

Minutes - Draft

**PECS-Planning, Economic Development & Community Services
Committee**

Monday, August 22, 2022

2:00 PM

Special Called Meeting

This meeting will be conducted via teleconference (Zoom). Simultaneous public access to the meeting will be available

*(1) via live stream on DCTV's webpage,
(2) on DCTVChannel23.TV*

Meeting Started At: 2:00PM

Attendees: Commissioners Johnson, Davis Johnson, Rader, Terry, Cochran-Johnson, Bradshaw

Present 3 - Commissioner Larry Johnson, Commissioner Jeff Rader, and
Commissioner Mereda Davis Johnson

I. DISCUSSION

DeKalb County Housing Affordability Study

-AJC article shared by Commissioner Johnson

-presentation provided by Dr. Michael Rich of Emory University

-Question MDJ: constituents and people have come to me regarding apartment units taking application fees, which usually start at about \$250. They are encouraged to pay it, and then on the back end they don't qualify. Is there anything the County can do to regulate or adjust how these landlords get monies from prospective tenants in a situation like this?

-A Mitchell: we can get the Atlanta Legal Aid team and Atlanta Metro Housing who we have contracts with to take a look at those specific instances

-additional information provided by CEO Pete Walker of DeKalb Housing Authority

-LJ: Commissioner the State has to help us on regulations like this

-Question JR: it seems it would relatively easy to develop a tool for potential applicants to use to access their free credit report to ensure they are applying to a complex that is affordable to them and assist in determining if they qualify for the unit. I think there are some tools we could make available via existing resources so that folks would know the parameters upon which the determination is legally made. Beyond that I'm interested in preservation of DeKalb County's existing affordable housing stock. I know that we have a numerical stock of housing, but do we have any estimate or distribution based upon jobs in DeKalb County what the need is in order to house DeKalb's workforce? Secondly, I'm concerned about affordability being driven by the condition of housing. I would like a report back on the tools we have in place, such as our interior code compliance ordinance, what has been the application of the ordinances to ensure our housing is safe and inhabitable. Commissioner Johnson if we could get some information on that dynamic. Could Dr. Rich speak on the preservation vs. creation of new housing stock?

-responses provided by Dr. Rich

-Question TT: I have an agenda item before the PECS committee related to the creation of a housing affordability study committee, which is one of your recommendations in the study. On another note, if we do not address discrimination, our most vulnerable residents will be at risk. When I read the AJC article discussed today I feel sorrow, but also motivation to do something about it. Over the next several months with the agenda Mr. Chair you've put together we will have the opportunity to show DeKalb as a leader. The recommendations of the study have been well received.

-LJ: As a committee we will bring the recommendations all back after these conversations, and come back as the PECS committee to make a recommendation on what we can do regarding housing. We will also come up with legislative priorities to influence those types of policies as well

-Question SB: regarding the term 'investors', you mentioned many homes are being acquired by investors. Do you have a functional definition of investors?

-response provided by Dr. Rich

-Question SB: regarding the recommendation of an affordable housing officer, is there a recommendation on job description, compensation, and staff for this position?

-response provided by Dr. Rich

-Question LJ: when you look at investors, half of the homes went to LLC's and the other to mom and pop. You can delineate between LLC's and mom and pop stores when creating laws. Can you delineate between LLC's and individual investors when drafting regulation?

-M Rich: whether or not a law can be created on that I don't have legal training; it's an important question to address what local governments can do; I would have to yield to someone with more familiarity with the law

-LJ: we will keep the conversation around the six sectors mentioned in the study recommendations

Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership (ANDP)

-presentation provided by CEO John O'Callaghan of the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership (ANDP)

-Question TT: I think we should create a DeKalb Land Trust, as it is a recommendation previously mentioned. What we have seen today is that we have done a lot, but we can do a lot more and keep things moving forward.

-information provided by County Attorney Ernstes on the role of the County regarding housing as stipulated within the Organizational Act of DeKalb County

DeKalb Housing Authority

-information provided by CEO Pete Walker of the DeKalb Housing Authority on current initiatives, tools, and programs currently being implemented by the DHA

-P Walker: the most important tool will be to increase the amount of tax credits to acquire properties from developers. We should look at expanding the federal tax credits - in particular 9% tax credits. DHA currently uses 4% and 9%; 9% is competitive. With more tax credits the DHA could strike more deals and help more people. Also, there are not many age 55+ subdivisions in DeKalb. The County could partner with churches to develop cottage communities

-LJ: Staff please record the tax credit option as an option for the committee to review

-Question JR: could you remind us of the governing structure of the Housing Authority and its responsibility to the County?

-response provided by CEO Walker

-Question JR: could you remind me of the terms of the housing commissioners, and any currently available seats for appointment?

-response provided by CEO Walker

-Question TT: the seniors housing is something we discussed on the housing symposium last week as well. A challenge is that land is so expensive, the land that may be available for senior housing is isolated from activity centers that seniors may want to be in the vicinity of. On another note, I would encourage us to continue asking why we can't have appointments updated for the DHA. Finally, we need to be working more closely with Planning & Sustainability as well as the Fire Marshal's Department. We know problems exist within communities, and at some point we need to take action. We need to have a plan for the likely inevitability of a split Congress, where things don't get done. If we put our eggs in the Federal basket, it won't happen - so we need solutions at the local level in ways to meet our home rule power.

-LJ: you won't get much help without federal and state partners. We have to be methodical; I hope that no one leaves here today that the Chair will do nothing, because the track record shows otherwise. It will require more than just the County, because we didn't get in the problem by ourselves.

-Question MDJ: we're doing what we can and we're very preemptive. We would be doing a disservice to our citizens to give them expectations that are not there. I won't give them any false expectations because I know our hands are tied. I am partnering with some private partners to see what we can do in DeKalb, and I'm glad the tax incentive was mentioned. We do know what will happen at the State level, and many of the State legislators are landlords, and they will only do so much. Let's not give people false expectations, but let them know that we have worked, we will continue to work, and we will do all we can to try to eliminate homelessness in DeKalb County. The expectations that may be given to the citizens are not in our power -but we will work day and night to do what we can do to eliminate homelessness. Lastly, I really want to look into those application fees because I don't think it's just

-SB: there's a general construct we're all in favor of affordable housing. Based on my experiences, that term has some negative connotations. We should be cognizant of the term and potential resistance.

Meeting Ended At: 4:24PM

Barbara H. Sanders-Norwood CCC, CMC