

Minutes - Draft

PECS-Planning, Economic Development & Community Services Committee

Thursday, September 8, 2022

10:00 AM

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: 10:02AM

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

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

I. DISCUSSION

HOUSING:

-comments and information provided by Shannon Heath-Longino: SVP Truist Community Capital on the topic of affordable housing

-S Longino: We need partnerships and advocates at the front line negotiating on behalf of residents for affordable housing. When we are negotiating deals make sure they are affordable for the people that it was intended for.

-S Longino: Support subsidized program where there is 30% AMI, if possible, 50% AMI, 60% AMI

-S Longino: Many development projects start at the 80% AMI. But that will continue to close the door and narrow the margin for everyday citizens who work across industries - it is becoming more difficult to market and serve these communities because the rents are increasing to where they cannot afford.

National Association of Counties (NACo)

-presentation provided by Eryn Hurley, National Association of Counties (NACo) Director of Government Affairs

-discussion of NACo Housing Solutions Matchmaker Tool

-Question JR: the dataset on your tool for DeKalb ends in 2019. when could it be updated?

E Hurley: we are going through the 2020 census data and are hoping to update the tool by end of year

-TT: regarding water and sewer tap fees, I think that is something we should consider as an opportunity to explore affordability cost-cutting measures

Decatur Housing Authority

-presentation provided by Doug Faust - Decatur Housing Authority CEO

-DHA Initiatives and Programs over Past 10 Years-low income housing tax credits from State and Federal entities include:

-Revitalization – \$65 million completed (444 units) and \$60 million in pipeline (246 units)

-Tax-Exempt Bond Issuances – Over \$27 million completed and \$64 million in pipeline

-Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) – 868 and 200 portables

-Project Based Vouchers – 166 Elderly Units

-Policies and Programs to Address Affordability include:

-Support Low Income Housing Tax Credits and State of Georgia Housing Credits

-Address DeKalb County Real Estate Taxes for LIHTC Properties

-Address Source-of-income discrimination by County Resolution

-Waive Governmental Permit Fees and Similar Costs for Affordable Housing Properties for developers

-Consider approaches to mandatory inclusionary zoning to include a percentage of affordable housing units for multi-family projects

-Increase dedicated funding sources for affordable housing

-Create permanent group/panel at the County level that stays focused on the topic of affordable housing

-Preserve Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) - the County can take measures, such as tax relief, to ensure rents don't increase dramatically

-Support increased density to help drive costs of infrastructure and land down; this helps create more units

-Support affordable housing development by exercising YIMBY (Yes In My Back Yard) Principles: work together with communities to understand why affordable housing could be wanted in neighborhoods

-Question JR: regarding (NOAH) naturally occurring affordable housing, what is your perspective of responsibility of property owners to maintain housing that is rented at a low cost. What does the DHA do to meet the goal while keeping prices down for that naturally growing segment of the market?

-D Faust: DeKalb could look at it doing tax abatements over a number of years where the prices are affordable to families for a period of time. Additional information provided by Mr. Faust

-Question JR: have you had success in being able to participate in renovation or upgrade of units that may require updated features and be able to work with the landlords to maintain affordable rents?

D Faust: we haven't done that through the renovation process. Additional information provided by CEO Faust

Lithonia Housing Authority

-presentation provided by Nikki Davis, CEO of Lithonia Housing Authority

-N Davis: I don't see a plan for self-sufficiency for the residents. That could help move things along if we had a plan for self-sufficiency

-Question JR: how many units does the Lithonia Housing Authority currently have?

N Davis: 129 and 200 housing choice vouchers

-Question JR: do you have plans for new projects

N Davis: absolutely

-Question TT: we should be considering is how multifamily units include amenity packages that address affordability that go beyond paying utility. One of the top budget priorities of families is child-care. In Clarkston we were able to ensure an early learning center was established with a developer we were working with.

-Question MDJ: would we have the ability to sale those foreclosed tax homes to low-income? Or does it need to be for the highest bidder?

E Jones: we can acquire any property as long as we have the resources

D Faust: hedge funds and large investment groups are buying large packages of houses. That is impacting huge blocks of neighborhoods in DeKalb that are moving into these investment groups.

-Question MDJ: I'm talking about homes that have been foreclosed based on them not paying County property taxes. Could we set those homes aside for purchase for potential low-income home buyers, or would they legally have to be placed on the market for sale?

-S Patenaude: the DeKalb land bank could be a way to address this and create a land trust program, you could ensure the homes remain affordable in perpetuity

-MDJ: if we have not addressed that, please add it to the list

-LJ: Instead of being listed as foreclosure under HUD, could they give it to us?

