



MEETING MINUTES

HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF WASHINGTON COUNTY

February 24, 2022- 9:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

<u>COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT</u>	<u>STAFF PRESENT</u>
Alma Flores	Josh Crites
Sid Scott	Jacob Boyett
Sheila Greenlaw-Fink	Melissa Sonsalla
Dave Bachman	Ling Huang-Dressel
Eric Schmidt	Shannon Wilson
Katherine Galian	Will Seals
Renee Brouse	Liz Morris
Vince Chiotti	
Melinda Bell	
Ballen Younis	
<u>ABSENT</u>	<u>GUESTS</u>
Cindi Otis	Gena Briggs
Narendar Sahgal	Jacquilyn Saito
	Katie Warden
<u>HABOD MEMBERS PRESENT</u>	

I. ROLL CALL – 9:01 a.m. A quorum was present.

II. DISCUSSION – ORAL COMMUNICATIONS and MEMBER UPDATES

Alma Flores reported, The Mary Ann is under way and heading toward conversion of permanent financing.

Sheila Greenlaw-Fink expressed her disappointment of an article stating that Portland led the nation with 39% in rent increases this past year.

Dave Bachman reported Cascade Management is busy with Metro bond projects as well as releasing activities with the Belfry in Forest Grove. They are also working on the Affordable Housing Preservation portfolio for the county coordinating the relocation of residents.



Katherine Galian stated Community Action has completed ERA1 (emergency rent assistance) and starting ERA2. The demand for rental assistance remains high most likely due to increased rental costs in the region. They launched a program providing utility assistance, which with current funding is projected to last about six months. There is also another water utility assistance program available through Washington County's Clean Water Services.

Rene Brouse stated the City of Sherwood will be receiving funding to assist businesses and area residents.

Vince Chiotti shared he will no longer be serving on the HAC as of the end of March. He thanked everyone who has worked tirelessly to provide affordable housing in Washington County noting the tremendous strides that have been made to make affordable housing more accessible. He stated non-profits need to step up to build 60% units using 4% bonds to provide additional affordable housing.

Melinda Bell reported the Union Gospel Mission will be breaking ground for their new women and children's center in June.

Ballen Younis explained the difficulty he had in reaching staff at the affordable housing properties listed on Washington County's website leaving a voicemail at each one except Aloha Park. He noted the rising rents in Beaverton making it challenging to find affordable housing for the immigrants he serves. He asked the committee for referrals to any available affordable housing units in the area.

III. ACTION – APPROVAL OF MINUTES @ 9:12 a.m.

The committee voted to approve the minutes from January 27, 2022 meeting.

Motion: Eric Schmidt

Second: Sheila Greenlaw-Fink

Vote: All approved

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Presented by Josh Crites, Assistant Director

Mr. Crites reported the County is still in a high risk category and staff are continuing to telecommute and follow mask guidelines. He also reported that the quarterly Metro bond and SHS program reports were presented to the Board of Commissioners earlier in the month, and a major change in the Public Housing Authority Plan (PHA) this year is the addition of the Move to Work (MTW) supplement that will be attached to the plan.

The Housing Services Department has been working with the Office of Equity on a training plan for the department in 2022 and has signed a contract with Cultural Coaching Solutions to provide equity trainings and coaching throughout the year. Managers and supervisors have already been participating in a six month management/supervisor training program run by Blue Tiger. He announced the new projected move in date to the Adams Crossing building is this May, but may be altered depending on supply chain issues.



Mr. Crites added that, HP4 is the syndication rehab project involving five of the county's affordable housing properties, and that these properties will be syndicated into the tax credit program, while Cascade Management is managing the relocation of residents during rehabilitation. The financing will be finalized in mid-April or May with Bonita Village being the first property to be renovated. Lastly, he was thrilled to announce the MTW program implementation is moving forward, and HUD mandated policies are being finalized for the rent reform study.

Vince Chiotti noted the public has expressed concerns due to the lack of information and updates regarding the implementation of the Metro bond. He asked how updates are shared with the public as he sees questions weekly from individuals asking how the funds are being spent.

Mr. Crites stated Metro and other counties agree there is need for an all-out media blitz to communicate the story of the Metro bond and how those funds are being utilized, along with the number of units being produced. The County's public affairs department is working with Metro to create a strategic plan to communicate what is happening in the tri-county region on how the funds have been allocated so far.

V. RESOLUTIONS / ACTION ITEMS

N/A

VI. ONGOING BUSINESS

A. Immigrant & Refugee Services

Sheila Greenlaw-Fink inquired if other jurisdictions have implemented programs that could be mirrored in Washington County to assist the immigrant population.

