

# MINUTES

Housing and Human Services Advisory Board (HHSAB)

October 12, 2023 from 6:30 PM-8:30 PM

*This will be a digital meeting. Members of the public may participate electronically in the meeting or by telephone.*

Zoom link: <https://washtenawcounty.zoom.us/j/83784962121?pwd=VXpMWGgrdIV6ZU9wSEFNK1hMVGRaZz09>

Meeting ID: 837 8496 2121 | Passcode: 758842

Reached a quorum at 7pm. Vice Chair Amanda Carlisle called the roll.

## Members Present:

James Daniel – Ann Arbor, Arrowwood Hills Cooperative

James Downing – Ann Arbor

Anna Hart Erickson – Ann arbor

Brenna McMahon – Ann arbor

Amanda Carlisle – Ann arbor

Peter Slutzker – Ann Arbor

Councilman Chris Watson – Ann Arbor

Members Absent: Jean Leverich, Ellen Rabinowitz, Karen Wanza, Councilwoman Linh Song

Guests: Jennifer Hall (AAHC), Arin Yu (AAHC), Geoffrey Lowes (Renters Commission)

## I. Convene Meeting (Amanda Carlisle, Vice Chair)

Amanda convened once a quorum was present, with roll call at 7pm. Members stated where they were zooming in from.

While waiting on a quorum, Jennifer Hall began an informal presentation on the City's HUD PRO application. See VI. Business/Updates below for more detail.

## II. Welcome/Announcements

- Farewell and thank you to Skylar Woodman for his work on the HHSAB. He soon will be relocating to Minnesota!
- Farewell and congratulations to Morghan Boydston. Her last day as OCED's Human Services Manager is Oct. 13<sup>th</sup>; we wish her all the best in her new role as Senior Director of Client Success and Services at the United Way for Southeastern Michigan!

## III. Public Comment - None

## IV. Approval of Agenda

- Moved by Anna Erickson. Support by Peter Slutzker. Unanimous approval.

## V. Approval of Minutes from July 13 and September 14, 2023

- Moved by James Downing. Support by Brenna McMahon. Unanimous approval.

Next meeting: Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. | Location: Remote (Zoom)

VI. Business/updates

**Business**

- a. Presentation: City of Ann Arbor Application Plan for HUD Pathways to Removing Obstacles (PRO) to Housing Notice of Funding (Jennifer Hall, AAHC)
- This presentation is included in your packet, along with the full funding announcement from HUD.
  - HUD recently announced this new funding opportunity - \$85 million to be disbursed across 20 selected applicants with each award ranging from \$1m to \$10m.
  - Funds are primarily for planning/analysis and other CDBG activities like infrastructure and preservation of affordable housing, but also can include new construction.
  - 6-year spenddown period ending Sept 30, 2029.
  - Applications due to HUD by Oct. 30, 2023.

Members, staff, and guests asked questions and provided feedback throughout Jennifer's presentation. Arin Yu of the AAHC took detailed notes, included below:

**Planning, Zoning, & Land Use - UPDATE 2015 AFFORDABILITY AND ECONOMIC EQUITY ANALYSIS & CONDUCT HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

AC: I was just talking with someone at the County about this, that we need to redo this 2015 analysis, so yes - this is needed. A lot has changed since 2015.

CW: Pandemic effects have been huge. Between remote work and prices of rents skyrocketing, we want to know what's changed.

AE: A needs assessment will be really useful to in order to identify what specific areas of town need affordable housing.

**Planning, Zoning, & Land Use - INCREASED DENSITY THROUGH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN & ANALYSING TC1 ZONING DISTRICT**

AC: Thumbs up!

**Planning, Zoning, & Land Use - EXPLORE MODIFICATIONS TO THE UDC**

AC: I would like to see streamlining done across all types of developments in the city. I have development experience and I also hear lots of complaints from citizens. I would love to see a way we can still get good development, but streamline it.

