



MEETING MINUTES
HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF WASHINGTON COUNTY
March 26, 2020, 9:00 a.m.

Skype Teleconference

<u>COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT</u>	<u>STAFF PRESENT</u>
Katherine Galian (Chair)	Komi Kalevor, Executive Director
Melinda Bell (Vice-Chair)	Yaling Huang-Dressel, Housing Controller
Ben Sturtz	Melisa Dailey, Housing Program Coordinator
Sheila Greenlaw-Fink	Gary Calvert, Asset Manager
Dave Bachman	Liz Morris, HCV Manager
Cindi Otis	Emily Nichols, Program Coordinator
Sig Unander	Josh Crites, Assistant Director
Vince Chiotti	Shannon Wilson, Housing Development Coordinator
Jason Hitzert	
Gary Whiting	<u>ABSENT</u>
	Annette Evans, Homeless Program Manager
<u>ABSENT</u>	
Sid Scott	<u>ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES</u>
Joshua Groesz	

I. ROLL CALL – 9:00 a.m. A quorum was present.

II. ACTION - APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM March 26, 2020

Motion: Ben Sturtz
Second: Dave Bachman
Vote: All approved

III. DISCUSSION - ORAL COMMUNICATIONS & MEMBER UPDATES

MEMBER UPDATES

Dave Bachman – In response to COVID-19, he is working with non-profits to serve them and the renters in their properties, especially for cleanliness and maintain 6' separation. They are closing common areas and playgrounds and deep cleaning other areas. His staff is still deemed essential. Also busy in March with starting management of the Washington County portfolio which is going well. They are collecting the last bit of info to finish that transition.

How is eviction moratorium affecting them? (Katherine G.) Mr. Bachman said there are industry tools to deal with people who cannot pay rent, but those tools are not useful now. Cascade is doing resident communication and establishing things like payment

agreements. Typically, a landlord reserves right to have a payment agreement and still reserves the right to evict which is now not applicable or appropriate. These rights may be reserved six months down the line. The real trick is not knowing what's going to happen down the line.

Sheila – she is grateful that we are having this call with many different perspectives which can help us make sense of our unusual circumstances. What are essential services and what is irresponsible to keep doing? She is looking forward to other people's thoughts. There is lot of uncertainty in the market. As a lender what does that mean? There is lot of money in projects, both near and farther out. She is keeping her eye on the industry and hopes to keep this group communicating to make difficult decisions.

Ben – At BRIDGE he is used to working remotely. The BRIDGE downtown office in Portland is being deep cleaned this week. His current project under construction is now at 75% completion; the contractor voluntarily decreased staff so project is now slowed. Twelve other projects are also under construction around the state. He is in charge of future projects in Washington County. He submitted a South Coper Mountain Beaverton Metro Bond application in February; he is also working on a project in Unincorporated Clackamas County, located at the end of the orange line, and the application deadline has been extended by two weeks. He looks at the COVID-19 in context of prior downturns, such as effecting equity pricing decreasing and leaving a bigger funding gap. We need to stay engaged to solve this problem. Also, costs will be adjusted. He hopes to see contractor pricing come back to earth but feels it might not be the case.

Sheila – construction is an essential service. It is great if costs decrease for sponsors, and also not great for those that don't have insurance, such as many of those who work for subcontractors (casual laborers, etc.). She is having a hard time sorting through the info for all industries and assessing economic vs health effects. Ben wishes lenders were more lenient on lease-up requirements.

Komi – a lot of small minority contractors may not be around by the end of COVID-19. The industry is going to send a letter to BOCC regarding the Metro Bond. With work slowing down and social distancing, they need the ability to sustain their small minority businesses.

Melinda – has not been into office (Union Gospel Mission) since last Tuesday. The Mission is still running but they are not accepting any new residents and she is working from home. Downtown Portland UGM is still handing out meals 3x/day. Their search and rescue van is going out during the day; they are still operating but cautiously.

Vince – would like to talk about non-profit evictions later in the agenda. Forty to fifty thousand dollars won't be coming in the door next month. He would like to discuss helping them out.

Jason – He has been fielding questions in the east county; it's important to connect with State Legislators and work with them to get the info they need. They are putting in 12-

13-hour days to help everyone at the Legislature keep up. The Special Session package is being considered by the different caucuses in Washington D.C. today; he will email this info to the group at close of business.

Cindi – direct services have become hard to provide. She is being creative by helping over the phone and it is her new challenge. She is still grocery shopping for a few of her folks, doing drop offs and leaving, or she has conversations with distance outside. She will only be doing ¼ of her job since most of her job is direct services. A lot of people are moving in with their families, so she is focused on the ones who are staying on their own.

Sig – left this position at West Tuality Habitat for Humanity but he still volunteers on the Cornelius Housing Advisory Committee which has quarterly meetings that are going well. Staff at West Tuality Habitat is mostly working at home.

