

Affordable Housing Commission

May 21, 2024

12-1 p.m.

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

Establish Quorum: quorum met.

Attendees:

- Polly Sumney (representing banking)
- Solveig Spjeldnes (Chair, City Council Rep)
- Maria Modayil (representing renters)
- Shay Myers (representing architecture)
- Zach Dye (Athens Metropolitan Housing Authority)
- Nat Edge (Athens Metropolitan Housing Authority)
- Mollie Fitzgerlad (Economic Development)
- Megan Vogel (Ohio University representative)
- Kimberlee Francis (Center for Student Legal Services)

Visitors: Joe Recchi (presenter), Zach Reizes (via Zoom), Ryan Schwartzhoff (via Zoom)

Absent: Mary Abel, Amy Lipka, Meghan Jennings

Joe Recchi, CEO Praxis Partners – Ridged redevelopment lead. Focus group on Saturday to discuss senior housing as an option for the Ridges. This project is a 10-year + adaptation process, beginning with approvals and building consensus with OU Board of Trustees (6/2023). Creation of NCA presented to council, along with CRA and TIF in 2023. A pre-cursor to affordable housing is the conservancy district (600/700 acres at Ridges). The university is the steward of the property but will execute this plan alongside the community. Joe has been working in affordable housing for many years as an attorney.

How can the Ridges redevelopment take pressures off additional challenges within the community (housing). Comprehensive market study completed and economic development impact of affordable housing (opportunity for WF housing and how to incorporate student housing capacity). Looking at how to compete the student rentals, the economics of which are skewed towards student vs families/workforce.

Looking at VOLUME of affordable housing too. Joe has a lot of experience with low-income housing tax credits and are over reliant on this program. Many clean energy initiatives from IRA have paths towards affordable housing without touching LITEC. Developers are focused on LITEC because it generates revenue for them. This leaves behind housing upgrade opportunities.

Re: the Ridges – looking at senior housing in buildings 2, 3 and 4. Fine arts/flex space on one side. The other side has been vacant for 30+ years. TIF bond financing can be used to get this done alongside LITEC. You cannot use state HPTC with a federal LITEC project (you can use the federal HPTC). We need to find as much equity as possible to reduce the annual debt service on the project. Reduce debt = reduce rent payments. Credits can offset construction costs or debt. Praxis is an expert in putting together these creative capital stacks and income averaging (starts at 30% AMI around \$400/month)

Another aspect of the project is artist housing. These folks are contributing to the economic success of a community and are often displaced. A good example is Short North in Columbus.

This needs to be a part of the 30+ year commitment to affordability. 77 units for artists at the Ridges (177 total affordable rental units out of 900+ total units). This includes new construction and historic.

Repurposing of facilities for home ownership units (80% of median income level or less). This is a public private partnership taking advantage of state and federal programs. We can also look into the Welcome Home program (\$90k write down makes the unit affordable).

All of these tools are not specific to the Ridges. They can and should be used throughout the community. AMHA will be an important player in these efforts.

Shay asked about the federal HPTC. Could other infrastructure at the Ridges qualify for reuse of existing buildings? In short, yes. Federal HPTC is uncapped. Use as much as you can! Ridges could be a micro-case study.

We have enormous opportunity at a large swatch of housing is being wasted on substandard "slumlord" ownership. We want to improve the properties and tax base beyond the students.

University Ridges website has a framework plan including an assessment of each building. Healthy housing environment plays into the community's social determinates of health.

Along Dairy Lane and off Carriage Lane will be single family attached homes. Capacities are based on sewer and water availability. The NCA will make long-term investments in infrastructure possible. Could there be another road constructed via easement off Blackburn Road? The university reserved right to use Summit entrance on Dairy Lane to access the future housing property. However, property has changed hands so enforceability could be challenging.

The university has reserved additional housing for folks at the 317 board (permanent supportive housing). Joe's information will be sent to all AHC members, along with the Saturday focus group notes.

Approve Minutes: Mollie sent out March and April minutes and we will approve at the June meeting, along with the May meeting minutes.

By-Laws: Solveig pulled up the by-laws with track changes. ORC only permits certain changes. Now the number of commission members and terms are correct and aligned with the city ordinance. Is May when terms will end/be renewed? Yes. If a member leaves, they will appoint someone else from the same organization (no term). Mollie moved to approve the by-laws. Polly seconded. All in favor and the motion passed.

Other discussions:

- Mollie needs to be reappointed.
- University Estate townhome complex is under City Council review right now (project was formerly put on hold). One provision is for AHC to take a look and make recommendations. Debbie Walker has them on the third floor. Commission members can swing by and take look. One of the concerns was the second floor (and how that met universal design criteria). It meets this standard if the design allows the stairs to have a chair lift. Per ORC, we cannot make a decision as what council can or cannot do. We can simply advise council.
- We need to make it clear that the AHC's focus is not only low-income housing. We look at affordable housing at every level (professors, service workers, young professionals,

retirees, etc.) Can we scratch “Affordable” and just be the “City of Athens Housing Commission?” We will think on this and decide next weekend. Shay brought up the HUD definition (30% of gross pay, which scales). Maybe we just clarify what affordable means. Solveig says they have tried this. Maybe it’s just an educational issue. A lot of the push-back on zoning changes with public review come from a misunderstanding of the terms. Shay will send Solveig the definition to include on the commission website.

- *** Institute conversation from last meeting – this has gone through the planning commission and we are downsizing the lot sized to follow their recommendations. This will create more opportunity for housing developments.
- The Hill publications listed Athens as one of the fastest growing cities in the country. This is based on census-data.
- Polly shared that HVB is in an application process to participate in the Ohio Homebuyers Plus program (tax savings for those with higher interest rates). Once it is final, we can add this to the website too.

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

- **June 18, 12-1 p.m. Megan cannot attend. Shay is going to check but he may be out of town.**
- July 16, 12-1 p.m.
- August 20, 12-1 p.m.,
- September 17, 12-1 p.m.
- October 15, 12-1 p.m.
- November 19, 12-1 p.m.
- December 17, 12-1 p.m.

Meeting adjourned: 1:02p.

*****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)