CW: Because of the environmental and sustainability goals of the City, there's a lot of times when we're asking a private developer to do additional improvements to infrastructure or sidewalks, for example. Could we make an exception for non-profit developers and continue to have for-profit developers that can "afford" to help make these improvements do so? There's more to discuss there.

Next meeting: Thursday, November 9th at 6:30 p.m. | Location: Remote (Zoom)

AC: I was thinking of the permitting process. Work on my single family home took forever because of the permitting process. So I think that's something for streamlining that can be improved.

### **Planning, Zoning, & Land Use - IN DEPTH ANALYSIS OF HIGH OPPORTUNITY NEIGHBORHOODS**

AE: I love this.

### **Planning, Zoning, & Land Use - CAMPGROUND**

BM: I love that idea.

GL: I know exactly what area you mean – if the goal is to use that lot for affordable housing, it is very much underused.

CW: I think something that runs through a lot of these strategies is how to get more 3- and 4-bedroom units. A lot of this says to me, "How can we incentivize different types and sizes of development for people at different stages in life?"

J Downing: Massachusetts has a law where you can avoid certain zoning requirements or local permit processes if you're building affordable housing. It has oftentimes set up a rather negative dynamic where a private developer comes in wanting all their permits approved, and saying that if it doesn't get approved they'll turn the project into affordable housing – and leverage people's negative emotions towards affordable housing. So it may get things approved that shouldn't get approved. Not sure if we should implement that in our community – just saying that sometimes in other communities it seems to stir up negative results, in addition to good ones.

### **Planning, Zoning, & Land Use - STREAMLINED PROCESS REVIEW FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS**

J Downing: It seems useful to have a timeline from application to approval. I know an uncertain timeline can mess up development processes.

TC: I know people feel strongly about their public participation. Are there more specific ideas about what this would mean?

JH: As a developer, I know that you're required to notify people within a specific area of your development, with the idea that they will be more knowledgeable. But we sought a much wider-ranged area of public input with our past affordable housing projects, which gives more people in the city an opportunity to support affordable housing than may typically be able to.

### **Planning, Zoning, & Land Use - ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS**

CW: I think the thing we don't know too much about is short term rentals. Are people building ADUs just to have them as short term rentals, are they not? And would these short term rentals impact the availability of other housing?

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AE: I also wonder what the opportunity for ADUs is. We all thought there would be more uptake in it than there has been. So how much do we invest in increasing it in our community? Is that something the community is interested in?

#### **Planning, Zoning, & Land Use - CITY FEES**

AE: This is something that comes up often when folks come to us with requests for funding, so it would be good to look at.

J Downing: I think this is excellent. Any fee that Ann Arbor is adding that other municipalities aren't is another disincentive to developers, so it's good to know what they are.

#### **Planning, Zoning, & Land Use - CITY CODES**

J Downing: One thing I definitely hear out in the development community is that Ann Arbor has a very slow building and permitting review process. Speaking as a developer, I would rather take a stricter building code with a predictable timeline than processes that have a longer and unpredictable timeline. So a change like a definitive timeline – like 60 days after application – would be a real impact. Affordable housing already has so many external clocks ticking on financing that market rate developers don't have.

#### **Development – FINANCING CONSTRUCTION/REHABILITATION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

AC: Yes, do it!

#### **Infrastructure - GEOTHERMAL**

J Downing: Any reason you're not including looking at solar power?

JH: We have many solar grants with organizations right now, so it wasn't included in this proposal.

#### **Infrastructure – CONVERSION OF COMMERCIAL OR OTHER PROPERTIES**

AC: Yes.

#### **Infrastructure – UPGRADING UTILITIES & INCREASE AN AREA'S CAPACITY FOR HOUSING**

AC: Would this also be able to include some of the co-ops?

JH: Yes, absolutely.

J Downing: Not sure if this would exactly fit here, but there's HUD funding for retrofitting affordable housing with electrification and energy efficiency. Something we've bumped up against with electrification is that you're at the mercy of the electric grid – including blackouts. The solution to that is a backup generator – but that means gas, and then you're no longer an all-electric building. So in Ann Arbor, where there is incentive to have an all-electric building, there should be more flexibility to allow for this solution of having a backup generator.

