and sent to the State. Commissioner Rodstrom concluded when the next report is submitted to the Commission, they could look at the recommendation at that time.

Concerning the committee's recommendation in the 2008 report to reduce setback requirements, Commissioner Rodstrom was not in favor of that incentive. She favored a case by case review of parking requirement reduction. She noted with mass transit, there may be less need for a vehicle. Commissioner Rogers did not want to rule out setback relief summarily as there is the potential for more dense projects near mass transit stations for example. Commissioner Rodstrom favored the incentive noted in the 2008 report with respect to flexible lot configurations.

With respect to land banking, Mayor Seiler referred to the recent audit of vacant properties and expressed the view that it should be examined with the thought in mind of potential affordable housing use. The City Auditor explained that current language in the charter would not allow this. He plans to work with Commissioner Rogers in putting together proposed language that could be presented to the Charter Revision Board.

Commissioner Rodstrom expressed favor in the committee's discussion noted in the 2008 report that the City continue to review the process through the Community Services Board. As to development near transportation hubs (2008 report), she felt property should be reserved for affordable housing in those areas. Vice Mayor Roberts felt this is important for long-range planning. If tied to mass transit, he felt it will be countywide and has the most potential. He envisioned there would be more federal dollars for transportation. He felt there should be a strong focus in this area. Commissioner DuBose agreed there are federal dollars being pushed toward sustainable housing that links to transportation. Chair Walter noted that there is a grant opportunity for this that is in the planning stages. Commissioner DuBose understood the criteria has to do with affordable housing with transportation in close proximity to jobs. Commissioner Rogers noted the City's advantage of having a light rail route developed; affordable, workforce housing would certainly be along those corridors. Mayor Seiler asked about their definition of close proximity. Commissioner Rodstrom offered the idea of selling City property that is walkable to mass transit to developers that would incorporate affordable housing. In response to Vice Mayor Roberts, Commissioner Rogers noted that the terminus for the light rail at present is 6 Street. If development of some density was focused in that area, it would address affordable housing and parking for people coming downtown. Commissioner DuBose explained with the sustainable community concept, people live there so they simply walk to the (mass transit) hub. It is a move to get away from vehicles, parking lots. Mayor Seiler believed that the federal government is interested in density and mass transit. It would be ideal to place affordable housing in these corridors. It would have to be vertical. Mr. Walters pointed out that the maximum number of hubs the City could actually have would be two, therefore he suggested not using that terminology. He suggested mass transit corridors in the alternative. Vice Mayor Roberts noted that the County's 2035 long-range transportation plan is to establish additional hubs and another type as well that would be situated around population centers, so there will be more. Commissioner Rodstrom envisioned a vertical development mixed with affordable units could be situated at one of these hubs. In view of the fact that Fort Lauderdale is the county seat, more people work here than any other area and increased density will continue, Vice Mayor Roberts saw the 2008 report's incentive of proximity of development near transportation hubs and major employers as a key to the solution. Mayor Seiler agreed.

- a. Frequency of Committee meetings

There was no objection to the committee's request to continue to meet every month. The City Attorney will draft the ordinance for consideration.

b. List of priorities

Mayor Seiler asked the committee to assemble a list based on today's discussion and bring that list back for Commission approval.

c. Agreement on one goal the Committee can accomplish in 2010

Mayor Seiler suggested and there was consensus on the incentive of proximity of development near transportation hubs (2008 report). Chair Walter asked what would be the anticipated deliverable. Commissioner Rodstrom suggested the committee look at City properties around the Florida East Coast railroad tracks and investigate whether there is vacant property around the mobility hubs identified in the long range transportation plan.

Commissioner DuBose referred to the City's scorecard (2007 Broward County Affordable Housing Market Update) that asks if the City has developed a comprehensive and integrated workforce/affordable housing policy. The City scored zero out of a possible ten. He felt this is something that could be achieved this year. He felt some of the others could also be achieved this year. He went on to delineate some of the scorecard questions where the City scored low. A copy of the scorecard is attached to these minutes.

Commissioner Rogers wanted the partners who are already at the table to be included as part of the implementation equation. He mentioned the land trust as one answer. He felt the City has not been successful with implementation. Strategies have been developed and they need to be brought together in a comprehensive plan. There was consensus that the committee should take this on.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 1:36 p.m.