

# Affordable Housing Commission Minutes

Tuesday, December 16, 2025 at Noon  
City Administration Building – Council Chambers

**Present:** Solveig Spjeldnes, Mollie Fitzgerald, Zack Dye, Amy Lipka, Mary Abel, Shay Myers

**Absent:** Polly Sumney, Maria Modayil, Megan Vogel, Meghan Jennings (\*Planning interns attended)

- 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. The commission focuses on housing at every income level.
- 2. Establish Quorum** (1 minute): Quorum met.
- 3. Disposition of Minutes** (1 minute): Minutes were generated through transcript of meeting and edited by Mollie and Solveig. Mary moved to approve the minutes. Shay seconded. All in favor and the motion carried.
- 4. Speaker – Rose Frech, Director of External Affairs, Federal Housing policy and funding at Integrated Services** (10 minutes): Solveig introduced Rose. Rose provided an overview of the HUD changes and impacts for Athens and surrounding counties. Integrated Services is a HUD grantee. This is the primary funding sources for homelessness assistance and permanent housing & supportive housing options for chronically homeless and those who are disabled. This is rental assistance paired with other support resources. HUD has functioned under a housing first philosophy for years with services optional. The goal is self-sustainability. The COC funds are managed through COHIO. Integrated Services receives \$3mm in HUD COC funds. In Athens, those dollars support the Charles and Graham Drive projects, units in the Plains, and 150 portable vouchers (similar to section 8, money follows the person). They are finishing year 1 of the COC program.

Last month, HUD released notice of funding that disrupted the second year and shifted priorities away from permanent housing to transitional funding/street outreach. They now want a 30% cap on permanent housing. In Ohio 90% goes to permanent so this is an abrupt and significant reduction. They requested changes

be submitted within 6 weeks. COHIO and IG are trying to project their project-based units that already have capital expenditures. They will have to give up a majority of the portable vouchers. There were many lawsuits filed against these changes. In the meantime, HUD pulled that notice of funding and plans to put out a new notice. As of now, they are unsure when the new notice will be released and what it will include. They are in limbo. As a provider, Integrated Services will operate under the assumption that they will lose much of their permanent housing programming. They want to keep federal dollars in the region and will do so by transitioning to transitional housing. The big difference here is the time limits. HUD requires transitional housing to include worker engagement (40 hours/week). This is a very different model. This keeps them from helping the most vulnerable in our communities.

Solveig asked for examples of projects in the community that will be impacted. SAOP has some HUD dollars from a separate source. Rose is unsure of the implications for them. It's the less visible projects that will suffer the most. Mary asked for the typical amount of the voucher. HUD is based on fair market rent, so it varies. Zack shared it's around \$829 for Athens through 2026. It will increase in 2027. There is a calculation that is used.

Mary asked about the state and federal work requirements that may not exist in a rural communities. Rose shared they are dealing with the same issue with Medicaid. They are doing advocacy work around this – lack of readily available consistent work. For housing, this is a smaller group of people. This puts burden on the provider as well to help piece together 40 hours of work. IG is looking at building customized plans with other partners.

Mary also added the transportation barrier. These are challenges not realized by those making the rules in a rational manner. There will most likely be some exceptions, but folks still get lost in the mix and lose the benefit or service.

There is a lot of advocacy happening and IG is having conversations with congressional aids, congresspeople, and stakeholders to share why these changes won't work in our communities. Reaching out to your legislators still can help!

5. **Brief Annual Report Presentation – Solveig Spjeldnes** (10 minutes): Solveig shared there wasn't time to present this to Council in December. We plan to present in January. She briefly went through the report, including goals, mission & purpose, history, member composition, committees, progress and future directions.
6. **City Updates – Meghan Jennings (City Planner), Solveig (City Council) and Shay Myers (Board of Zoning Appeals)** (5 minutes): Gracie Vaughn (Planning Intern) gave an update. Meghan is working on the Neighborhood Overlay Zone meeting. This has been in the works for 2 years. The purpose of this is to continue aesthetic continuity

in Athens, and not just uptown. It focuses on walkability (e.g. reduction in parking requirements for projects within certain distance of bus stop). The meeting is at 6p at the Armory. City is also working on the framework for the Comprehensive Plan update. This is the 5 year evaluation period. They are looking at specific neighborhood developments and affordable housing. They will engage the AHC more in coming months. Mary asked if folks attending the meeting tonight can park in the Masonic Lodge lot. Gracie will check with Meghan. Solveig reminded everyone that property owners are responsible for their own snow removal.

The Conestoga Huts resolution passed. Rob Delach noted the conditional use for temporary shelter ordinance for B3 and R3. BZA will approve/deny these. Taking housing stock off the market is not the goal. The process will be the same for temporary shelter projects. Solveig shared the Gathering Place is working on a concept for another temporary shelter. They have a grant to buy land for this. They are looking at the outskirts of the City near a bus line.

7. **Area Housing Development/Construction projects** – Ridges, LIHTC projects, SAOP, Woods Edge, Sunset Shelter & private developments/construction (5 minutes): The Ridges will be early 2026. No new info LIHTC projects or SAOP. Woods Edge is coming along. Sunset Shelter is on hold as all bids came in over budget. HAPCAP is working on a solution.

8. **Committee Reports/Updates (20 minutes) – Progress on Projects and Goals**

a. **Nominating Committee (Ad hoc) - Mary, Megan V., and Amy**

- *Vote on 2026 slate of candidates:* Proposed slate of candidates: Shay Myers as Chair, Mollie Fitzgerald as Vice Chair, Maria Modayil as Secretary. This does not need city council approval. Amy moved to accept this slate of candidates. Mary seconded. All in favor and the motion carried.
- *Vote on replacement member:* AHC can make a recommendation but it must be approved by city council. The committee received 5 letters of interest but recommend Solveig given her knowledge and experience with the commission. Mary made the motion and Shay seconded but it could not pass without a quorum (since Solveig has to abstain).

b. **New Development Committee - Mary, Megan V, Meghan J, Mollie and Shay**

- *Discuss progress and ideas for adding housing options:* Mollie shared the committee did not meet this month but plans to try and convene a meeting of property owners around Oakmont to discuss potential housing development up there.

**c. Neighborhood Revitalization - *Maria, Zach, Solveig, Polly, Amy, Megan V***

- *Rental Inspections Processes Subcommittee Update*: None
- *Neighborhood Associations and Activities: Neighborhood Revitalization Grant*: Solveig reached out to Lacy Rogers to see about working collaboratively with her to increase neighborhood communication.
- *Habitat for Humanity* - None

**d. Communication/Education Committee (Ad hoc) – *Polly and Amy*: None**

9. **For the Good of the Order** (5 minutes): Happy Holidays! Rob added Ken Ohlers (Habitat for Humanity) is speaking at the Strong Town Athens meeting on January 4<sup>th</sup> at 5p at Big Run Kava Bar. We will discuss the neighborhood revitalization concept. Solveig added Ken will also be at the West Side Community Association meeting too. He wants to focus on the west side. This will be collaborative with the residents there. They can offer DIY trainings with a mobile unit. Hopefully this will make home repair more affordable. That is 6:30p at Central Venue church on 12/17.

10. **Concluding Remarks** (5 minutes): None.

11. **Motion to Adjourn**: Mollie moved to adjourn. Mary seconded. All in favor and the motion carried.