

Affordable Housing Commission Minutes

Tuesday, May 19, 2026 at Noon
City Administration Building – Council Chambers

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

Absent: Mollie Fitzgerald, Maria Modayil, Alan Swank

Note: Minutes were created from YouTube transcription of meeting.

Link to YouTube recording of meeting:

[Athens Affordable Housing Commission - May 19, 2026](#)

1. **Introduction** – Chair Shay Myers started the meeting at 12:02 p.m. and read the AHC mission.
2. **Establish Quorum** – Quorum met.
3. **Disposition of Minutes** - Solveig made a motion to approve the minutes from April. Polly seconded the motion. All other members present in favor and the motion passed. Minutes for April accepted.
4. **City Updates** –

Per Meghan, Welcome Home Ohio is moving along. Closing with Red Cross is being scheduled to officially transfer the property to Community Building Partners. A site plan is still being finalized — utilities in the area are tricky, and the city has been meeting with the developer to work through utility access and a gas line easement question. A community meeting will be scheduled with the neighborhood once the site plan is ready.

Shay requested that Meghan talk about how interested parties could purchase one of the Welcome Home Ohio homes. Meghan asked that interested parties email her at mjennings@ci.athens.oh.us and she will connect them to the developer. The developer has details on qualifications. Maximum sale price is \$180,000 per the state grant approval.

Solveig brought up the CHIP program. City Council introduced an ordinance at first reading authorizing the mayor to enter a partnership with Athens County Commissioners to apply for CHIP funding through the Ohio Department of Development. The program provides home repair assistance for income-limited residents. An emergency clause is included so it would take effect immediately upon

passage. Commission members were encouraged to spread awareness as demand for the program has historically been high.

Habitat for Humanity has an active two-story home project in The Plains currently being framed, with volunteer opportunities available. A "Project Playhouse" program is coming next month. The commission is exploring inviting a Habitat representative to speak at a future meeting.

Shay shared that there were no BZA cases this month; no updates.

5. Area Housing Development/Construction projects

Solveig shared that the Ridges development is moving along. The senior housing portion of the project includes a senior-friendly unit component within the larger development — this is only a small portion of the overall Ridges project. A senior focus group has been discussing age-friendly design principles and potential community support partnerships. Based on recent conversations with OU and the developer, final signing is anticipated this summer with a possible construction start this fall. Zoning discussions are being handled in parallel to avoid delays.

Shay asked Amy about the Athens County CRA (Community Reinvestment Area) being developed at the county level. The CRA is a property tax abatement incentive tied to universal design and accessibility criteria, applicable to renovations and new builds in unincorporated areas of the county. The abatement would phase out over approximately five years. Amy shared that the county has been meeting with the auditor to work through scenarios. Amy will follow up for an update to report back.

Amy shared that an exploratory conversation took place among university and community members regarding shared housing, co-housing, and intergenerational living models. An Ohio University professor has researched a platform called Nesterly, which matches people with extra rooms to those seeking housing. The model requires local coordination and community partnerships to be effective. The group will meet again in approximately one month to continue the conversation. Anyone interested in participating is welcome to reach out.

6. Committee Reports/Updates (15 minutes)

a. New Development Committee -

Meghan provided an update on the Comprehensive Plan. The timeline has been delayed due to other priorities but the plan is to engage each city commission. The New Development Committee or a representative will be incorporated into a housing-specific stakeholder group as part of the comprehensive plan process, which will have topic-based chapters covering housing, transportation, recreation, and economic development.

b. Neighborhood Revitalization -

Solveig shared the Westside Community Association is working with Habitat for Humanity on a neighborhood revitalization initiative — a program Habitat implements nationally. The west side was selected out of all of southeast Ohio to initiate this project. A table was hosted at Porchfest as the first community engagement activity, gathering neighbor input on priorities for the community over the next couple of years. The initiative is ongoing and will continue building on community feedback.

Solveig provided an update on the Rental Inspection Processes Subcommittee. Nearly 400 survey responses have been collected from tenants and approximately one-third of all landlords and property managers — a strong response rate. The survey deadline is May 31st. The subcommittee has been meeting with Director Pile, who is assessing the capacity of the Citizens Serve software used for inspection records; a follow-up is scheduled for May 23rd. Survey data will be cleaned of identifying information and then used by an OU communications doctoral student for a summer research project focusing on landlord vs. tenant perception differences. Dr. Charlie Morgan will use the cleaned data in his fall undergraduate research methods course, and a faculty member from the Voinovich School will incorporate it into a graduate-level statistics course. A best practices conversation was also held with Joe Posey, Logan's code director.

Porchfest was noted as a strong community-building event, reportedly doubling or tripling in size this year with acts across the west side, near east side, and uptown.

7. For the Good of the Order

Mary noted that the Commission is required to meet 6 times a year and requested to not meet in June and July if there isn't enough on the agenda. Whether or not a June meeting will take place will be determined before the next meeting. Shay noted that their may be a speaker from Habitat for Humanity coming to present about their local work.

8. Concluding Remarks: None

9. Motion to Adjourn: Solveig made a motion to adjourn. Mary seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 12:37 pm.