

Orange County Affordable Housing Advisory Board Minutes
Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 6:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Mae McLendon, Arthur Sprinczeles, Jenn Sykes, Olivia Fischer, Saru Salvi, Holly Meschko, Douglas Boemker, James Eichel, Allison Mahaley.

Members Absent: Gio Mollinedo (excused), Adejuwon Ojebuoboh, Keith Cook (Chair), Tammy Jacobs (Vice Chair).

Staff Present: Erika Brandt (Interim Housing and Community Development Director), Maria Dewees (Acting Housing and Community Development Manager).

Public Present: Paul Voss

I. Call to Order/Introductions – Ms. Mahaley called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM.

II. Approval of the February 9, 2021 and May 13, 2021 Minutes
AHAB voted in favor of approving Feb 9, 2021 minutes. Ms. Salvi abstained from the vote, having not attended the Feb 9, 2021 meeting or been a Board member at that time. The AHAB unanimously approved May 13, 2021 minutes.

III. Introductions

IV. Board Member Updates

Ms. Sykes shared an update about the impacts of 160D North Carolina General Statute and potential Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) changes that could result. Many local governments in North Carolina will need to reconfigure their special use zoning and permitting process to comply with 160D, including Hillsborough, NC. The Hillsborough Board of Adjustment may see an increase in applications.

Ms. Sykes shared that the Hillsborough Water and Sewer Advisory Committee met recently and that utility rates are going to increase.

Ms. Sykes shared an update about County tax rate increases and information about appealing property tax valuations. She expressed that the number of people appealing in Hillsborough seems low and shared that she has been getting the word out about the process for appealing.

Ms. Sykes encouraged AHAB members to share information about Covid-19 vaccination to make sure everyone has access to and information about vaccines in the community.

Ms. McLendon shared that the Marian Cheek Jackson Center has been helping residents file property tax appeals and has done extensive organizing around inequitable tax burden faced by Northside, Tin Top and Pine Knolls residents- all historically African-American communities. Members of the County tax office were recently invited on a guided tour of these neighborhoods.

Ms. Meschko asked for members of the AHAB to share information about volunteering opportunities and ideas for how to get more involved in affordable housing advocacy in the community.

V. Department of Housing and Community Development (OCHCD) Updates

Interim Director Erika Brandt announced that Corey Root, who has spearheaded the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH) since March 2016, has been chosen to replace Emila Sutton as the new Director of OCHCD. Ms. Root's first day will be June 21.

Ms. Brandt shared that the County continues to respond to the housing needs brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Weekly in-person office hours for the Housing Helpline and support with Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) applications have begun at the Southern Human Services Building. On Tuesdays between 8:30 AM-4:00 PM, County residents in need of housing resources can receive 1-on-1 assistance in-person at 2501 Homestead Road in Chapel Hill.

Interim Director Brandt shared that the HOPE Program has reopened for applications to provide rent and utility assistance to income-eligible renter households impacted by the pandemic. The North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency (NCORR) is administering this program throughout 88 counties, including Orange County. Residents in need of rent and utility assistance are strongly encouraged to apply and can contact the HOPE program at their dedicated phone number for assistance.

Ms. Brandt shared that as part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP), Orange County will receive 19 Emergency Housing Vouchers to supplement our current voucher supply. The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) is likely waiting until the fall to make decisions regarding the full allocation of ARP funds. OCHCD requested \$1.3 million in ARP funds to support the EHA program through the summer.

The County and the Towns of Carrboro, Chapel Hill and Hillsborough are working on the issue of manufactured home park closures. The Town of Chapel Hill is spearheading the Manufactured Homes Action Plan to guide a coordinated response to the issue among the County and Towns.

Ms. Fischer asked about the status of the eviction moratorium and its pending expiration. Ms. Brandt responded that while OCHCD doesn't know what the impact will be when the moratorium expires, the department is working closely with the Eviction Diversion Program (EDP) so that anyone with a court date for an eviction hearing or anyone who requests legal assistance can be referred for assistance.

Ms. Meschko inquired if Orange County residents need to have an eviction pending to request EHA. Ms. Brandt replied that no, an eviction notice is not required to receive EHA. Ms. Meschko expressed concerns that residents in her apartment community many need assistance and are unaware of available resources. Ms. Brandt shared the contact information for the Housing Helpline and agreed to arrange for OCHCD to distributed flyers at Ms. Meschko's apartment community.

Ms. McLendon asked if Corey Root's previous position has been filled. Ms. Brandt replied that the position has not been filled yet but that a formal announcement about the new hire for the position will be coming in the next few weeks.

VI. Old and New Business –

a. New Member Nominations –Cain Twyman vacated her seat on the AHAB, creating one (1) vacancy. Ms. Sykes proposed postponing the nomination and waiting until the fall to recruit a candidate for the seat. Mr. Sprinczeles suggested contacting individuals who currently have AHAB applications on file to verify their interest and noted that one of the current applicants is a Carrboro resident.

b. Election of Chair and Vice Chair –

Ms. Sykes volunteered to serve as the next Chair for the Advisory Board. Mr. Boemker volunteered to serve as Vice Chair. Ms. Fischer volunteered to serve as the back-up Vice Chair as needed. All members present voted unanimously to elect Ms. Sykes as the new Chair, Mr. Boemker as the Vice Chair and Ms. Fischer as the back-up Vice Chair.

c. Adoption of Updated AHAB Policies and Procedures –

Board members voted to revise Section III.B.2 of the Advisory Board's policies and procedures to read "membership should reflect the diversity of the County residents (demographic, geographic, cultural and professional characteristics."

VII. Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM

Submitted by Maria Dewees, Acting Housing and Community Development Manager