



Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date/Time/Location: 2/9/2023 / 8:30-10:00am / Hybrid: Civic 1st Floor Conference Room & Zoom

Committee Members Present: Ann Beck, Ashley Thomasson, Bruce Bosch, Dan Dunne, Dawna Morse, Kayla Schott-Bresler, Samya Lutz, Tara Sundin, Von Ochoa

Committee Members Absent: Brien Thane, Dean Fearing, Diana Phair, Teri Bryant

Whatcom Co. HCS Staff/Guests: Ashley Geyleynse, Barbara Johnson-Vinna, Chris D’Onofrio / Debbie Paton, Helen Campbell, Kate Laspina, Michael Chiavario, Paul Schissler

Agenda Item	Report/Discussion	Action/Who
1. Call to order, introductions, and roll call	Introductions commenced and quorum present. New members Von Ochoa and Dan Dunne introduced themselves.	Ashley T.
2. Approval of Oct. & Dec. 2022 Minutes	Ann moved that the minutes from the October and December meetings be approved, Samya seconded the motion. The motion passed.	Ashley T. Yes: 9 No: 0 Abstain: 0
3. New applicants for Housing Advocate position	The County has received two applications for the vacant Housing Advocate position. Chris called for volunteers to review applications and make a recommendation by the end of February so the new member can join for the next meeting in April. Samya, Dawna, and Ashley volunteered.	Chris
4. Funding Overview, Expectations & Budget Proposal	Several charts outlining the overall Whatcom County Health & Community Services Housing and Homelessness program budget and sections of the budget were referenced in a funding overview. Staff went over the different funding sources and explained the upcoming funding cliffs expected due to the conclusion of some state and federal grants this summer and fall. Local funding sources, such as document recording fees, have also been impacted by the lack of home sales and refinancing. Tara asked to see revenues versus the amounts committed to funding. Charts specific to permanent supportive housing and interim facilities and motels were reviewed and discussed. Discussion topics included the importance of case management and services to improve programming, and the need to invest more in families with children.	Chris presented, Committee discussed



<p>5. Upcoming Presentation to Councilmembers</p>	<p>Ann and Chris will be giving a presentation to County Council on March 7th to raise awareness of funding cliffs and make the case that we don't have enough resources to fund programs at the scale necessary to solve the homelessness and housing affordability problems. Chris asked for members to bring forward talking points they think are important to bring to elected officials. Members brought up several ideas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Buildable Lands Report, • Department of Commerce's requirement to include housing by AMI with their comprehensive plan, • the Whatcom Homeless Service Center reports which show a snapshot of intakes into the housing pool versus referrals out, • ongoing trends showing the need for ongoing development of services and affordable housing options to meet the growing need for families with children, • land use data from planning department, • and creative strategies for increasing revenue. 	<p>Chris</p>
<p>6. Budget Proposal</p>	<p>The committee reviewed the proposal outlined in the packet regarding the use of 1406 and 1590 funds, a spending plan that allocates funding into three buckets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services, Rental Assistance and PSH Operations • Small Scale Development (no LIHTC) • Large Scale Development (leverages LIHTC funds) <p>It was suggested that the line between services and development should be a little harder and the line within those larger categories be a little softer. There may be a need to shift between explicit buckets of funding depending on community needs and what projects are brought forward in order to get the money out into the community in a timely manner. A few other things to note are that the amounts in the plan include the total amount allocated and do not account for administration and there should be very few development surprises due to there being a procedure for adding projects to the pipeline via the Affordable Housing Planning Group facilitated by the County. It was suggested to align the annual process for competitive applications with the City's annual process. The committee discussed the proposal and there was a general consensus that this is a good direction to move in. There is a need to continue to revisit the plan in relation to the housing portion of the Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan and on an annual basis.</p>	<p>Chris presented, Committee discussed</p>
<p>7. Whatcom Homeless Service Center Update</p>	<p>Chris shared an update from Teri who was not present at the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early indicators show that we are going to see high numbers from the Point-In-Time Count this year. The Homeless Outreach Team completed over unsheltered 300 surveys by lunch time on the day of the count, much more than usual, including a high quantity of surveys from Lummi Nation. 	<p>Chris</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing navigation services are now available at 1111 Cornwall Avenue from 1:00-4:00pm for those who have some income and need housing search support. Advocacy Day is coming up for the 40th and 42nd voting districts. Visit wiiha.org/get-involved for more information. 	
8. City of Bellingham Update	The City's Consolidated Plan is well underway and due to HUD by May. The official draft will be submitted between now and the next meeting and will be distributed to members of the committee for comments. Notices of Funding Availability were extended by about a week and close at noon today. There is also an opportunity for agencies or organizations to submit a Letter of Interest for homelessness prevention and diversion ideas. Submissions will be accepted on a rolling basis.	Samya
9. WCH&CS Update	Someone was hired to fill the Affordable Housing Specialist position but has since left the position.	Ann
9. Public Comment	<p>Michael shared reflections from the meeting and suggested the creation of an alternative system for permanent affordable housing that won't continue to drive up housing costs and push people into homelessness.</p> <p>Paul asked to make a proposal or work with a subcommittee for a project he's working on outside of the City of Bellingham if allowed. Paul stated that the affordability problem is just as big of an issue outside of the City of Bellingham.</p>	

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 13, 2023, 8:30-10:00am

