

# Affordable Housing Commission Minutes

April 21, 2026 at Noon  
City Administration Building – Council Chambers

**In attendance:** Mary Abel, Zack Dye, Mollie Fitzgerald, Maria Modayil, Meghan Jennings, Shay Myers, Amy Lipka, Solveig Spjeldnes, Polly Sumney, Megan Vogel

**Absent:** Alan Swank

## Link to YouTube recording of meeting:

[Athens Affordable Housing Commission - April 21, 2026](#)

1. **Introduction** – Chair Shay Myers started the meeting at 12:01 p.m. and read the AHC mission.
2. **Establish Quorum** – Quorum met.
3. **Disposition of Minutes** – Meghan moved to approve the minutes from March. Megan V. seconded. All other members present in favor and the motion passed. Minutes for March were accepted.
4. **City Update – Meghan Jennings (City Planning), Alan Swank (City Council), & Shay Myers (Board of Zoning Appeals)**

Meghan reported that the Welcome Home Ohio project is moving along at 93 Hudson Ave. Materials are being audited and moved to storage on Kenny Drive. A draft site plan and variances are being reviewed by the Code Office to determine if there are minor or major subdivision plans. The City plans to share with the public and schedule a public meeting with the neighborhood to talk about the development and allow interested buyers to learn more about the project.

Meghan also informed the group that Tom Pyle, the new Director of Code, has invited the Ohio Recovery Housing Organization to the May 6 Planning Commission meeting to provide an informational presentation about recovery housing. The Planning Commission is excited to have the organization as a guest and to learn more about zoning language to address specific use for recovery residencies. Currently, there are some ongoing court cases and per the advice of Lisa Elias, the recovery houses are being regulated as rentals until they have more information from the ongoing court cases.

Shay inquired about the selection process for the Welcome Home Ohio project and if it was determined yet. Meghan asked that interested parties email Meghan (mjennings@ci.athens.oh.us) and she will then connect them to Joe Recchie, the developer about details on being a qualified buyer. Joe has the details on the qualifications and has a handful of people reach out which is encouraging. Meghan added that in the first phase of the project there will be eight units and it will be on a first come first serve basis. Individuals can get approved for loan and mortgage and such but should reach out to Meghan/Joe first to know about the program and it's requirements/criteria.

No updates from Alan Swank as he was not present at the meeting.

Shay invited Solveig to speak about her presentation to the City Council. This will be provided below.

Shay reported that the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) heard one case but it was not housing related.

## **5. Area Housing & Development Projects**

### **Ridges**

Solveig reported that final approvals will all be completed this summer. Some construction starting this Fall. Amy has been participating in these conversations as well. Solveig asked Meghan a question about the zoning changes that are required and if it would be done simultaneously to these approvals. Meghan has not had any recent discussions, but believes that B1 zone is most applicable. For the main building. Meghan will inquire with the developer about the timeline on the zone change. Solveig asked about the plans for restaurants, artist lofts, condominiums. Solveig added that the property along Dairy Lane was planned for townhomes/condos.

### **Senior Housing**

Amy reported that senior housing is only a small part of the conversation at the Ridges. Out of the about 700 units planned, 120 will be senior friendly. Some of these will be new builds that will have features that would be accessible to older folks or “age-friendly features”. The plan for renovations is to create mixed income, so while some will be at market rate, others will be subsidized. The new builds are planned first in order to help fund the renovations. The group meets monthly and is co-chaired by Age Friendly Housing and Athens County Foundation. The Ridges developer also participates in these conversations which is very very community engagement focussed. Building 24 for six luxury condos is being planned as a new build and some interested individuals have been identified.

Mollie asked a clarifying question about B1 zoning and Meghan clarified that housing allowed in addition to businesses on the ground floor.

### **Shared & Intergenerational Housing**

Solveig talked about shared & intergenerational housing. NPR had a piece on intergenerational housing and how older adults were looking for housemates to share in the load of chores and help with and also for social companionship. A group meeting on April 29 at 2:30 p.m. at the Athens Health Department is planned to discuss. Solveig also added that she talked to Dr. Kathleen Sullivan, a professor in Political Science, who may be interested in intergenerational and shared housing along with her Learning Community class.