Ballen Younis stated one of the biggest barriers to housing for the immigrant community is the requirements needed for housing such as social security numbers, rental income, and an income source. He asked Liz Morris if Section 8 might be utilized to provide short-term housing for these families. Liz Morris noted Section 8 is waitlist only but there might be an avenue through Community Connect for possible eligibility of regional housing funds like Regional Long-term Rental Assistance (RLRA) program through the Supportive Housing Services (SHS) program.

Yaling Dressel inquired about the number of immigrant and refugee families needing assistance and the length of time they are needing temporary housing. Mr. Younis stated currently these families are provided housing in a hotel for three months but need to find permanent housing after this time. He noted he is currently working with approximately 40 households.

Alma Flores inquired if the low barrier screening with the Metro bond housing would be applicable with this population or not. Shannon Wilson explained the lack of proof of identification is a challenge with Metro bond housing. These properties would be more accessible and a good option if the identification portion can be verified.



Mr. Crites noted the county's legislative staff affirmed there is legislation regarding financial assistance for refugees, and will distribute the information he receives for this legislation to the HAC. The legislative package included 18 million dollars for refugee resettlement, and Mr. Crites advised looking into how these funds will be distributed to see how they could assist the refugees Ballen is working with at this time.

Katherine Galian confirmed a package was passed in the last legislative session addressing housing Afghan refugees. She did note there are tools and mechanisms to move individuals past screening criteria especially if there is a rental assistance program that is committed to paying the portion of the rent the household cannot afford for the duration of the lease. There is a master leasing program for households without documentation in some jurisdictions. The lease is placed in the name of a sponsoring organization on behalf of a household allowing time to obtain the needed documentation to then transfer the lease into their own name. As far as she is aware, Washington County does not actively have a master leasing program.

Dave Bachman stated Cascade Management does have a low barrier screening and qualification threshold, but none of their criteria would typically deny any refugee households. A social security number would only be necessary for HUD related programs, but is not needed for tax credit or bond funded programs. He added a social security number might be requested on an application but is not necessarily required, and recommends entering zeros on the social security line; stating that as long as a source of income can be verified, the other barriers can be overcome. Available affordable units are mostly 60% AMI that require rental assistance due to higher rental costs, and suggested having a tool similar to Housing Connections, which connected people with all the affordable housing landlords and guiding them through the process of qualifying for housing.

Josh Crites stated that he added information to the chat about \$18 million what put in place for a funding package on refugee resettlement, with the press release coming out of the Oregon Department of Human Services. He suggests that a closer look be taken at the \$18 million and see how they are funneling it, because the article does state it will provide for short-term/long-term housing assistance, case management, and legal services.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Homeownership Opportunities and Support

Sheila Greenlaw-Fink reported the Community Housing Fund is interested in how they can be involved and partner with to provide homeownership opportunities. She was excited to see the Board of Commissioners set aside a portion of the Housing Production Opportunity fund for homeownership. She added, the Section 18 disposition is a great opportunity to assist first time home buyers in this difficult housing market. She inquired how the HAC can partner with other organizations to advance homeownership.



Josh Crites stated the HAC can provide guidance on strategic priorities with homeownership. He noted there is a homeownership program within Section 8 which is underutilized and will look for strategies to increase utilization of this program in the future. Liz Morris added, five people are currently utilizing this 15 year program and 15 to 20 interested residents met with staff to discuss this program last year.

Sid Scott inquired if Sheila knew how many housing units Habitat for Humanity is producing each year. Ms. Greenlaw-Fink stated the number of projects in Washington County has increased. She will send an overview on the number of projects produced by Habitat for Humanity to HAC members. She added the passage of the middle housing bill will provide much needed zoning changes for entities like Habitat for Humanity to build additional units in the future.

Mr. Scott suggested adding ADUs to housing authority property to assist in the low housing inventory.

Chair Flores requested the March HAC agenda include the topic of land use and ADUs in relation to Housing Authority property. She inquired about the protocol for HAC members providing letters of support for ARPA applications. Mr. Crites stated there is an ARPA committee for Washington County and he will look into the procedures for providing support and bring that information back to the committee.

VII. DEPARTMENT UPDATES

A. Housing Development

Shannon Wilson presented an update on the progress report for the affordable housing bond and the process for lease up at the Viewfinder. Washington County's overall unit production goal was to produce 814 units with the Metro affordable housing bond funds, currently 812 units are in progress with \$17.4 million remaining, which when awarded will exceed the unit production goal. The Viewfinder is the first of ten Metro bond projects and was completed in December 2021. Additionally, the Valfre at Avenida 26, Terrace Glen, and the conversion of the Aloha Inn Motel are three other projects that are currently under construction. Through the bond implementation process, partnerships with culturally based organizations have ensured equity and inclusion are priorities.