Gary – sent Komi two articles from Kate Brown on evictions and late payment of rent. He has three landlords that are very concerned if they do not receive three months of rent, how do they pay their loans? He also sent Komi a lender spreadsheet on interest rates for different loans; rates are not as low as they could be since lenders are processing so many refi's. It's hard to conduct business and close deals due to social distancing. Title Companies needs to have notarized signatures to be recorded at the County, and he hopes the County figures out how to do this remotely.

Katherine – at Community Action they continue to provide services while practicing social distancing. Their buildings are closed, and there are no face-to-face appointments. Intake and assessment are done over the phone. They are still doing energy assistance payments by mail and email. Most utilities have a moratorium on being shut-off but they are concerned about arrearages after the fact. Rent assistance is continuing and there is increased capacity with five appointments/day. Eviction notices are still filed but just not enforced, which is what they hear from Legal Aid. They are trying to help as many people as they can to stay housed. The City of Hillsboro provided additional help with rent assistance due to COVID-19. Capacity is still not enough to respond to all the calls. Full time shelters are continuing to operate while providing social distancing. Community Action is working to provide childcare and match care with essential workers. Also, they are coordinating pop-up childcare for first responders and health workers that is through the schools.

ORAL COMMUNICATION

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Komi Kalevor reported Washington County is still open. The Housing Department is trying to ensure some people work from home, so everyone is not in the office. They are getting requests for interim adjustments from people who have lost their jobs. Also, they have social distance officers in the office. Clearly, housing is an essential service. A lot of information about operations during COVID-19 is on the County website. We do not know yet about evictions, when will rent be paid, people evicted, etc. Clackamas County

is saying there will be six months allowed for repayment, and activists are saying no. The good news is that our Metro Bond NOFA went out on March 16, with \$80M total and \$25M for non-profits. There is conversation on whether or not to extend the application deadline with both viewpoints held among potential applicants. There is a 20% goal of minority contracting for the Bond projects. The ballot initiative for Here Together is still moving forward even with COVID-19; before it was polling pretty well; a lot is yet to be determined.

Ben likes the NOFA \$25M set aside for local non-profits since there are many non-local agencies who want to apply for funds, too. Sheila worries that local providers are on the ground with resident services right now; maybe change the deadline for the local non-profits?

V. STAFF REPORTS

A. Financial Statement:

Yaling Dressel reported she is still not getting info from Infinity due to the transition of property management to Cascade. We are on track with our budget. Also, she is working to get information from HUD on corona virus operations; she should have information tomorrow for the inflation rate, which will probably be 2.8%, from HUD. There also may be special funding, more dollars, to accommodate the decrease in tenant incomes. HAP will be increased, and HUD is trying to come up with ways to help.

B. Section 8 and Low Rent Public Housing

Liz Morris said the HCV program is at a 94.1% utilization rate; there are not too many decreases. They are only issuing new vouchers for VASH and Mainstream.

Gary Calvert said public housing is doing fine but starting to see impacts from COVID-19. He had a new tenant that handed keys back before moving in because the tenant got nervous. They are seeing some changes to income. Some folks in public housing are under observation for COVID.

C. Affordable Housing

Mr. Calvert has instructed Cascade to hold off on rent increases for the next three months. Rents are only increasing on turnover. Gary expects the affordable portfolio to not have huge issues since many residents are already on fixed incomes. He expects issues at the other properties that don't have subsidies tied to the property; he is not sure how they will handle this. They will issue notices for non-payment then deal with residents on a case by case basis.

Josh Crites said that Cascade is doing a good job of giving information to tenants for COVID-19 social distancing as well as delays in evictions. More information will be covered during New Business. CDBG and ESG funds will likely be available in the future. The voucher program did an email blast to clients last week and will continue to work with residents so they don't panic.

D. Special Projects

Liz Morris said project based vouchers are status quo. A lot of interims for decreases in rent are being processed. The FSS program finalized home ownership for one family, and the closing is this week. They are recruiting from the waitlist to increase the number of FSS participants. The Section 8 Administrative Plan goes to the Housing Authority Board next month (April).

Josh Crites said we are in the process of updating the criminal background policy. For Metro 300, we received the first \$440,000 and are working with Continuum of Care and Community Action to prioritize those funds to house seniors with disabilities who are homeless and get those funds out the door. Meyer Memorial Trust sent an email to all grantees that funds will be flexible due to more pressing needs in your community, so grantees can use funds how each agency sees fit. Luke Dorf, Sequoia, and Lifeworks are our partners and we will have a discussion about how to use the funds.