### **Glouster Cottage Homes**

Shay talked about a project that is being headed by SAOP and HAPCAP in Glouster. These were started last year and Shay shared some prints from the project. This is a grant-funded project and there are some issues with the funding so the project is currently on pause but this is a good example of type of housing that’s becoming popular specifically in single family neighborhoods, “cottage home concept”. The specific units are targeted to be all electric and net zero energy ready so there is a sustainability component as well. Two single family lots with 6

units- smaller homes with shared common space. Allows for more density and compatibility. One of the plan is approximately 900 sq.ft . on a single lot with a shared common area in between. The second concept is four units on a single family lot. Two duplexes “stack duplexes” – a ground floor level and an upper level unit. Each of these would be approximately 600 sq.ft. so a total of six units on two single family lots.

Shay talked about the advantages of this type of housing including smaller housing product given higher land costs. These are also inherently more affordable and allows for more density and more housing at a scale that’s similar and compatible to existing single family neighborhoods. These are centered around shared common spaces. This concept is gaining traction in cities that are updating their zoning codes to allow more affordable types of housing.

Shay reported that this type of housing concept would currently not be allowed under our R1 zoning but other cities across the country are legalizing this “cottage style homes” and is an alternative to denser types of housing– duplexes/ triplexes/quadplexes. Not allowed. 2-3 bedroom concepts. Shay added that one of the units would be fully accessible and the other will be designed with universal design principles. No elevators are planned because of cost. Shay confirmed that parking is planned as a mix of on street and off street parking.

Mollie asked if the funding for this project was Appalachian Community Grant funds and Shay believes there are a few different sources of funding and ACPG is one of them.

Polly asked if these were rentals and Shay clarified that the current models were developed for SAOP client housing but the concept could be broadly applicable for sale and for rent. Polly asked how the property would be managed when it is for rent and Shay responded that it would be up to the developer. It could be managed through HOA or subdivided.

Mary asked where in the process was this project and Shay reiterated that right now it was paused but hoping that it will be funded this year.

## **6. Committee Updates**

**New Development Committee:** No reports. Meghan reported that she does not have the capacity to manage an agenda for the committee and neither has other members.

Solveig asked about the Comprehensive plan and Meghan responded that she and her two interns are working on a public engagement plan which will be rolled out this summer. Marketing materials are currently being developed. They plan to meet with city department heads, all city council commissions, neighborhoods as well as hosting topic specific stakeholder meetings throughout the summer and fall. Public engagement is planned as well so once the engagement is completed in 2026, basic public input report will be compiled into a recommendation for policies and framework for plan. The group plans to gather another general public input meeting to discuss and confirm the finding. Then, they plan to move into the phase of writing the plan. Once this draft is completed, another big engagement is planned to review the full document. This is planned for another year to 1.5 years. Because this is being done in-house vs. through a consultant, it will take time but cost less.

## **Neighborhood Revitalization Committee**

**Neighborhood Associations-** Amy reported about the Neighborhood Revitalization Steering Committee that is being facilitated by Habitat. The committee is deciding how to engage folks on

the west side about they may want to see in their neighborhood. Some conversations around renaming committee to Neighborhood Vitality. Outreach planned at porchfest.

Solveig asked Amy to talk about how this project came about. Amy provided a brief background. Habitat for Humanity facilitates this nationally and work with communities to engage the neighborhood to engage folks and figure out what kind of projects or ideas the neighborhood is interested in. This is a five-year plan and there is a steering committee of 8 members. The projects can be anything that benefits the neighborhood. Habitat helps organize the agenda and keep the group on track and the committee has met 4 times so far. The projects are community driven and can be lighting or new playgrounds or anything else. Habitat chose West side in all of their regions in Southeast Ohio to complete this project. Megan Almeida, city council representative also participating on this committee.

**Rental Inspection Processes Subcommittee (RIPS)-** Solveig presented to the City Council two Mondays ago. The presentation was sent to the members of this commission (see attached). Solveig made some minor changes to the presentation.

