

Affordable Housing Commission Minutes

November 19th at Noon
City Administration Building – Council Chambers

Members in Attendance: Solveig Spjeldnes, Mollie Fitzgerald, Meghan Jennings, Megan Vogel, Zack Dye, Shay Myers, Amy Lipka, Mary Abel, Kimberlee Francis, Maria Modayil

Members Absent: Polly Sumney

1. **Introduction** – Solveig welcomed everyone and stated the Commission’s mission: The Athens City Affordable Housing Commission is a commission of city government established to review best practices, investigate community affordable housing models, and identify needs and opportunities within Athens’ city limits to advance decent, safe, sustainable affordable housing for all city residents. The commission is tasked with providing advice and guidance on measures and policies that influence access to and needs within the local housing market.

She emphasized the Commission does not only look at low-income housing options. It is an advisory commission with a comprehensive view of housing.

2. **Establish Quorum** – Missing Polly but quorum has been met. Maria arrived around 12:15p.
3. **Disposition of Minutes** – Meghan moved to approved the October meeting minutes. Amy Lipka seconded. All in favor and the motion passed.
4. **Speaker** – *Developer Taylor Koch with Hill Tide Partners, LLC – “Potential Affordable Housing applications that may require zoning changes”* – Affordable housing development firm working on Hooper Street proposal on Athens southside. He is here to update the commission and seek input. He gave some background on Hill Tide Partners including staff, size, focus areas, etc. Mr. Kock also gave examples of other tax credit developments Hill Tide has completed (The Estates at Shiloh in Dallas and Pegram Landing in Lewisville, NC).

The federal housing tax credit is critical to housing development (OHFA in Ohio). Mr. Koch explained the two scoring criteria are geography based and the set aside for Appalachian counties, including Athens. Census tract 9733 is one of those which is why we are receiving inquired from affordable housing developers.

Hill Tide is under contract for 18 acres off Hooper Street, next to Monticello Village. 5.13 acres is already property is already in city limits and zoned R1. The remaining acreage requires annexations and rezoning. This will give them more

flexibility with site designs. Mr. Kock reviewed existing zoning (R1). R3 is directly to the north and R2 is directly to the south. He showed the preliminary site plan which includes 2-three story buildings, 1:1 parking, a culvert between buildings for access, community building, patio area and small park. It will be between 50-80 units and a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom units. A majority will be be 1 & 2 bedroom units, and about 40% will be 3 & 4 bedroom units. Mary Abel asked about ADA accessibility. It is currently proposed as a three story walk up building with no elevator. He referenced the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the requirements outlined in that code. OHFA requires you to meet and double the 504 accessibility requirements (e.g. 60 units would require 6 ADA compliant units).

Solveig asked about transportation and noted bus routes do not exist in this area. Where could there be bus stops added? Mr. Koch suggested commercial locations on county road 198 or at the existing multi-family development at Monticello. They could also consider adding sidewalks to help with pedestrian traffic.

Mr. Koch showed preliminary elevations which aren't very realistic given the topography and contouring of the site. There is a 16-foot drop on the site. He also showed rent breakdowns, which are targeted at households making 60% of the area median income. The property will be mixed-income (between 30-70% AMI). Solveig reiterated that they want to annex the property adjacent, which is a possibility.

Shay asked what is driving the unit count. Mr. Koch answered that it's about maxing out the 9% tax credits up to 65-75 units. There is no minimum, but you want economy of scale (to help with services and on-site management and maintenance). Mr. Koch explained the tax credits sell to investors that provide equity in the deal. He explained that these developments are not possible without the subsidy. In return, the state requires a 30-year restricted covenants to maintain rents and incomes. After those 30 years, owners can do different things. Hill Tide would likely go after 4% credits to restart the 30-year cycle. Their goal is permanent affordability.

5. **City Updates** – Meghan (Planning Commission – Welcome Home) – Meghan shared that the City applied for grant funds through the Welcome Home Ohio (WHO) program. They were granted \$2mm for 8 affordable housing units throughout the city. This essentially establishes a revolving loan fund for the city since it will get the revenue from the sales of units. There are deed restrictions and a 20-year period that they need to be owner occupied, as well as a restriction for qualified buyers upon purchase. This structure helps maintains affordability. The city is in the process of identifying several properties for these builds and is partnering with Joe Recchie on the project.

Solveig (City Council) – Solveig shared that the Ridges is moving forward and it appears the state will approve the transfer of land from OU to the New Community Authority (NCA) in December. The City anticipates 700 housing units, both in the Ridges buildings and on the land between Dairy Lane and Richland. The construction on Dairy Lane was for infrastructure improvements to prepare for that development.

Shay (Board of Zoning Appeals) – Shay was out of town and missed the BZA meeting, but noted there was a request for reduction in parking requirements and request to permit ground floor residential units in areas where commercial uses are required.

6. Other city and housing related news – None.

7. Vote on Next Year's officers – The nominating committee put together a slate of candidates for 2025 AHC officer positions. Amy Lipka moved to approve the following slate of candidates for 2025, as follows:

Chairperson – Solveig Spjeldnes

Vice Chair – Polly Sumney

Secretary – Mollie Fitzgerald

Shay Myers seconded. All in favor and the motion passed. Congrats to all!

