

**Affordable Housing Advisory Committee
St. Johns County, Florida
Regular Meeting**

**August 21, 2019
Minutes**

The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee of St. Johns County met at 3:00 pm in the Kingfisher Conference Room at the St. Johns County Health and Human Services Building – Housing Department, 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, Florida 32084.

The meeting was called to order at 3:03 pm by Bill Lazar, Chair.

Members Present:

Tracy Hayes
Jay Kalter
Steve Ladrado
Alex Mansur
Karl Vierck
Herbie Wiles

Members Absent:

Harry Maxwell
Jon Woodard

Guests Present:

Mary Hepler, Alpha Omega
Joseph Cearley, Growth Management Department
Joseph Cone, Housing & Community Services Manager
Michelle Lawlor, Housing Support Staff
Mary Garcia, Social Services Support Staff

Notices regarding the meeting were sent to all members. No press was in attendance.

- 1) Introduction of AHAC Members and SJC Staff: Committee members were acknowledged. Quorum was present.
- 2) Approval of Minutes: Motion made by Alex Mansur to approve minutes of June, 2019 meeting (no July meeting); motion seconded by Steve Ladrado. Motion passed unanimously. There was discussion regarding the number of Triennial Report recommendations approved at the last meeting. The motion stated 5 recommendations were approved but Joe Cone clarified there were actual 11 highlighted recommendations. It was determined the remaining items will be reviewed at this and subsequent meetings and the final copy of the report will be submitted for AHAC approval.
- 3) Growth Management – BCC Recommendation for Affordable Housing: Joe Cone stated he and Joe Cearley, Growth Management Department, have been working on a number of affordable housing initiatives and he said some of them are ideas of their

own and some they have been asked to research. Mr. Cone said he and Mr. Cearley will be presenting the County Commissioners with a proposal in regard to accessory dwelling units and new zoning category on September 3rd, in draft form. Mr. Cone asked Mr. Cearley to review the particulars of their proposal for those present. Mr. Cearley said they are requesting the rezoning application fee be waived for projects that can dedicate 30% or more of their units to deed restricted affordable housing. Mr. Cearley said this will provide a density bonus of double that of the underlying future land use designation if developer can provide 30% or more of their units as deed restricted affordable housing, serving those families at the 50% - 80% of area median income (AMI) level. Mr. Cearley stated deed restrictions would keep the dwellings affordable for a period of 30 years. Mr. Cearley said they looked at property appraiser data of the homes built between 2017 and 2018 and found there were many homes sold in the price range of \$180,000 to \$280,000, but far fewer sold for \$180,000 or less. Mr. Cearley said \$195,000 would be a somewhat affordable price point for the workforce. Mr. Cearley said they also looked at a multi-tiered approach, whereby the developer might get density bonuses for 30%, 50% and 80% of AMI. Mr. Cearley said the price point for affordable zoning designation is still to be determined and there are differing opinions on this. Discussion ensued with regard to this, as well as length of time a property should remain affordable and the matter of income verification. Mr. Lazar commented the 2016 Triennial report states the income and guidelines chart provided by Florida Housing shall be used when defining affordable eligibility. Mr. Lazar stated it is more generous than HUD, it is updated every year and it holds everyone to the same standard. Tracy Hayes and Karl Vierck both stated the bank, rather than realtor, should be responsible for determining household income and Mr. Lazar agreed and stated the bank should be doing about 90% of the work involved in verifying eligibility. Discussion ensued with regard to what developers are asking for as far as affordable housing and where a happy meeting point might be. Mr. Lazar said a collective planning mechanism is necessary that would see the County putting in infrastructure to encourage affordable projects. Mr. Lazar suggested some of the CDBG-DR money might be used for this purpose. Discussion turned to density and Mr. Cone said increased density is looked at adversely by some members of the community. Mr. Cearley said the County Commissioners want to know how it would affect roadway capacity, school capacity and school concurrency. Mr. Cearley said some of the commissioners have been very wary about doubling density on projects that have come before them recently, and the public near and around these projects have not supported the idea. Discussion turned to deed restriction and Mr. Cearley said he believes the restriction should certainly be longer than 5 years. Mr. Lazar said that would depend on what benefit or incentive is being provided to the builder. There was discussion regarding the fact that homes on the lower end of the price point might just be a first home and a stepping stone to something more desirable to the buyer, so restricting the deed for 30 years would make properties much less appealing, even to a first time home buyer. Mr. Lazar said for those in the 50 to 60% AMI, this might not be the case and this could very well be buyer's first and only home. Mr. Lazar said he is ensuring that individuals buying homes from St. Johns Housing Partnership either live or work in St. Johns County already. Mr. Lazar said his organizations mission is not to enable more people to move to St. Johns County but rather to help those already here better their living situation. The discussion was concluded and Bill Lazar reminded everyone the

County Commission meeting is on September 3rd and he encouraged attendance, as well as letters to the Commissioners, the newspaper and even personal meetings with the Commissioners. Mr. Lazar said it is important for the business community to let the County Commission know they support affordable housing for their employees.