-E Jones: they won't give it to you but you can negotiate. Talk to your HUD reps on what could be done to preserve affordability

-Question TT: thank you Mr. Chair you established the policy in PECS that we would hold on to certain properties for the land bank to assess so that they are not released. Hopefully soon we get an update from the Land Bank on their progress

-Question LCJ: I appreciate the raising of the point of the Land Bank. Where are we with the Land Bank?

-Z Williams: this time last the final appointments were made and they began the efforts of hiring an executive director. I believe has convened a meeting or so

-A Mitchell: we've been the staff of the Land Bank, and is on its sixth or seventh meeting. We plan to have an all-day session next week to work on policies and procedures. It is functional and they have not made policy decisions yet. There are 3 things they can do. We are going to market to get a full time director. We have a law firm and we work to create bylaws; a lot of the suggestions today are viable and are in the land bank toolkit. I'll be able to come back with a list of the policies and procedures they will make. The 3 main facets are on affordable housing, economic development, and blight removal.

-Question LCJ: when do you believe it can come online and decisions can be made?

-A Mitchell: After the Board meets and decides which policies and procedures can be made; then we can share that with the Board and the PECS committee and communicate those priorities. Additional information provided by Director Mitchell

-LCJ: blight, affordable housing, and economic development are very important issues here. If they are working with \$300,000, if an additional infusion of capital is necessary to achieve optimal results, perhaps that is something that should be considered once the priority is established

-Question MDJ: Commissioners can use discretionary funds as well

-TT: I would like to request meeting minutes or notes to share on the Land Bank. Could we get the Land Bank notices in the same schedule of other committees so that we are aware of the discussions being had? Part of the equation is to move forward with transactions - there are hundreds of these types of properties. What is the inventory, what's available based on the zoning code, and what could be done with these parcels to bring them to activity?

-LJ: Mr. Mitchell prepare to come back the first PECS in November to discuss the Land Bank and budget recommendations you may be asking for in the 2023 budget. In November we will put together our policy for asks and resolutions and resolutions that we need to pass. We will keep this conversation moving.

Atlanta Housing Authority

-information provided by Atlanta Housing Authority CEO Eugene Jones

-Policy input and recommendations from CEO Jones included:

- landlords not accepting housing choice vouchers is a big problem because the clientele can't find adequate housing as a result*
- we as practitioners need a strategy of what could be done at the State level to address affordable housing*
- the numbers and formulas of AMI % are not working anymore*
- focus on homeownership is needed*
- a developer's conference is needed to stakeholders to listen and get support around the State to move forward on housing*
- we need to expand the pool for other resources of grant monies*
- submit to the State legislature an action plan of something being done to take action now, and not review and come back in another 10 years. Costs are increasing daily, so the process does need to be sped up*
- LJ: with this housing forum we will be speaking with our Federal and State partners because it's a collaborative partnership effort. We will invite you to be here when we have those key stakeholders at the table.*
- Question JR: you mentioned affordability in the context of homeownership. Today we're seeing more competition in the market for lower-priced housing from Wall Street and other investors. Have you identified any strategies to make pressure on the housing market less advantageous to the investors?*
- E Jones: a complaint that we have gotten is that we have so much vacant land, why don't we don't something with it? We will test the market with 5 model homes and see if we can build better homes for less costs. We'll look to stay within the total development cost, which we think will be a lot less than what HUD allows us, and see if we can make it a go. Container homes and tiny homes are examples to cut costs and cut out the middle man. By that we will tie in what we're building with a rent to own program and see if we have match affordability for a small subset of homes. If it works we will expand and take this show on the road.*
- TT: regarding the vouchers where the applicant doesn't get the unit and the fee is lost - that is an unfair policy that we should address. DeKalb passed a discrimination ordinance that could be used to address local landlord discrimination. We should talk with the Atlanta Apartment Association to address this and we can immediately work on. If we could get the Administration or Law's update on where they are with that ordinance. Adding a source of income as a non-discrimination violation would go a long way. The housing study stated that many affordable units will disappear in the next decade.*
- Question LJ: has the City adopted that resolution and put it in play?*
- response provided by Mr. Jones*
- LJ: we would like to create more mixed income housing across the County*
- Question RP: under our current zoning ordinances, how many housing units can the County accommodate? From there can we determine how many would be available affordable housing products?*
- A Baker: We would have to look at the land available and other measures. We can do some research on that and provide that to you*
- E Jones: we have to preserve some of the rental housing that is available. HUD has a program called 221(d)(3) and 211(d)(4) Financing - these are properties we need to look at as an opportunity to acquire. Inventory for this in the County would be helpful for this to ensure it doesn't turn back into market rate housing*
- LJ: we need to look at vouchers and how homeownership could be a path as well*

Meeting Ended At: 11:36AM

Barbara H. Sanders-Norwood CCC, CMC