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GL: That's something that we on the Renters Commission talk about quite a bit. As a renter, you can't install a generator – so from a renter's point of view, this is also an important issue given the uncertainty of our power grid.

### **Infrastructure – INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS**

J Downing: I think one public good that doesn't necessarily increase prices is increased public transportation access and more frequent bus service.

### **Preservation – FUNDING FOR RENOVATIONS & ACQUISITIONS**

J Daniel: I am certainly interested in money going to the co-ops.

AC: I support.

### **Preservation – HOUSING BUREAU FOR SENIORS PROGRAM**

AC: I would support re-creating the Housing Bureau for Seniors program. Washtenaw Housing Alliance has been looking into that as well. Overall, it seemed like a successful program and in the future could include other types of households like single parents.

TC: I also think that sounds important to explore. It brings up some questions about logistics and how it would all work, but if we've done it before it seems like something that could be done and be very helpful.

AC: It was Michigan Medicine that used to run this program, and they stopped because they didn't necessarily want to be in that business.

J Downing: Sounds like a fantastic program, would be great to do this again. I can see why the large university didn't necessarily want to continue it, but maybe a different organization can.

### **Preservation – HOMEOWNERSHIP EDUCATION**

TC: I would support homeowner education. There doesn't seem to be many organizations providing that right now.

### **OTHER IDEAS?**

AC: Something that I didn't see come up was state advocacy around inclusionary zoning, lifting rent control bans? Is that something that could be included in planning and policy?

JH: It can be included in there.

J Downing: I think the biggest barrier to development of affordable housing in Ann Arbor is the high cost of the acquisition of the land you're starting with. Are there ways that the public sector can help with acquisition of property? Land banking, land trusts?

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JH: We probably aren't going to include acquisitions in this particular grant because it involves federal funds, but the things we've been talking about here would still be very relevant for development that we do without federal funds, like with our millage.

AC: Something that the Washtenaw Housing Alliance has talked about is institutions that have land, and looking at those organizations the way that the City is looking at City-owned sites. I'm curious if there was something you could give to a faith-based organization for example, like a toolkit that would explain to them how to use some of their underutilized property for affordable housing or donation?

JH: Sure thing.

J Downing: There are programs in other cities where when a library or public health center is rebuilt, they look at ways to have the public space on the first floor and build housing on top.

JH: I know the downtown Ann Arbor library is specifically looking at that right now.

CW: I know motels and hotels in other states are looking at ways to convert to one bedroom units for rent as well.

PS: I was wondering about opportunities to convert unused commercial space if folks aren't returning to offices to be used for residential purposes?

JH: We should consider that. It's more of a building-by-building analysis, and there are so few buildings that meet the exact dimensions and infrastructure requirements. But it's still worthwhile to figure out how we could attack that issue.

TC: It would be interesting to look at it if zoning weren't a barrier and do kind of a case study on a couple of specific buildings to see what it would cost and what would go into conversion instead of new construction.

- b. Public Hearing on City of Ann Arbor Draft Application to HUD PRO Notice of Funding
  - Vice Chair Amanda Carlisle will open and close the public hearing.
  - Members of the public will raise their Zoom hand if they wish to speak during the hearing.

Amanda opened the public hearing at 8:02pm. Closed at 8:03pm.

- c. PRO Application Discussion and Input from HHSAB Members
  - Discussion occurred concurrent with Jennifer Hall's presentation.
- d. Discussion: HHSAB Meeting Format
  - When developing a 2023 workplan in Fall 2022, the board agreed to re-visit a discussion on whether to resume in-person meetings.
  - How are members feeling about the virtual format, and what are your thoughts on moving to in-person? What about quarterly in-person with other meetings virtual? Other ideas?