Mr. Cearley stated the Board of County Commissioners fully support the idea of expanding accessory family units to allow them to be rented to non-family members and calling them accessory dwelling units. Mr. Cearley said the statute simply requires an affidavit of affordability and that affidavit will probably be all that is necessary in order to rent these units. Mr. Cearley said he was advised not to put "affordable" language in the affidavit but he said the unit can be no more than 800 sq. feet and that will most likely ensure affordability. Mr. Cearley said the owners of the property must live on site, so it must be homesteaded and they must rent their accessory unit for 6 months or more and this should ensure the property is not rented as a vacation rental. Mr. Cearley said Miami-Dade County has had this in effect for some time now and it has really provided good affordable housing stock for that area.

- 4) Triennial Report: Joe Cone reviewed incentive "f" and asked Joe Cearley if the "reduction of parking and setback requirements for affordable housing" was a possibility. Mr. Cearley said this is feasible and the new zoning category would allow for this. Joe Cone suggested circling back to this item at the next meeting. Incentive "h", Modification of street requirements for affordable housing was discussed next. Mr. Cone stated Habitat for Humanity had problems with this on a development of theirs. Mr. Cearley says County requires two lifts and this is not something Public Works will budge on. Bill Lazar said removing the necessity of curb and gutter and using swales instead would reduce size of retention ponds. Mr. Lazar suggested a conversation should be had between AHAC/HFA and Public Works and Dept of Transportation. Discussion ensued. Mr. Cone brought the conversation to the recommendation suggested by Mr. Kalter, which would require large corporations or businesses that are receiving incentives to pay a specific dollar amount, based on the incentive being received, into an affordable housing trust fund. Mr. Kalter said those that are creating jobs and the need for workforce housing should be assisting with the affordable housing solution, rather than putting all of the onus on developers. Mr. Cearley said this is inclusionary zoning and he said he does not believe the Board of County Commissioners will support this concept. Mr. Cearley went on to say the initial version of House Bill 7103 tried to get rid of all inclusionary zoning ordinances in Florida. Further, Mr. Cearley stated, a dual rational nexus study would be required and he said the cost for that would be approximately \$90,000. Mr. Cone reiterated the fact that all of these incentives are simply recommendations and he told Mr. Kalter he would be happy to keep the item in the report, provided the rest of the Committee agrees. Mr. Cone asked Mr. Cearley if he had any thoughts on the recommendation to "Consider reducing landscape requirements for development of affordable housing units". Joe Cearley responded by stating that rezonings to the proposed affordable housing zoning district would not require open space or active recreation components, thus trimming the fat. Additionally, Mr. Cearley said, staff could reduce the required tree inches from 80 inches per acre, to 40 inches per acre. Mr. Cone then asked about the water re-use requirements for affordable housing units. He said this recommendation was a part of the 2016 report. Joe Cearley said

he does not believe this is a requirement unless it's PUD and a soft suggestion but he said he would look into this further. Mr. Cone said this completed the items he wished to review. Bill Lazar asked Mr. Cearley about excess impact fee credits, which could go toward paying the fees on affordable housing projects. Mr. Cearley said he believes the County Commissioners were amenable to that suggestion. Mr. Cearley then asked Joe Cone if he had obtained a map from GIS of County inventory of land for affordable housing joint experiments. Mr. Cone said he did and he would share that with Mr. Cearley. Mr. Cone will provide a revised draft of the report to the Committee based on today's discussions.

Joe Cone informed the group about the workshop for USDA loans being held at the County's Health & Human Services Center on September 11th. Mr. Cone said the USDA has a very attractive single family loan for income qualified individuals and it seems very few local realtors know anything about USDA products. Mr. Cone said the USDA rep will be in attendance. Karl Vierck and Tracy Hayes both asked that the information and invite be sent to them in .pdf form.

- 5) Recommendation Update and Current Vacancy: This item was not covered at this meeting.
- 6) Public Comments: Mary Hepler from Alpha Omega spoke about the CDBG funds they have been granted to purchase a home to be rehabbed off of Collins Avenue, as well as 6 acres. The master project will also include a community care center and day care for their residents.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:09 pm.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be held on September 18, 2019. Notices will be sent.