

ESCAMBIA-PENSACOLA AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

November 01, 2022

The Escambia-Pensacola Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) held a regularly scheduled monthly meeting in the Hagler-Mason Conference Room, 2nd Floor of Pensacola City Hall, 222 West Main Street, Pensacola, Florida on November 01, 2022 at 9:05 AM.

Committee members present: Ed Brown, Laura Gilmore, Brenton Goodman, Pensacola City Council President Ann Hill, Deborah Mays, Maya Moss, and Crystal Scott

Committee members absent: Patricia Mackovic, Escambia County Commissioner Lumon May, and Paul Ritz

Staff members present: Timothy Evans, Escambia County Neighborhood Enterprise Division (NED); Garrett Griffin, NED Division Manager; Clara Long, Escambia County Neighborhood and Human Services Department Director; Marcie Whitaker, Director of City of Pensacola Housing Department, Tracy Pickens, City of Pensacola Housing Department

Call to Order, Welcome, and Roll Call

Chairwoman Crystal Scott called the meeting to order at 9:25 am. As the monthly meeting immediately followed the Public Hearing for approval of the two Affordable Housing Incentive Plan reports, she did not ask for the Committee members to introduce themselves again but restated the presence of a quorum for the meeting. Recognizing that Paul Ritz had requested his absence from the November monthly meeting be excused, the Chair asked for such a motion. Ed Brown made the motion to excuse the absence of Paul Ritz. The motion was seconded by Brenton Goodman and was passed unanimously.

Next the Chair asked for a motion to approve the Minutes of the October meeting. Deborah Mays made the motion, and it was seconded by Ann Hill. The motion passed unanimously.

The next item of business on the agenda was a Guest Speaker. Ms. Scott re-introduced Mr. Sam Young who had addressed the Committee previously as the CEO of Pensacola Habitat for Humanity. Today Mr. Young was speaking in his capacity as a co-chair of the Affordable Housing Area of the transition team for Pensacola Mayor-Elect D. C. Reeves. He began his remarks by saying that the incoming Mayor is committed to address the critical housing needs of the community. He stated that affordable housing is a central foundation of the developing City strategic plan. Saying that the crisis in housing has deepened significantly through the national disruption caused by the COVID pandemic, he stated that the ‘crisis’ no longer impacts only low income households, but now reaches across most every demographic. That realization makes the urgency to address the crisis a front burner issue.

He continued by saying that through community ‘town hall’ style meetings on the issue of housing the focus had tended to focus on three areas; 1) availability of land; 2) addressing the strict regulatory requirements for development, and; 3) the availability of capital funding for housing. Mr. Young stated that the Mayor-Elect’s team has referred to the Affordable Housing study completed by a City task force in 2020 (pre-pandemic) and considers that work as foundational for the Housing component of the

strategic plan. He said that the local housing problem is not constrained by a lack of ideas but suffers from a lack of execution (funds).

Following his introductory comments, he asked for feedback from the Committee. One member said that while there is usually some level of funding support for low-income households the community needs to find support for 'workforce' level households. Some discussion followed referencing the 'missing middle' of housing affordability and availability. Another member said that the urgency of the issue should have the community reconsidering some previously discounted ideas around non-traditional housing (RVs, mobile homes, tiny homes).

Another member raised the issue of development of new affordable rental properties, as opposed to a focus strictly on homeownership. Mr. Young said that is a part of the discussion, as homeownership is not the best option for all families or individuals. He mentioned the opportunities available through Federal programs such as the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program run by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation. He said that while there is a significant amount of funding available through the program, the program has a degree of complexity putting it out of reach for smaller scale developers.

Tagging on to the discussion of rental affordability and availability, a member of the committee brought up the impact of short-term rentals on the local housing market. This recent phenomenon in the market has displaced many families and driven up the cost of rental properties available for long-term leasing. The consensus of the committee was that the issue calls for some regulatory intervention.

A member mentioned that the community Homelessness Reduction Task Force seems to have had some success at finding some ways to address the growing homelessness issue within the community. Perhaps it may be a reasonable approach to establish a similar standing task force working on the larger housing issues in the community – both rental and homeownership. This could foster greater City-County collaboration, and hopefully ensure that side issues – such as the short-term rental ordinances – don't get instituted in one jurisdiction but not the other.

As the discussion moved toward government cooperation and collaboration a member voiced the concern which had become more evident over the past months' presentations that staffing shortages present limitations which impacts government program efficiency.

Announcements

The Chair stated the hour dictated that the balance of the day's agenda be forwarded to the next regular meeting, scheduled for December 6 at 9:00 am

Adjournment:

There being no further speakers, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:58 am.

Submitted by Timothy Evans