8. Committee Reports/Updates – 20 minutes – Goals, Potential Ordinances, Projects

a. Nominating Committee (Ad hoc) - *Mary, Megan, and Amy Lipka* – see above.

b. New Development Committee - *Mary, Megan V, Amy, Meghan J, Mollie and Shay*: Megan shared the draft list of goals and initiatives of the New Development Committee, including:

1. Find Development Opportunities

a. Identify locations in Athens that could be good for new affordable housing, focusing on filling in empty spaces within the city

b. Look at changes to local zoning rules that would make it easier to build different types of housing

2. Engage the Community

a. Get the community involved early in the planning process so that residents can share what they want and need from new housing

3. Attract New Housing Projects

- a. Look for grants, tax incentives, and partnerships that could help fund new affordable housing developments

4. Support a Variety of Housing Options

- a. Encourage developments that are affordable, accessible, and appeal to seniors, families, and young professionals
- b. Work with the Disabilities Commission to ensure that new housing meets accessibility standards

c. Neighborhood Revitalization - *Maria, Zach, Solveig, Polly, Kimberlee AND Michelle Papai as our consultant:* Solveig read the draft goals of the Neighborhood Revite goals, including:

1. Develop a focus and vision for new housing developments

- a. Identify vacant or abandoned properties for housing.
- b. Collaborate with Realtors, Developers, Contractors, Bankers, Neighborhood Association, Habitat For Humanity and other organizations to identify projects and goals.

2. Identify strategies to improve the health factors and safety of properties

- a. Identify property-related needs, risks and barriers to improvement in each neighborhood.
- b. Develop strategies collaboratively with stakeholders to address this issue.
- c. Engage city administration to meet our goals.

3. Community Information and Education

- a. Provide education about home improvement programs (HAPCAP, etc.).
- b. Provide education about grant supported projects.
- c. Provide education about landlord-tenant rights and responsibilities
- d. Collect information for renters and property owners to assist with property revitalization.

4. Coordinate with citywide annual Revitalization activities

- a. Collaborate with city, Diversion Program, student engagement, Rural Action, Athens-Hocking Solid Waste District, 4-H and Girl Scouts, etc., and Athens Village Greek Societies on projects.
- b. Organize neighbor to neighbor assistance programs to facilitate services for lawncare, snow shoveling, and light maintenance to help neighbors in need.
- c. Set annual goals and priorities to improve the appearance and property safety of neighborhoods.

She noted that Neighborhood Revite will focus on the vision and the New Development committee will focus on the development emphasis.

What can we do to get folks excited to help their neighbors? Maybe we can engage students in this (shoveling elderly neighbor driveway for example).

Rob Delach, Morris Avenue. Neighbor to Neighbor Assistance Program is a great example. This has been discussed on maybe city commissions. This includes clearing sidewalks in the winter. There hasn't been a lot of movement on this but it needs a place to "live." Solveig noted this must include excitement from the neighborhood, possible through a neighborhood association.

- d. Communication/Education Committee (Ad hoc) – *Polly and Amy*: This is an ad hoc committee and has not met yet. They will meet soon to map out goals. One item for this committee is to add more info from the AHC and its goals to the website.
9. **For the Good of the Order** – Solveig was asked to present to the Athens Board of Realtors and asked them what they would like to see from the AHC. Michelle Papai took notes from that meeting, which included:
- Someone from real estate to advise the AHC (possibly Meranda Chesser).
 - Collaborating on affordable housing.
 - Providing resources (On Common Ground magazine from the National Association of Realtors) for expanding housing options.
 - Establishing local/in-house building inspections (which could also generate profit). Solveig gave the example of homes owned by senior citizens renting out rooms to students. All ideas are worth considering.
 - Revising AirBnB ordinance (e.g. requiring owner occupied vs investor-owned). Rob Delach, Chair of BZA, noted uptick in requests for entire home short-term rentals. This is permitted by City code by conditional use, which requires BZA to approve. It's more of an opinion, but generally the BZA is against it. He also added with this comes requests for variances for extra parking for long-term rentals. The BZA doesn't feel like they should be making all these decisions. The conditional use provision could be limited. This is something the AHC could work with them on.
 - Ways to attract more contractors to the area.
 - Adding ADUs and tiny houses. The New Development Committee is interested in looking into these and other appropriate formats and how to add those to the zoning code.
 - Looking at more creative financing and increasing awareness of programming (like WHO).
 - NIMBYISM – way to go Meghan for explaining city policies to neighborhood associations so well! It helps to alleviate some misconceptions.

Other affordable housing projects are being considered along Columbus Road. Solveig also mentioned the Sunet Motel project, which will convert rooms into

emergency housing. The ACH is open to community input on this and other housing strategies.

Solveig also shared the draft AHC report for City Council. She briefly ran through the slides. The charge is to update council on what we've been up to and what is planned for next year. Send any thoughts, feedback, additions to Solveig. The presentation to council is scheduled for 12/9.

Shay noted there is more work to be done to help solve this issue and suggested we emphasize the drivers of the affordable housing crisis in the presentation, such as zoning reform, legalizing ADUs, expanding beyond just LIHTC projects, etc.

10. Concluding Remarks – Caitlyn McDaniel, is looking into Community Land Trusts both in the city and throughout the county. If interested in these conversations, reach out to Caitlyn! They are planning a visit to the Yellow Springs CLT.

11. Motion to Adjourn – Mollie moved to adjourn, Amy seconded. All in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 1:02p.

Remember that the Association of Realtors is a resource for smaller community improvement grants. They awarded \$7,000 to the Village of Chauncey to support its code office.