Katie Warden noted the Viewfinder was the first opportunity to fulfill Metro's expectation of an equitable lease up process. The goal of outreach was to connect and inform low income communities of color. In partnership with Community Development Partners and Guardian, promotional lease up flyers were distributed to targeted communities and a lease up informational session was offered. The flyers included all the necessary information needed to inform the public about the project and the steps to apply for these units. The flyers were available in 17 languages and were shared via email with Washington County housing groups, culturally specific community based organizations, and on social media pages. To conduct intentional outreach, housing services partnered with the Somalian Empowerment Circle (SEC) to hold a lease up informational session for the Viewfinder via Zoom. The initial plan was to hold several of these sessions with various BIPOC community groups, but with the short planning timeframe and limited capacity of culturally specific community based organizations only one session could be coordinated. Five of the participants of the SEC session joined the waitlist and two moved into units at the Viewfinder. Feedback from SEC, Bienestar, and APANO provided input on



making the lease up process more accessible to communities of color which was incorporated into the Viewfinder lease up process. Two issues that arose with the Viewfinder project were construction delays, pushing the move in date back two months, and communication to those on the waitlist on the timing related to preference policies. The property management company will improve communication advising those on the waitlist of changes affecting their application status and move in timeline. Katie announced the 2021 Metro annual report will be released in May 2022.

B. Financial Statement

Yaling Dressel reported on the Department of Housing Services and Housing Authority of Washington County programs. The Department of Housing Services programs include the Continuum of Care grant supported by HUD funds, Homeless programs supported by Washington County's general fund via a public safety levy, the Kaiser Metro 300, the Metro affordable housing bond, and the Metro supportive housing services bond. Continuum of Care expenditures are behind due to the difficulty housing partners are experiencing in securing affordable housing for their clients. The homeless programs are close to a breakeven point. The Kaiser Metro 300 program has ended, and those clients have now been transferred to either emergency housing choice vouchers or Metro RLRA programs. Metro has provided fixed dollars for the Metro affordable housing bond admin fee which currently shows a net surplus but will equalize once expenditures are completed. This is also true of the Metro affordable housing projects, that show a surplus which will decrease as projects move forward with construction expenditures. The Metro supportive housing services program was projected to receive 38 million dollars with \$1.4 million having been received as of December 2021. The remaining portion will be received once tax returns are submitted this year. The county has provided a loan in the interim until those tax dollars are received from Metro. Currently 2.5 million dollars have been expensed.

Housing Authority of Washington County programs :

Section 8 – Actual revenue received is slightly higher than what was budgeted due to CARES Act funding received from HUD in 2020. Also, understaffing issues resulted in less salary costs being expensed during the last budget year.

Public Housing – Revenue is slightly less than projected due to capital dollars for rehabilitation of public housing properties being behind schedule. Some of these dollars may be reallocated to the next fiscal year to continue improvement on these properties.

Kaybern Terrace – This is a small 14 unit property which is at a breakeven point.

Aloha Park – This is an 80 unit property that is currently being renovated as part of the syndication project for rehabilitation which is also at a breakeven point.

Local Fund – This fund netted 2.4 million dollars due to the landlord compensation fund that crossed two fiscal years. They were contracted to receive 28 million dollars to be distributed to the community. In all, they have disbursed 30.8 million dollars. The 3 percent admin fee for this program only utilized about \$250,000, however \$900,000 was received. The remainder will be used for various projects.



Additional development and admin fees were received from other projects attributing to the increase in revenue.

C. MTW Activities

Josh Crites reported the implementation of the Moving to Work (MTW) program is underway. This program allows the Housing Authority to increase affordable housing choices, cost effectiveness, and promote self-sufficiency. In February, the MTW activities were posted online for public review, then in March these activities will be previewed to the Board of Directors and presented at community stakeholder meetings, resident participant meetings, and the resident advisory board meetings; with a final presentation that month to the HAC for recommendation to the Board of Directors. In April the finalized programs will go before the Housing Authority Board of Directors along with a public hearing seeking Board approval. The PHA plan and the MTW supplement is required to be submitted to HUD by April 15. The following are proposed activities within the MTW program that will help reduce rent for many residents, help mitigate disparate impacts, and decrease staff time.

Tiered rent program – This is a contractual HUD mandated program to move rent calculations to a tiered program, helping people increase their earned income and incentivize work. Washington County is one of four housing authorities to be chosen to implement this program. The goal is to simplify the rent calculation and reduce reviews, allowing for increased incomes. Household reviews will only take place once every three years and increases in income will not need to be reported between regular reviews. Hardship protections will be in place for those with large families or childcare expense, and utility allowances/reimbursements will still be applied.

