

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

August 20, 2025
Minutes

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

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm by Vice Chair, Bill Lazar.

Members Present - AHAC:

Greg Burke - Residential home builder
Polly Crabtree – Citizen rep/Essential service personnel
Drew Geisel – St. Johns County resident
Bill Lazar – Citizen actively engaged as a not-for-profit provider of affordable housing
Harry Maxwell – Citizen actively engaged as a for-profit provider of affordable housing
Michael O'Donnell -HFA Chair/Citizen actively engaged advocate for low-income persons
Judy Spiegel – Citizen actively serving on local planning agency
Ann Taylor – BCC Commissioner

Members Absent - AHAC:

Orville Dothage – St Johns County Resident
Alex Mansur – Citizen actively engaged in areas of labor in home building
Tracie Sax –St. Johns County resident

Guests Present:

Joseph Cone – Asst. Director Health and Human Services
Jenny Harvey – Housing & Community Development Manager
Laura Lavelle– Support Staff, St. Johns County Housing
Vicki Pepper – Resident St. Johns County
Evan Walsnovich – Planner, Growth Management

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

1. **Introduction of AHAC Members and SJC Staff:** Introduction of AHAC Members and SJC Staff: Committee members and County staff were acknowledged, and a quorum was present.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** A **motion** was made by Greg Burke to approve minutes of the July meeting; **motion** seconded by Harry Maxwell. **The motion passed unanimously.**
3. **Administrators Report:** Jenny Harvey reported the SHIP Annual report was in the consent agenda and approved by BCC on August 19, 2025. DPA has closed to date, twenty-nine households with home purchase assistance. Ms. Harvey stated they paused on upper AMI clients until SHIP set asides are met. This has not caused any transactions already in process for DPA to close. On July 29th Joseph Cone and Ms. Harvey attended Chamber meeting to see a recent report data and hear Ashton Nesbit from Florida Housing Financial Coalition speak. On CDBG business, the Annual Action Plan approved and submitted to IDIS (HUD Systems). The Hastings Library/Community Center project is ahead of schedule, target date to complete is February 2026. Ms. Harvey presented the committee members photos of the progress. The last CDBG/SHIP blended rehab project closed on August 1st for Sergeant Wilbur, who was named a Hometown Hero, the project was a collaborative effort of two funding streams SHIP/CDBG and two contractors. Ms. Harvey presented a video by Public Affairs and power point picture presentation of the project welcoming home Sergeant Wilbur and the Hometown Hero Celebration. Mr. Cone and Ms. Harvey will be attending the statewide Annual Housing Coalition Conference in Orlando August 25th through August 27th.
4. **“Yes, in Gods Backyard” YIGBY:** Mr. Cone provided information to the committee members on the 2025 Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 1730, which allows local governments to approve affordable housing on certain land owned by religious institutions, regardless of the underlying zoning. “Yes-in-God’s-Backyard” (YIGBY) policy that was added to the existing “House Bill 1339” tool for affordable housing. Mr. Cone provided a listing of church or faith based groups that own five or more acres in St Johns County. Evan Walsnovich, Planner from Growth Management provided maps of the four quadrants of St Johns County with the Churches and Faith based organizations that have five or more acres of property. Conversations ensued over the policy between the members regarding the law and ordinances that does not include state funding, tax credits, or guidance for navigating development. Conversations continued that the faith-based organizations may not want the burden or too much responsibility to handle legal and regulatory details. The members were thankful for the insightful presentation on YIGBY.
5. **Annual Report Review:** Bill Lazar spoke about the 2024 Annual Report and goals and suggested the committee turn the same report with updated data points. Mr. Lazar requested that all members receive another copy of the 2024 Annual Report for review and update as needed to discuss at next meeting. A conversation ensued with the committee members on goals and incentives on the report. Mr. Cone mentioned the timeline for the annual report submission, he reminded the members that at the October’s public meeting they could recommend finalization of the 2025 draft. November meeting to vote on final recommendations with public comment. December would be when they present the report to the BCC meeting for a vote to accept recommendations.

6. **Officer Nomination & Election/Chair:** Committee members ensued a discussion regarding nominees and proceeded to nominate Bill Lazar as Chairperson, followed by a **motion** made by Harry Maxwell; a **motion** was seconded by Polly Crabtree, resulting in the confirmation of the nominee, Bill Lazar, as new Chair. **The motion passed unanimously.** Committee members discussed the position of Vice Chair and were in favor of nominating Drew Geisel as new Vice Chair. A **motion** was made by Polly Crabtree; a **motion** seconded by Harry Maxwell.
The motion passed unanimously.
7. **Public Comment:** Vicki Pepper, resident of St Johns discussed reviewing the comp plan and look at an optional density bonus for housing to drive down lower income levels. She suggested the AHAC and HFA join her and ask the BCC to task the staff to take a detailed approach to make the plan a more effective tool and to take a closer look at how the bonuses are structured.

The meeting adjourned at 4:14p.m.