

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

June 16, 2021  
Minutes

The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee of St. Johns County met at 3:00 pm at the Health & Human Services Center, in the Kingfisher Conference room, at 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, Florida 32084.

The meeting was called to order at 3:04 pm by Chair, Bill Lazar.

Members Present:

Jay Braxton  
Brittany Coronado  
Henry Dean  
Steven Ladrado  
Bill Lazar  
Alex Mansur  
Harry Maxwell  
William McCormick  
Michael O'Donnell  
Karl Vierck

Members Absent:

Tracy Hayes  
Nizam Emamdie

Guests Present:

Shawna Novak, Director, Health & Human Services (via Zoom)  
Julie Voorhees, Housing Support Staff  
Michelle Lawlor, Housing Support Staff  
Mary Garcia, Social Services Support Staff  
Roberto Ortiz, Manager, SJC Housing  
Sarah Butler, Assistant to County Administrator, Brad Bradley  
Darren Smith, Smith & Henzy, Real Estate Developer (via Zoom)  
Brett Green, Archway Partners, President (via Zoom)  
Jack Monfore, Council on Aging/Sunshine Bus Company  
Cathy Rabino, Council on Aging

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

- 1) Introduction of AHAC Members and SJC Staff: Committee members and County staff were acknowledged and quorum was present. Mr. Lazar introduced Dr. William McCormick, new committee member representing the PZA. Dr. McCormick provided some of his background and the reason for his interest in affordable housing. Mary Garcia delivered the unfortunate news that Committee member, Nizam Emamdie had passed away unexpectedly,
- 2) Approval of Minutes: **Motion** made by Alex Mansur to approve minutes of May, 2021 meeting, motion seconded by Michael O'Donnell. **Motion passed unanimously.**
- 3) Administrators Report: Roberto Ortiz informed the Committee that representatives Jack Monfore, Road Supervisor, Sunshine Bus division, and Cathy Rabino, Independent Living Services Manager, both with the Council on Aging, were present to discuss transportation planning within St. Johns County and the difficulties that senior citizens are facing finding affordable housing in the community. Roberto Ortiz also reported that a date and time has been set for the ground breaking of the newest

affordable housing project, San Marco Heights. All AHAC and HFA members were invited to the June 28<sup>th</sup> ground breaking ceremony. Roberto Ortiz, reiterated that the Board of County Commissioners recently voted to approve the TEFRA resolution for the Victoria Crossing project and he said he will update the Committee as more information becomes available.

- 4) San Marco Heights Project: Bill Lazar turned the meeting over to Brett Green and Darren Smith, developers of the San Marco Heights project. Brett Green gave some background information on the project, talking about the partnerships and financials involved in the development of San Marcos Heights. Brett Green told the Committee that 100% of the units would be affordable, with the majority of the units at 60% AMI. Brett Green talked about incentives and strategies for developers interested in building affordable housing projects in St. Johns County. Mr. Smith said some of the difficulties developers are facing are water and sewer hookups and impact fees. Brett Green discussed fund raising and funding sources that other counties and municipalities in Florida are using to assist with these financial hurdles. Darren Smith joined the conversation by stating that rezoning should be considered in St. Johns County. Darren Smith stated the impact fees in St Johns County are quite high and account for roughly 25% of the cost per unit. Mr. Smith stated other counties' impact fees average 5% to 6% of the cost per unit. Henry Dean asked if Mr. Smith or Mr. Green might provide him a printout of the average cost per unit, per county, to take to his peers when discussing the impact fees in St. Johns County. Commissioner Dean said he would be interested in engaging other community leaders in a discussion regarding their ability to lower or waive impact fees for affordable housing. Mr. Green said he would also provide Mr. Dean with the Florida counties that offer lower impact fees for affordable housing. Brett Green mentioned House Bill 1339 which, he said, was passed last year, and allows any jurisdiction to approve zoning for affordable housing projects, regardless of land use being industrial, office, or commercial. Brett Green encouraged the AHAC to open dialogue with County Administration and County Commissioners to see about using these parcels not already zoned for multifamily housing for affordable housing projects. Discussion ensued regarding expedited permitting and holding developers to their commitments to include affordable housing in their projects. Brittany Coronado asked about the social services component of San Marcos Heights, and Darren Smith stated all social services will be overseen by the property manager. Mr. Smith also stated the club house will be utilized as a hurricane shelter for the community and will also be used for public meetings, as needed.
- 5) AHAC Annual Report 2021 – Transportation Hubs Near Affordable Housing: Cathy Rambino stated all of her non-profit community partners are in agreement that one of the largest needs in the community is affordable housing. Ms. Rabino talked about the fact that many seniors in the community are not equipped to deal with the time and expense of home maintenance, so the need for affordable rentals is great. Ms. Rabino said there are simply not enough units that are affordable for an individual living only on their social security benefits. Jack Monfore, Road Supervisor for the Sunshine Bus, talked about their routes and the cost to ride the bus for seniors and those of low to moderate income. Mr. Monfore explained the rides are extremely affordable, anywhere from \$.50 to \$1.00 for a one way trip, and up to \$4.00 for an all-day pass. Mr. Monfore went on to say individuals who wish to ride to a specific location can call ahead and make an appointment for a transporter to come directly to their home. Mr. Monfore said bus routes will continue to be added as the County grows, since public transportation is in high demand, and the staff at Council on Aging/Sunshine Bus will be monitoring that growth and responding accordingly. Sarah Butler advised she would be happy to help facilitate advertising for the Sunshine Bus in order to make information available to the public on the County website and social media pages.
- 6) Public Comment: Bill McCormick commented that when the Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida put out their surveys, the majority of the respondents were from Duval, leaving little input from St. Johns residents. He suggested that surveys should be placed for maximum exposure to St. Johns residents. Bill Lazar also suggested providing a link to the CDBG survey to the United Way, asking that they share with all of their member agencies.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15p.m.