

Affordable Housing Commission

Agenda

Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at Noon

City Administration Building – Council Chambers

In Attendance: Mollie Fitzgerald, Meghan Jennings, Megan Vogel, Solveig Spjeldnas, Zack Dye, Amy Lipka, Maria Modayil, Polly Sumney

Excused Absence: Shay Myers, Mary Abel

Guests:

1. **Introduction** – Mission and Purpose - 5 minutes: 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 AHC looks at housing developments on all points of the housing spectrum – not just low-income housing. We want to be inclusive.

2. **Establish Quorum** – 1 minute: Quorum met.
3. **Disposition of Minutes** – 1 minute: Polly moved to approve the minutes. Amy seconded. All in favor and the motion passed.
4. **City Updates**, Meghan Jennings (City Planner), Solveig (City Council) and Shay Myers (Board of Zoning Appeals) – 5 minutes: Shay is not here today. Meghan shared there isn't much to report out on the planning commission. They are waiting to hear back on a Hugh White Honda application for an expansion plan. Tomorrow's meeting will discuss the Pains LIHTC project and legal reviews from city staff and public. Solveig mentioned the Ridges will be approved by November except zoning changes/corrections. None of those seems to be controversial. Solveig shared the SAOP is doing a number of housing projects, both in Athens and elsewhere in the region. It would be helpful to update the public on housing projects during these meetings. The SAOP project is a 9-unit apartment complex in Glouster, 3-units in

Athens, 6-units in Chauncey and a few others around the county. Other communities include Nelsonville, Logan, New Lex, McConnelsville etc. Habitat is working on a 24-unit housing project as well. These two entities have been collaborating a lot. Solveig got a great tour of the modular home.

5. **Progress on Vacant Properties Ordinance & Welcome Home**, Andrew Chiki – 5 minutes: the WHO grant progress includes identifying a location that would be the most useful. Several were considered. There is a parcel on Hudson Avenue that has a garage and impound lot currently on it. Kenny Drive is currently storage for the Fire station off 56. The intention is to decommission Hudson building and move those items to Kenny Drive. The garage would then be demolished and primed for WHO funding. This is on the near east side and will match the characteristics of the existing housing stock. There are discussions with an adjacent parcel owner to build additional houses within that project. This would be 8 units, the sale of which would revolve the program funds. IF extended, 17 total units could be built. Price is being negotiated with this property owner, who appears to be very interested.

Re: Vacant Property Ordinance – This is addition to title 29 in city code for identifying unoccupied vacant structures and record those to rehabilitate them for reproductive use, and to provide a tool for the code office and admin to track vacant properties and remediate them. Currently the only process for this is focused only with rentals. There is no mechanism outside complaints for weeds/grass and blight to identify vacant properties. It's a long ordinance with a lot of nuisance, exception and qualifiers. Solveig thanks Andrew for sharing that with the AHC members. He incorporated their feedback into it. He touched on the fee structure of the program/ordinance as well. The longer a property remains vacant, the costs for upkeep and remediation go up. Sometimes this required possession and demo but he city. The funds from this ordinance could go towards supporting those efforts instead of burdening taxpayers with this cost. Final revisions will be sent to council by tomorrow and ready for discussion on 9/22. Solveig added that a realtor group to provide options for folks.

6. **Area Housing Development/Construction projects** – Ridges, LIHTC projects, SAOP, Woods Edge and other private developments/construction – 5 minutes:

Woods Edge at UE is coming along. This will include 42 mid-income housing units. Meghan acknowledged recent LIHTC projects that were approved: 111 Hooper Street and Balckburn Landing off US 50. Both are within city limits. There are two

LIHTC projects in the Plains and a third being proposed in Valleyview Estates (Avanelle and Hooper Rd.) Meghan will tally the total number of units from those projects. Solveig noted if we get more housing options that will hopefully stabilize prices to some degree. Construction of LIHTC projects are highly monitored.

