

Affordable Housing Commission Minutes

December 17th at Noon
City Administration Building – Council Chambers

Members in Attendance: Mollie Fitzgerald, Zack Dye, Solveig Spjeldnes, Maria Modayil, Shay Myers, Meghan Jennings, Amy Lipka, Polly Sumney,

Members Not Present: Not excused - Megan Vogel. Excused absences - Mary Abel, Kimberlee Francis

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** – Quorum met.
3. **Disposition of Minutes** – Zach moved to approve the minutes. Shay seconded. All in favor and the motion passed.
4. **Speaker** – None
5. **City Updates** – Meghan (Planning Commission): Meghan clarified that the planning commission is not currently considering changes to short term rental code. Internal working group this did discuss how this impacts affordability. Conversations are still happening but not currently being discussed among the entire planning commission.

Re: LIHTC projects – the Spire Pomeroy Road project went to council last week. It was determined there was an error in filing application materials. Council kicked this back to the planning commission to restart the review process. The Developer has updated the application. The second case for LIHTC on Hooper Street will have its first case hearing at the 12/18 meeting. At that meeting, the commission will also hear from OU about the new HCOM facility. Solveig confirmed that the public meeting for Hooper Street is today 12/17 at 6p at public library. She also expressed

her support for the Pomeroy Road project. She will share her documentation and data with anyone who is interested that shows the demand and need for this type of housing development.

The City has started work with American Structure Point for a corridor overlay zone. Public engagement this will happen in February. This is an overlay zone that can be applied throughout the city, and Stimson Avenue will serve as a pilot corridor.

Solveig shared that for every 100 people in need of housing only 45 units are currently available. Commissioner Chmiel sent Solveig a contact for a developer that builds smaller, energy efficient and movable homes. Solveig is meeting with him in January. This could be another tool in the housing toolbox.

The Co-Create Group is looking at emergency housing. GoodWorks doesn't have enough options and doesn't offer emergency housing. This is a complex problem. Solveig gave various examples and reminded the commission that the Sunset Motel was awarded \$2mm to transform to emergency housing. She urged folks to complete the project survey which will help identify needs and potential concerns. Although She also shared the Gathering Place's Conastoga Huts will not be housed at the OMJ site and need another location.

Jim Kauffman, Director of Real Estate for OU was at the meeting and gave a brief update on the Ridges. The university is working through administrative items regarding the contract agreement with developer for potential condos. This goes to the controlling board in March or April. He will then have a better update on next steps including when it will close and what the timeline looks like. Specific questions should be answered by the NCA, not university. More information will be available in January at the next public meeting. Polly asked the date and location of that meeting. Jim will send. Mollie asked if there is participation from the AHC on the NCA board. There isn't, but Solveig feels tuned in. Jim is open to working with the AHC on future projects as well. Solveig shared that the President Gonzales is supportive of housing efforts too. Jim has a background in community development and housing.

6. **Other city and housing related news** – Shay shared one case for a church property in a residential zone. It's not directly related to housing but its interesting to see how bulk control changes impact R zones. It is Christ Lutheran Church on Mill Street.

7. **Committee Reports/Updates** – Progress on Projects and Goals

a. Nominating Committee (Ad hoc) - *Mary, Megan, and Amy Lipka*: None

b. New Development Committee - *Mary, Megan V, Amy, Meghan J, Mollie and Shay*: Solveig first shared that the Athens Board of Realtors provided the On Common Ground booklets that offer creative housing solutions and ideas. There are three editions available. This New Development

Committee met on 12/10 and reviewed goals and focuses in greater detail. They discussed how important public engagement is. We need to be more proactive especially when it comes to larger housing developments. The community and developers also need more guidance on the public engagement process. We can engage other housing and development organizations to garner their support as well. The Committee also revisited Oakmont Phase II. This is already zoned and within city limits, but there are hurdles to development including a second access road to Pomeroy. This is a very expensive cost. WE can look into design to inspire interest among developers and to get a better idea of associated infrastructure costs. Solveig shared we could use TIF here. The Committee made revision to its goals and will adopt these at next meeting (not yet scheduled; likely in February).