Solveig reported on RIPS. The RIPS is putting together a plan for activities until December. The plan for this is very comprehensive— looking at financial realities of the code enforcement office, surveys of landlords and property managers as well as tenants, talking to individual experts, and looking at best practices to determine easier, faster, and more efficient ways of doing the work given constrained budgets. The surveys have been distributed through Qualtrics. There are three researchers on the project. A PhD student may be interested in making this a part of their data analysis for their dissertation. 210 landlords which is approximately 30% response rate. Megan helped distribute to students and the university community. There are flyers around town, information at businesses, social media, etc. The survey is not applicable to those who stay at Kershaw Greene since they have a different inspection process through Metropolitan Housing Authority. Solveig reported that the RIPS group has received support from Tom Pyle, Code Director and meeting with Tom on Thursday of this week to talk about the workflow and how the system works along with IT and communications.

**Neighborhood Associations & Activities-** No reports

**Communication/ Education Ad-Hoc Committee-** no updates

#### **7. For the Good of the Order:**

Maria clarified if there was a meeting in May. Solveig confirmed that the Commission takes a break in July. Maria reported that she may not be at the meetings in May and June and would need someone to take minutes. Mollie agreed to cover for Maria and take minutes.

**8. Concluding Remarks:** None

**9. Motion to Adjourn**

Mary moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:40 p.m. All in favor.

*Minutes completed by Maria Modayil, Secretary, Affordable Housing Commission.*



An aerial photograph of a city, likely Athens, Ohio, showing a dense urban area with various buildings and a prominent rooftop with several satellite dishes. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green geometric shape on the right side. The text is centered over the image.

# **Affordable Housing Commission**

**2025 Annual Report to City Council**

**Link to AHC website <https://www.ci.athens.oh.us/448/Affordable-Housing-Commission>**

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. The shapes are primarily triangles and polygons, creating a dynamic, layered effect. The text is centered on a white background that occupies the left and middle portions of the frame.

**Solveig Spjeldnes,** PhD, MSW, MA  
Past President  
Past City Council Liaison



# Today's Presentation Goals

- ▶ Present mission, history and 2025 accomplishments.
- ▶ Discuss 4 Committees' goals & tasks.
- ▶ Report on progress
- ▶ Discuss future directions

# Affordable Housing Commission

## 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.

For information about the legal definition of Affordable Housing, please click on this link. [Barriers to Affordable Housing | HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)

# AHC Purpose

## 3.07.77. POWERS AND DUTIES

(A) Review and make recommendations to the Athens city government on policies and procedures related to housing issues, including but not limited to:

- Zoning plan and implementation
- Fire, police, and safety services
- Recreational services
- Housing code and enforcement services
- Athens city transit, streets, and parking services
- Utilities services: water, sewage, garbage, recycling
- Existing programs and needs

## ...Continued Purpose

- (B) Acts as liaison between members of community and local government.
- (C) Respond to questions from the public, local government, and community.
- (D) Consult with city officials, council citizens and institutions of Athens in implementing special projects.
- (E) Inform the city of grant opportunities.
- (F) Prepare and submit an annual report of activities to Athens city council and to make such other reports and recommendations to Athens city council from time to time as may be deemed necessary.

# History

The Affordable Housing Commission was established by Athens City Council in 2017 (Ord. No. 0-108-17, § I, 11-13-2017)



Our purpose has continued but during the pandemic it paused.



Began reinvigorating AHC in January 2024

# Original Housing Report 2016



1. Partner with community organizations to promote more mid-level priced housing - \$125K to \$250K
2. City and University should seek comprehensive approach to Neighborhood Housing Conversion, Revitalization and Reconstruction.
3. Establish a 501(c) 3 to manage the development of new housing stock and the neighborhood housing conversion, revitalization and reconstruction initiative.