Last year the bulk controls were revised. there is a home at Utah & Dalton that recently sold. The new owner redivided that block. The issue was the home built crossed 3-4 property lines. There are now 5 new parcels which will allow for 4 new homes, one of which is under construction.

The land bank continues to work hard as does the MHA. The city is working with MHA to transfer ownership of the properties the city has owned to MHA. The second reading was last night and the last reading will be 10/6, per Zack.

7. **Committee Reports/Updates** – 35 minutes – Progress on Projects and Goals: reminder that subcommittees have to be chaired by an AHC member. Per the bylaws we need to discuss leadership and positions for next year. Solveig does not necessarily wish to chair the commission again. She left the room for the nominating committee discussion.
 - a. Nominating Committee (Ad hoc) - *Mary, Megan V., and Amy*
 - Replacing member discussion: Megan shared that the committee met 9/3 and discussed replacements for Kimberlee Francis. There is no final decision, but she asked that existing committee members ask about a leadership role for next year. Let Megan know by September 30th.
 - Nominations for leader positions per Bylaws: The understanding per the bylaws is no one will need to roll off the commission aside from Solveig since she will no longer be the city council representative. You can email the committee if you have suggestions for new members.
 - b. New Development Committee - *Mary, Megan V, Meghan J, Mollie and Shay*
 - Discuss progress and ideas for adding housing options: The committee did not meet today due to attendance.
 - c. Neighborhood Revitalization - *Maria, Zach, Solveig, Polly, Amy, Megan V.*
 - Presentation and Discussion of DRAFT Overview for Subcommittee project (5 minutes): Solveig noted the pedestrian

accessibility project with Rob Delach. The link to this was sent to AHC members. Solveig's presentation shared draft ideas, including a partnership with Dr. Shaw's class to create and distribute and analyze surveys. The presentation covered goals for the Rental Code Inspection Processes Subcommittee. See attached overview for details. Amy asked for clarification if these are recommendations and not the actual goals. That is correct as we are an advisory body. We don't enforce anything but can work closely with the City on efforts to improve things for the code office, renters, owners, students, etc. in a data-driven way.

- Discussion and Vote Subcommittee Candidate: Solveig stepped out for this discussion. Polly shared that the committee met and Megan provided an overview. They reviewed the applications received to date. The subcommittee will have 7 members with specific identified members...they are Emery Mathey (renter) Bob Prebe (landlord/developer), Caitlyn McDaniel (experienced renter), Jennifer Collins (research consultant) and Solveig (AHC member). Megan confirmed that Jim Kauffman will be the university representative. Mollie moved to accept the slate of candidates. Amy Lipka seconded. All in favor and the motion passed. Solveig rejoined the meeting.
- Westside Porchfest and Strengthening Neighborhoods: This will build off the east side porch fest. The goal is to expand it throughout the city. This brings neighbors together and supports research that shows building community through events like this improves neighborly behavior.

*Mollie left the meeting and Maria took over minutes.

- Amy mentioned that the W Side neighborhood group has been revitalized in the past few months and they have been engaging in some social activities regularly.

d. Communication/Education Committee (Ad hoc) – Polly and Amy

- Solveig asked the commission to take a look at the website as some changes were made on the website.

- Amy reported that Polly and Amy took a look at the website and did not see any issues.

8. **For the Good of the Order** – 5 minutes: Amy suggested opening the floor to the guest members who were in the audience.

Rob Delach reported that the law director denied the Gathering Place's spot zoning for temporary housing. Spot zoning for temporary housing could be challenged and a referendum could be passed. Board of Zoning would have to approve it for conditional housing. This is in relation to the Conestoga Hut Project.

Meghan clarified that the Safety Officer's review was based on concerns for sanitation.

Drew Daniels from Chauncey spoke in favor of the vacant housing ordinance and how this can positively impact affordable housing and that vacant houses in disrepair can lead to demolition at the cost of the taxpayer.

9. **Concluding Remarks** – 1 minutes: None

10. **Motion to Adjourn:** Meeting adjourned at 12:52 p.m. Zach Dye motioned, Amy seconded.