- c. Neighborhood Revitalization - *Maria, Zach, Solveig, Polly, Kimberlee AND Michelle Papai as our consultant*: This committee met before the meeting. They discussed encouraging beautification of neighborhoods. Solveig spoke with David Riggs on potential strategies around this and he seems willing to discuss in more detail. (E.g. how many code enforcement officers does his office need? How do we make their work more efficient?) David Riggs has been chatting with Drew Daniels with the Chauncey code office as well (an office that was funded through support from the Athens BOR). The Village of Chauncey is doing annual cleanup day and beautification days, providing info to residents on assistance to fix up homes. There is interest in the latter in the City of Athens, particularly from the West Side. Solveig shared a previous cleanup day with help from Rural Action. There is an application for beautification services in Chauncey that makes the application process easier. Can we do an Athens County Home Repair Fair, which would bring together various orgs that offer programs to assist repairing folks homes and volunteers? We could get OU students more involved too. Learning home DIY is good and saves money. Habitat for Humanity is conducting DIY classes.
- d. Communication/Education Committee (Ad hoc) – *Polly and Amy*: Committee met and discussed the scope of the committee. Its first step is to learn about the communications approval process and reviewing if/how current messaging on website aligns with the commission' bylaws. Solveig added that she would like to see a repository of information for residents (e.g. where to apply for home repair funding) created.) The committee will work on a process for collecting that information at its next meeting. Polly asked about admin rights on the website. She would like to make some changes to make it graphically more pleasing. Layout matters! They need to better understand constraints of the CMS system and city approval process. Who has final approval on messaging? They will prepare and present recommendations to the full commission and we will find out who has final approval for city website content.

8. **For the Good of the Order** – Michele Papai shared there were Athens beatification days prior to COVID. There is a model that exists. The Mayor and university President would kickstart the day. Lots of students participated. Meghan asked if it was timed up with Earth Day? It was around the same time, but there are a lot of Spring events. Solveig suggested we start revitalizing the plan now. Maria shared the university does it but it's now a month-long event and folks submit projects to complete. The Center for Community Engagement runs that program. Amy added the West Side Neighborhood Association did "quick picks" for garbage cleanup for a couple hours on a Saturday morning. It was fun and could be revisited.

Michele noted that the On Common Ground booklets are online too. Megan Vogel is the university representative on the AHC, but she was unable to attend today.

Shay shared info on "Helping Hands of SEO." This is for home repairs on a sliding scale for upgrades that are flexible but often overlooked (grab bars, ramps, power washing, lawncare, checking smoke detectors, etc.) Please share with anyone who may benefit from these services. There is a website and Facebook page. This could be included in the AHC resources. Most programs appear to be for those 60+ or who are disabled, but it may be flexible. Solveig noted that seniors may want to pay slightly more if they trust the provider. So far the organization is well-received and is supported through various local and grant sources. Amy shared two funding sources - a Healthy Aging grant through the Commissioners, and another through Hopewell Health Centers. Shay added that some funding is specific to communities.

Maria asked how this committee plans to better engage the community moving forward? Maria represents renters; how does she spread the AHC messages? Solveig shared some of the current ways in which messages are shared (newspapers, Facebook, neighborhood associations, public meetings). In short, we need to be more proactive. We have also discussed a public housing forum. Let's look at recreating the Chauncey model. We can discuss this at the next development meeting too.

Co-Create is another great place to share and update housing information. They will continue to explore housing options even after the Sunset hotel emergency housing project.

9. **Concluding Remarks** – None.

10. **Motion to Adjourn:** Maria moved to adjourn. Polly seconded. Meeting adjourned 12:49p.

Next Meeting: January 21st at 12pm in Council Chambers