Melissa Sonsalla added if someone loses their job, they can request an interim and be placed in a lower tier if their income allows. She noted the vast amount of impact analysis that was completed in preparing for the program. There are approximately 600 eligible households and half of those would be selected for the program. The majority of participants will see no change or a rent decrease, and one third would have a monthly rent increase. Most rent increases are less than \$30, with a small amount of families experiencing an increase of no more than \$61.

When calculating the rental tiers at the HUD recommended 30% of income, which placed 72% of households with a rent increase. We saw a disparate impact in Black, African American, and Hispanic communities due to the loss of deductions for large families. In speaking with the other three housing authorities implementing this program, as well as HUD, it was decided to reduce the tier calculation to 28%, which changed the percentage of households receiving a rent decrease to 70% and only 30% receiving an increase. After this change, a disparate impact remained among Black, African American and Hispanic households, again due to the loss of deductions for large families. The Washington County Housing Authority decided to implement their own hardship policy that will be automatic for large families (5 or more dependents), not allowing more than a \$30 increase in their rent as a result of the program change.

Rent simplification initiatives – There are initiatives to simplify rent calculation, with the first being around asset income. Of the 2,256 households currently reporting assets, the average impact in rent



was \$3.56 per household, per year. The new policy will disregard assets for rent calculations when total assets of a household are less than \$100,000, because the administration of these asset calculations is so burdensome.

The second calculation is the medical and disability expense deduction, which is complicated and uses a threshold for calculations which differ by household. Due to this, the threshold will no longer be used and instead a simplified table will be used, utilizing the actual reported medical expenses, rounding down to the nearest \$1,000, and deduct that from the resident's annual income. If someone has less than \$5,000 in medical expenses, no documentation is needed, and they can self-certify with a form stating the amount of medical expenses. If someone has less than \$1,500 in medical expenses this will not be included as a deduction. This information will be collected yearly. Residents will be notified of these new rental calculations and the need for the changes.

Another rent calculation is the proration for mixed eligibility households (one or more members of a household are ineligible citizens), who currently have their assistance prorated based on the size of the household, how many are ineligible for citizenship, and the amount of assistance they are receiving. The calculation for this rent structure is very complicated, so instead a standard subsidy deduction of \$100 will be applied to any mixed eligibility household regardless of family size, ineligibility, or assistance levels.

Triennial reviews for seniors and people with disabilities – Households in this category do not typically see changes in their income from year to year. Due to this, reviews will now take place every three years, but yearly checks to review annual medical expenses or utility allowance adjustments will still take place. There are approximately 1,300 households who qualify for this rent calculation resulting in 700 less reviews per year.

HQS inspection processes – Simplification of the current process is proposed.

Local project based voucher program – Create flexibility around project based vouchers. Currently these vouchers are capped by program and project but with the flexibility of MTW we can increase project based vouchers in the community.

Voucher set-aside program – The Beaverton School District has one of the highest rate of homeless youth in the state. A pilot program will be implemented in partnership with the Beaverton School District to set aside 50 vouchers for homeless youth and their families.

The next steps will be to collect public comments in the next month and hold stakeholder and resident meetings. Reports will be given to the Resident Advisory Board and the Housing Advisory Committee in March. In April, the finalized MTW outline will be presented to the Housing Authority Board of Directors.

Katherine Galian asked about revenue stabilization for the department if the vast majority of rental income with the new calculations are going to decrease. Mr. Crites stated the affordable housing portfolio is separate from public housing and housing choice vouchers. He noted there will be a loss but



they are looking at other avenues for savings on the administrative side. With some of the special programs that will be operating along with administrative savings, the above proposed changes will bring more opportunity to more families.

D. Additional Department Updates

Due to time, members were directed to look to their packet for these updates.

IX. ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Sheila Greenlaw-Fink inquired how much of these changes will result in real differences in demographics regarding lease ups and requested staff update the HAC on this in the future.

Ballen Younis suggested implementing the building of tiny houses to address the housing shortage in the county.

Eric Schmidt asked staff how the HAC can help the Housing Authority get the word out on any of the programs and changes mentioned. He extended an invitation for staff to speak on TVCTV to update the public and share what is happening within the Housing Authority.

Josh Crites noted there is a lack of information in the community regarding all the work and program changes occurring within the realm of housing in the County. He asked the committee to be a voice in the venues they are a part of, to communicate and educate people on the changes taking place. He recommended HAC members sign up for the Housing Authority newsletter with the public affairs department, so they can be apprised of everything that is happening.

Alma Flores asked to receive an update on bond project partnerships to see if they are meeting the objectives of the NOFA and the bond in terms of equity and inclusion.

Sid Scott expressed interest hearing more about incorporating wrap around services with affordable housing.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:57 a.m.

Komi Kalevor
Secretary/Executive Director