E. Report on Homelessness

Komi Kalevor reported at this time of year shelters typically close their doors, but they may need to keep open longer this year due to cold weather. See the packet for Annette's updates. Homeless encampments are a main issue for our department now. Encampments are increasing since people are leaving shelters. As decided in Martin vs Boise, jurisdictions cannot tell people to "move along" if a community does not have shelter space/beds for them. People are camping in other people's driveways and front yards and in parks; discussions are ongoing at the County.

Katherine Galian said Community Action is working a lot of angles to provide shelter beds to shelter in place. Sanitation sites have been set up across the county in the meantime. Also, they are trying to hammer out a response for the homeless who are COVID-19 positive. They got 25 beds online in the first few days; 25 more beds come online Monday. There is a target of 120 beds although it's still not enough to shelter everybody. Community Action is also doing outreach to let people know what to do if they don't feel well and, also what to do to protect themselves. Sunrise is a current shelter location, but it will be closing; the shelter opening on Monday is in a Beaverton City building.

Komi Kalevor said that in the past there were hotels/motels taking people who have rental assistance and now people are being denied even with vouchers in hand.

Katherine reported that libraries and restaurants are now closed due to COVID-19 so hand washing, phone charging, etc., are more limited; there lot of people working hard to help this.

F. Housing Affordability/Development Initiatives

Shannon Wilson reported that Willow Creek Crossing was removed from the development tracking list since it's fully constructed and almost fully leased up; last we heard there were eight units remaining to be leased. At The Fields in Tigard, construction is happening as usual and it's about 60% complete. It is a large project at 264 units. The CDP Tigard project is working hard to close at end of June; luckily the interest rates are locked. CDP had a kickoff meeting with the funding partners earlier

this week; final approval from Metro, via the BOCC, is needed for this project. The Rosa Street property has been on the backburner but is still on our radar.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

The Admissions and Continued Occupancy Plan (ACOP) and Section 8 Administrative Plan go to HABOD on 4/7. If April meetings are cancelled, we will try to have phone meetings to approve Housing Authority plans since timelines are based on HUD guidelines. The Housing Authority is meeting with HABOD members one-on-one electronically about criminal background policies. The PHA Plan is also moving forward on 4/7.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

The Volunteer Celebration was canceled due to COVID-19.

Liz Morris reported that for the Rental Assistance Team COVID-19 procedures, the staff have been operating on a 40-50% reduction of the team at the office and still communicating with voucher participants. Income decreases are a priority and are still being processed; they have seen a high increase in the number of decreases. They are processing about 15/day and since last Monday have processed 80 decreases; the same time period last year was 15 total decreases. Some good news is the elderly and disabled are not experiencing these decreases. Annuals are still moving forward; they created a Memo to clients for proof of working through the crisis in case this information is needed in the future. Staff is trying to do all annuals online and over the phone. Also, they have stopped all unit inspections except initial inspections due to very little risk in those associations. Overall, there is stress with the staff but they are doing a really good job.

Komi stated that the staff commitment has blown him away.

Metro Bond Update

Shannon Wilson stated that the NOFA came out on March 15; we had partner call last Tuesday on 3/24 for developers interested in applying for Metro Bond funds. Seventeen different development organizations and service providers were on the call. Staff is already looking at the application deadline and is checking with partners to see their perspective of what would work best as far as extending the deadline. Housing got a new AmeriCorp volunteer, Katie Warden, who started on 3/16 to conduct community engagement for the Bond. She is working at home right now; community engagement is hard to do right now with social distancing. But, Katie is reaching out and doing phone calls with other agencies.

COVID-19 – Eviction Moratorium and other housing related topics (discussion)

Komi – in terms of rent due April 1, estimates are all over the place, but there may be a 15-20% of households with non-payment of rent. There are a lot of working people with service jobs and we anticipate there will be a lot of challenges come April 1. For our housing, estimating 90-\$100K/month loss. For Quatama the estimate is more like 40-

50% loss of payment so \$330-\$400K/month. Komi is working with County Administrative Office and HUD to come up with funding to close that gap.

Ben – he heard there would be a stimulus bill that would fill in gaps for non-profit providers.

Josh – is tracking with the State and HUD in D.C. The Senate Bill had rental assistance that would offset rent decreases. If our per unit cost goes up this would mean federal funds would be available to fill those gaps. For other programs, the \$5M in CDBG in the COVID response bill, he is hearing conflicting things. Does money go to the state or entitlement jurisdictions? He is not sure. He also heard some money could be used for rental assistance but does not have details yet. Will funds go to landlords or tenants, also don't know. There will be \$4M in emergency solutions grants (ESG) to keep people safe from corona virus. At the state level, it sounds like there will be \$500-\$100M, and shelter will be part of that, but not sure what it will be allocated to. Will funds flow to community action agencies or housing authorities?

Vince – if there is not cash or not enough, it might be time to take some existing funds designed for housing and use for our non-profits that we took so long to develop. Long term we need these agencies in place that we spent 25 years building.