## ...Origins Continued

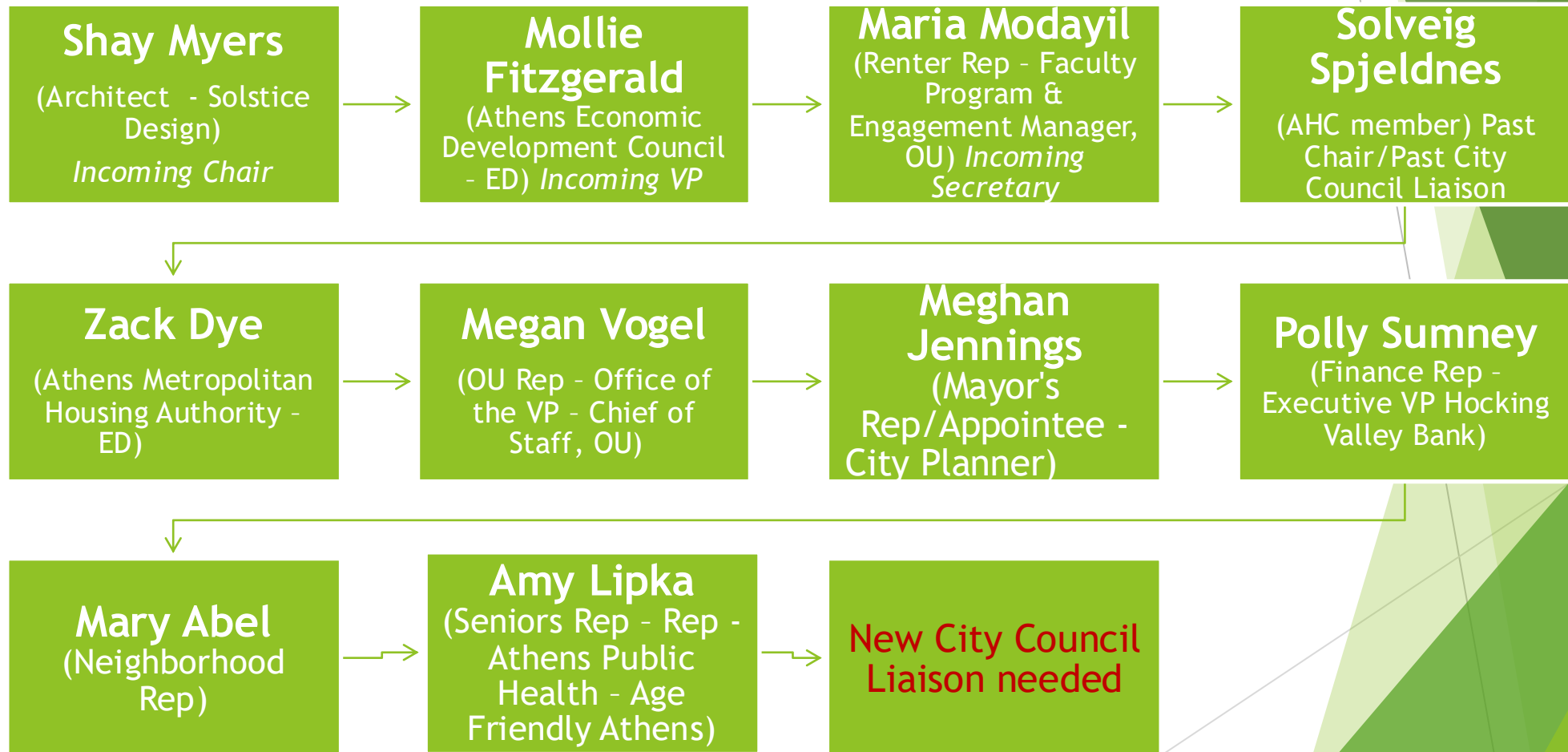
4. The City/University and other Athens' employers may want to consider providing financial incentives for individuals who choose to live in a targeted neighborhood housing conversion, revitalization and reconstruction area.
5. Athens City Council/OHIO University Affordable Housing Task Force looked at several financial models that could be used to implement their recommendations.

# Member Composition

## Consists of 11 voting members

- 7 appointed by City Council
- 1 Mayoral representative/appointee (not confirmed by council),
- 1 OU representative,
- 1 City Council representative,
- the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Housing Authority.

