

Affordable Housing Commission

March 26, 2024

12-1 p.m.

City Administration Building Conference Room “Edward and Martha Berry Room”

Attendees:

- Polly Sumney (representing banking)
- Solveig Spjeldnes (Chair, City Council Rep)
- Meghan Jennings (City Planner)
- Maria Modayil (representing renters)
- Mary Abel (representing community/neighborhoods, three times state representative)
- Shay Myers (representing architecture)
- Amy Lipka (representing older adult population)

Visitors: Rob Delach, Robbie Scott

Absent: Mollie Fitzgerald, Zack Dye, OU rep, Kimberlee Francis, Karen Dahn (stepped down)

1. Lisa Eliason, Law Director for the City, joined the meeting and discussed the conflicting language in the City Code vs. Affordable Housing Commissions' Bylaws regarding membership.
 - a. According to the code (see Page 3) the commission is limited to 11 members, but the bylaws we inherited say we can have a “minimum of 11 members...” Two new members Amy Lipka and Mary Able were approved by city council so the commission has 13 members. After the chair emailed the members notifying them of the overage and asking whether anyone wanted to step down, Karen Dahn said she would because she planned to move to Florida. Lisa provided the group with two options:
 - i. Change the ordinance to 12 members through the normal city council review process, OR
 - ii. Have members serve as non-voting members and step into voting status through attrition.
 - b. After much discussion of the presented options, Michele Papai resigned from voting position. Michele will continue to attend and participate in the meetings as a non-voting community member. Her knowledge is invaluable as she has been on the commission for many years and has much of the historical contexts as a City Council member when this commission was created.
2. Introductions were completed by members on the commission. Prompt that was considered with introductions: “What excites you/motivated you to join this commission?”
 - a. Below is a list of issues and interests that were brought up by the members of the commission:
 - i. Poor planning with new housing developments that could have been avoided if this commission had a voice at the table. Example: transit for apartments by S.R. 682, schools- Morrison Elementary, traffic
 - ii. Development Regulations- urban planning, zoning
 - iii. Renters' rights, rental availability for those who have to work and live in Athens,
 - iv. Availability of housing for across the financial spectrum- rental, real estate taxes, city limits live, equitable housing across the board

- v. Affordable housing (book ends) for several income levels availability of quality affordable housing for early career professionals,
- vi. Development money to rebuild anew (this commission was created because of an original meeting with Ohio University President 15 years ago or so)
- vii. Athens community is 30% owner occupied, 70% rentals; it would be important to determine the right ratio and better address renter needs.
- viii. What is affordable?
- ix. Congregate housing
- x. Housing that is 900-1500 sq.ft.
- xi. Assessment of developable areas in City, Oakmont area (Carroll Rd.) -- be proactive in assessment of development, sewer expanding to Albany, water
- xii. Interest in hearing from Ridges development/Joe Recchie-- housing, audience, progress, timeline, land cost-- with banker's and loan officers and appraisers
- xiii. Land bank, rehab of areas (commercial as well)
- xiv. Construction with a focus on sustainability goals, zoning codes haven't been modernized, parking minimums, walkability, diverse communities that incorporate different age ranges as well as family sizes, etc.
- xv. Multi-generational living, safe and affordable housing to feel stable and secure, lot move away as people age in this area, policies that would help keep people in place

3. Other discussions:

- a. Kerry Pigman from the Athens County Foundation is working on the issue of housing insecurity and emergency housing
- b. April is Fair Housing Month
- c. Next meeting:
 - i. Review Bylaws
 - ii. Discuss Commission's short term and long term priorities
 - iii. Invite Joe Recchie and Chris Knisley to provide an update on the Ridges housing development
- d. Draft minutes will be sent to members by Maria
- e. Per Solveig's request, IT has created a distribution list with all members included, athensahc@ci.athens.oh.us (sending email to this address will alert all members in the group)
- f. The commission also has access to an individual mailbox account that can be accessed through <https://office.com>. Login information was shared with members

4. Future Meetings: monthly third Tuesday in the City Admin Building, Edward & Martha Berry Room as available.

- o April 16, 12-1 p.m. City Admin Building, Edward & Martha Berry Room
- o May 21, 12-1 p.m.
- o June 18, 12-1 p.m.
- o July 16, 12-1 p.m.
- o August 20, 12-1 p.m.,
- o September 17, 12-1 p.m.
- o October 15, 12-1 p.m.
- o November 19, 12-1 p.m.
- o December 17, 12-1 p.m.

5. Solveig will continue to contact OU President Gonzales to have her appoint a representative to the Affordable Housing Commission.

*****Excerpt from City Code*****

3.07.76. - Establishment of the affordable housing commission.

(A) There is hereby created and established a committee to be known as the Athens City Affordable Housing Commission consisting of a member of city council, the mayor or their designee, the executive director of the metropolitan housing authority or their designee, a designee by the Ohio University president, and seven additional members appointed by the city council who are, when possible, representatives from the following: real estate, neighborhoods, finance, tenants, senior citizen, and two at large members appointed by city council.

(B) Initial appointments of the seven representatives shall be as follows: two of the appointed members shall serve terms of one year; two of the appointed members shall serve terms of two years; and three of the appointed members shall serve terms of three years. After the initial appointments establishing the affordable housing commission, all members shall be appointed to three-year terms commencing on May 1. Members may be considered for reappointment and may serve consecutive three-year terms. Vacancies on the affordable housing commission occurring otherwise than by the expiration of terms, shall be filled for the unexpired term and appointed in the same manner as the original appointments. All members shall serve without compensation.

(C) All meetings are open to the public in accordance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

A quorum for the affordable housing commission shall consist of a simple majority of the members. A majority vote of the full voting membership is necessary to take any official action. Voting may be done by being present at the meeting, by real time conferencing, or by proxy vote.

The commission shall elect its own chairperson from among its members, shall maintain a record of its proceedings, and shall adopt such rules and regulations of self-government as may be necessary to carry out the purposes and provisions of this section.

A member who misses three consecutive meetings, without an excused absence, shall automatically cease to be a member and their seat shall become vacant.

(Ord. No. 0-108-17, § I, 11-13-2017; Res. No. R-05-22, 8-1-2022)