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Someone asked whether the public could still participate virtually in HHSAB meetings if members were to meet in person. Amanda stated that pre-COVID this board met in the basement of the County administration building on Main Street, where there are Zoom capabilities/equipment, so this would make it possible for public to call/zoom in. Councilman Watson emphasized that for in-person meetings, voting members who could not make it in person would only be able to participate as if they were a member of the public.

The group expressed interest in the idea of meeting in person twice next year with the majority of meetings being held virtually. Logistics are harder to make in person but many noted the desire to be together even if only a few times.

### Updates

e. Substantial Amendment to the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan

- The amended plan was approved in a single reading by the Board of Commissioners on Oct. 4. OCED intends to submit the amendment to HUD this week. After HUD approval, OCED will announce more details about the RFP process for awarding HOME-ARP funds.
- Updated information will be made available on the OCED website's [HOME-ARP landing page](#)

Tara noted that OCED will send a communication out to the CoC community soon about prepping for the Supportive services RFP given the needs for winter and a tight window once the County obtains HUD approval on the amendment. Much more lead time is expected for the RFP for Development.

f. HHSAB Membership/Recruitment

- Staff recently recommended an applicant for the HHSAB youth seat and for the vacant nonprofit/consumer rep seat, for consideration by the Mayor and City Council.
- Not including these 2 vacancies we're in process of filling, there are another 2 additional vacancies. If you know any Ann Arbor residents who are eligible and interested, please encourage them to apply for 1 of these open seats:
  - Professional/academic in social services seat (formerly held by Skylar Woodman);
  - Representative of business/development/banking/architectural/legal community

g. Renters' Commission Update

(Geoff Lowes)

Geoff Lowes sits of the Renters Commission stated that their last meeting was short. Predominant discussion was preparing for Green Fair that they attended. Will meet Monday with Committee for Tenant Education. Other big discussion was around rent control, the history of this in the state and locally, do we want to encourage advocating to Council to overturn prohibition of rent control. This effort did not go well with Ann Arbor voters in the past but that was more than 40 years ago. Geoff noted he will bring back to the Renters Commission some of the helpful info from Jennifer's presentation tonight – for example the data showing City's average income is still remarkably high even when factoring in the large student population which artificially inflates the number of low-income people living in the city.

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h. Reflections from Sept 15<sup>th</sup> PARK(ing) Day (All)

Several board members participated – Amanda, Anna, Peter, Ellen, Chris, Linh, Karen, Tara. Lots of different engaging folks stopped by the booth, a somewhat representative sampling of the city. Some students, a man who is currently living in an affordable unit at City Club Apartments who said it has changed his life, a number of people stopped by who showed interest in affordable housing issues. Might provide input to the organizers for next year to put more of the parking spaces together so participants feel like they're really part of an event.

VII. City Council (Council Member Update) \_\_\_\_\_ 8:00 pm

Chris Watson: Said he will be speaking on Saturday at a Washtenaw Democrats event with Jennifer Hall, Annie Sommerville, Justin Hodge, SOS Services, and others.

TC-1 Info meeting for Washtenaw Ave Corridor (near Arborland) being held Thursday 10/19 in the evening, location and time TBD.

This week's Council agenda is fairly light. There are a few annexations on agenda.

VIII. General Updates

Amanda shared the following updates:

- WHA – hosting 11/16 at WCC Morris Lawrence. State of Homelessness event. Ask that people RSVP. Panel discussion on decrease in veteran homelessness and compare to family
- State senate just passed the bills for source of income protection – very exciting. Separate bills still need to be passed in the house.
- City Council working session 10/23: Jennifer Hall and Amanda Hall will give a presentation on housing and homelessness.
- Winter Shelter Task Force has been meeting to plan for the winter – currently there are no prevention funds available in the County. Looking at possibility of standing up family shelter through rotating shelter at congregations in addition to Delonis Center providing winter shelter for individuals.

IX. Public Comment - None

X. Adjournment - Moved by Carlisle. Support by Erickson. Adjourned at 8:28pm.

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