# Members



# 2025 Administrative Progress



- ▶ Expand work of Committees
- ▶ Add Rental Inspection Process Subcommittee via Resolution
- ▶ Clean up and add to website
- ▶ Expand collaboration with departments, organizations, OHIO and agencies to fulfill projects and goals

# Informational Speakers

Part of our duty is to inform members/the community about housing related issues and projects, so we invited speakers -

- ▶ Andrew Chiki, *Athens Service-Safety Director*, discussed *Welcome Home Ohio* and *Vacant Property* ordinance.
- ▶ Rob Delach, *BZA chair*, spoke about STRs.
- ▶ Rose Frech, *Integrated Services*, discussed HUD rules.
- ▶ Ken Oehlers, *ED Habitat for Humanity of Southeast Ohio*, talked about their work *and* New Housing Plans.
- ▶ Zack Reizes, *Consultant*, explained how Land Trusts work.
- ▶ Jeff Woda/Chris LaGrand, *Woda Cooper*, discussed their LIHTC projects and about their company.
- ▶ Danny Yahini, *Contractor*, spoke about tiny homes and their utility.

# AHC Committees



**Executive Committee**



**Communications Committee**



**New Development Committee**



**Neighborhood Revit Committee**

Rental Inspection Processes Subcommittee

# Communications Committee

- ▶ Ongoing work to add new links and correct missing or inaccurate information on the AHC website.
- ▶ Made the website more accessible and easier to navigate.

# New Development Committee

- ▶ Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) - Discussed the possibility of adding this as an option to add
- ▶ Short Term Rentals (STR) - Reviewed and discussed concerns about where STRs should be allowed. Decision was to stay the course for now.
- ▶ Welcome Home Ohio - **Add here!**
- ▶ Conestoga Huts ordinance -
- ▶ Community Overlay Zone -

# Neighborhood Revitalization Committee

- ▶ Neighborhood Efforts - Collaborate with the WCA to expand Porchfest to the Westside in 2026 and set up food donation bins for neighbors at risk. Encourage the city to add Community Associations and churches on the website. Propose starting neighborhood mutual assistance and/or bartering for services program.
- ▶ Summer Beautification Days - Collaborated with WCA/OU to conduct clean up days on the Westside and along the bike path.
- ▶ Vacant Property Ordinance - Deputy Service-Safety Director Andrew Chiki asked AHC to review his draft of a proposed Vacant Property ordinance. With our recommended changes, it was passed by City Council. Plus, we spread the word to encourage reporting of such properties and sent known properties to Chiki.

# Rental Inspection Processes Subcommittee (RIPS)

- ▶ In October, got Resolution #0-111-25 passed to authorize formation of RIPS as a 1-year ad hoc group.
- ▶ 7 Members with 3 appointed
- ▶ **Purpose** - Review rental code inspection and complaint processes to enhance efficient and effective code compliance and rental unit safety to address goals in the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- ▶ Two full team meetings so far

# Rental Inspection Processes Subcommittee (RIPS) Progress

- ▶ Goals are that 1) all rental housing in Athens, Ohio is structurally and functionally safe; 2) the Athens Code Office Inspection process is fully fulfilling its mandate, so that every rental is inspected and problems fixed; therefore, all rental property owners can qualify to purchase an annual rental permit.
- ▶ Research team of 4 PhDs and one student member along with volunteer statisticians/IT experts are preparing a program evaluation packet/plan for IRB to conduct a study. Surveys, focus groups and interviews. Search best practices. Compare with other cities.
- ▶ Collecting & Analyzing existing Code Office data about inspection process, inspector work requirements, legal issues, etc.

# Rental Inspection Processes Subcommittee (RIPS) Progress, cont.

- ▶ Meetings with Ohio University - Met with OHIO off-campus housing director & Megan Vogel and others to propose expanded off-campus portal and services along with establishing a Landlord Network similar to what OSU has.
- ▶ Interviews - Learned how the Public Health department, the AMHA and fire department handles residential housing inspections. Plans for interviewing Code Office staff/inspectors. Collecting efficiency ideas from landlords.
- ▶ Timeline - IRB submission in early January, 2026. Distribution of surveys February - May. Clean data - Summer. Analyze data - August & Sept. Prepare report - October & November. Present Report - December.



# Project Co-Create

- ▶ Sunset Shelter - Address Emergency Housing.
- ▶ HAPCAP's building plans are delayed. All construction bids topped their funding caps. So, no expected start date.
- ▶ HAPCAP is working on program options for future residents with agencies, organizations and churches.

## **AHC Future Ideas**

Exploring ideas based on mission, goals and purposes.

To solve our housing crisis, we need full menu of strategies.



**Thank you**