Katherine – at Community Action they are seeing folks who have rental assistance who are not sure how they are going to pay their portion of the rent. In addition to emergency housing funds and ESG, also looking to cities and private foundations for support of emergency rent assistance payments. Community Action is waiving the rule that people can only access one rental assistance payment per year, and they are also waiving the 72-hour notice requirement.

Sheila – everyone is understandably fractured, and there could be help coming from 3-4 directions. She is not worried about tenants trying to take advantage but is worried about connecting in real time with resources and for service providers to know how and which people are being helped. Also, not all workers are able to work remotely. It's important day by day where communication concerns are, such as buying computers for people right now, so we can be at 100% capacity. Good Neighbor Center noted they cannot have volunteers on-site now, and there is a huge shift in how agencies are operating.

Cindi – questioned if volunteers are not allowed in some of the shelters? She knows an agency that is providing meals.

Sheila – is not sure across the network how things are going.

Katherine – a lot of the volunteer base is a vulnerable population (e.g. elderly) so they are not going into settings where they would have social contact. In shelters, you cannot provide volunteer service without direct contact. A lot of places have changed their operations, such as food boxes are provided outside and a person will pick up with no actual contact. There are still volunteer opportunities and still a demand for volunteers.

In summary communications, how can housing providers be aware of what's going on? How do housing owners manage the expected decrease in rent payments? Where to send tenants if they need assistance? Are there suggestions or ideas on this missing infrastructure?

Sheila - Housing Oregon is doing weekly calls in Multnomah County. There are more providers there, though. She does worry we won't be as strategic and timely as we could.

Vince –thinks Housing Authority has to focus on other owners besides themselves and make sure the private providers do not go away.

Sheila – Community Development might be the more relevant agency for tenant assistance. How is the EOC (Emergency Operation Center) going?

Komi – if non-payment is on the EOC agenda, he not heard of this. BOCC/CAO has been updated and County does have a reserve that could be accessed during an emergency. It's touch and go right now.

Sheila – as a CDFI does Community Housing Fund (CHF) keep making loans to projects or reserve funds to make emergency loans to providers? During 9/11 and the great recession, nothing instantaneous happened—it took some time to see and understand the impacts of stalled markets. It doesn't feel right to keep making loans without regard to long term risk. Her board feels uncertain, but to date is willing to keep moving projects forward. CHF has little capital remaining, so needs to decide whether to keep using it for “regular lending activities,” or whether to assume there will be market disruptions and the need for different products (i.e. guaranties).

Vince is also concerned by this. We don't know how long this will take. Could it be 2-3 years of no development? Don't know the answer.

Sheila - can we focus on the area that we each most focus on to then put together a bigger picture than we would on our own?

Katherine said this makes a lot of sense to pull all the strands of information together and share it in a central location.

Sheila has been listening in to a lot of webinars, but so far, they are much more focused on public health than finance or economy.

Ben is curious about when the Washington County Metro NOFA deadline will be decided.

Komi thinks we should revisit a possible deadline extension in mid-April. There is so much volatility right now. Some developers may need an extension, and some might not, so one size might not fit all. Komi would like maximum flexibility.

Ben hopes this would not affect scoring; also, who would be ready to proceed in this market?

Sheila believes sponsors will not be able to accurately describe their risks by early May and does not think scoring can reflect market certainties. Similarly, large developers can pump out a pretty application, and are likely less focused on delivering services to support local Washington County residents right now. It may not be a level playing field as applications are being completed.

Komi said we will take the comments and review.

Shannon says there are projects ready to apply for the Metro Bond NOFA; also, nonprofits are more often directly providing resident services and are helping their

residents get through the crisis. She wonders if the non-profit set-aside can be increased and used as a tool to make sure the local non-profits get their fair shot but also provide units on the ground.

Vince thinks you don't want a non-profit to take on a project they don't know if they can complete. He thinks the funds should be put on hold like everything else until there is some idea of what the future may hold.

Ben asked for insight on Komi's internal struggles.

Komi says they have not discussed pausing the Metro Bond NOFA projects; Metro is pushing to proceed and if there are major hiccups Metro wants to know.

Katherine says there is a lot to think about and sort out. Any other items for discussion?

Sheila - Is there a way to communicate in less than 30 days?

Vince - Can we do this meeting every two weeks over the next few months?

Katherine suggested a subcommittee.

Vince & Ben would do that.

Komi suggested a meeting in two weeks for rental assistance, NOFA, balancing existing portfolios, schedule in next two weeks. (this meeting did not occur due to public noticing requirements that subcommittee meetings are still considered regular committee meetings, and a notice did not go out to the public.)

VIII. RESOLUTIONS/ACTION ITEMS

N/A

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

Komi Kalevor
Secretary/Executive Director