



Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date/Time/Location: 4/13/2023 / 8:30-10:00am / Hybrid: Civic 1st Floor Conference Room & Zoom

Committee Members Present: Adrienne Renz, Ashley Thomasson, Brien Thane, Bruce Bosch, Dan Dunne, Dean Fearing, Diana Phair, Kayla Schott-Bresler, Samya Lutz, Tara Sundin, Teri Bryant, Von Ochoa

Committee Members Absent: Ann Beck, Dawna Morse

WCHCS Staff/Guests: Ashley Geleynse, Chris D'Onofrio / Katie, Helen Campbell, Debbie Paton, Marcelo Pratesi, Paul Schissler

Agenda Item	Report/Discussion	Action/Who
1. Call to order, introductions, and roll call	Introductions commenced and quorum present.	Brien
2. New member: Adrienne Renz	Chris introduced new member Adrienne Renz, Executive Director of Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services (DVSAS). Adrienne shared about her background in social services.	Chris/Adrienne
3. Approval of February 2023 minutes	Samya moved that the minutes from the February 2023 meeting be approved, Ashley T. seconded the motion. Teri abstained. The motion passed.	Brien Yes: 11 No: 0 Abstain: 1
4. Agenda review	There were no suggested changes to the agenda.	Brien
5. Stakeholder Advisory Committee recommendations for housing services	Kayla provided an update on the Justice Center planning process that's been occurring through the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and Incarceration Prevention & Reduction Task Force. The needs assessment has been completed and approved by County Council. Next steps are working on an implementation plan to build a new jail that includes behavioral health services, but also broader supportive services to prevent incarceration and to reduce the revolving door of people going in and out of the jail. Housing recommendations that may come forward are 1) to adequately fund permanent supportive housing services for existing projects 2) to expand permanent supportive housing for justice involved individuals 3) to provide recovery housing, specialty shelter, and smaller permanent supportive housing/rental assistance models for justice involved individuals, 4) to advocate for	Kayla presented, Committee discussed



	<p>relief from HUD's (US Department of Housing & Urban Development) chronically homeless definition which prevents incarcerated individuals for qualifying as homeless in order to receive housing services. Kayla acknowledged that there's more conversation to be had around the availability of local 1406 and 1590 funds, whether we need to be looking at entirely new resources to fund these strategies, and where unit or bed priority for this population fits into the coordinated entry system.</p> <p>Committee members offered the following feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There aren't enough local resources to fully operate permanent supportive housing programs and more resources are needed from and initiative/levy and the state. • It could be beneficial to add language around prioritizing specific populations (i.e. families with children) and advocate for the state legislature to more thoroughly fund permanent supportive housing services for those populations. • Suggestion to look at where this population overlaps with other priority populations (i.e. families, seniors, disabilities), create synergy between those priorities, and get specific about the needs that justice involved folks have. • If HUD were to bend chronic homelessness rule, could use Shelter Plus Care rental assistance that would get sent back to HUD by getting match for case management. BHA will continue to have discussions on this topic with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee. • Include the justice involved population in broader conversations about the Coordinated Entry prioritization process (i.e. how does being justice involved intersect with unsheltered and chronic homelessness?) 	
<p>6. Habitat for Humanity memo</p>	<p>Habitat for Humanity sent a memo to the Housing Advisory Committee requesting the use 1406 and 1590 funds for homeownership, including the rehabilitation of existing homes and down payment assistance. Habitat for Humanity and Kulshan Community Land Trust staff responded to questions about screening potential homebuyers because there has been a barrier getting families through the Habitat for Humanity process in the past. Habitat does complete background checks on potential homebuyers, Kulshan does not. This relates to conversations the committee has been having about the local development fund allocation approach. There are also actions being taken at the state level to address wealth inequities as it relates to homeownership. This conversation will be continued later on in the meeting and at future meetings.</p>	<p>Chris presented, Committee discussed</p>
<p>7. Skagit HOME Consortium plan update</p>	<p>The Skagit HOME Consortium includes Skagit, Island, and Whatcom Counties, excluding the City of Bellingham, and funds have not been used much in Whatcom County to-date. Chris reviewed a few</p>	<p>Chris presented, Committee discussed/</p>



	<p>proposed changes to the next five-year plan and requested feedback. Proposed changes include: 1) eliminating the CHDO operations budget and adding that to the general development bucket 2) reducing tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA). Samya and Debbie Paton, Opportunity Council Community Services Manager, whose team distributes TBRA, cautioned against reducing TBRA over the five-year period. They instead suggested to increase the allocation because of the demonstrated need for rental assistance and the fact the other sources of rental assistance are set to expire. The committee discussed advocating for using unspent development funds for down payment assistance, ensuring that the resale policy is compatible with all stakeholders.</p>	<p>provided feedback</p>
<p>8. Memo to EDI Board re: affordable workforce housing</p>	<p>Paul gave an overview of the County's Economic Development Investment (EDI) fund, which brings in almost \$6M per year. The fund can be used for a limited number of purposes related to economic investment and public facilities, including affordable workforce housing. Paul proposed that there are two other uses this fund could be used for: 1) land banking, 2) predevelopment expenses (personnel). The committee discussed the proposal, including the potential legal complications with using EDI funds for affordable housing. Dan motioned to request that the EDI Board consider using EDI funds for land banking and personnel expenses for affordable housing, if it's legal. Dean seconded the motion. Kayla abstained. The motion passed.</p>	<p>Paul presented, Committee discussed</p> <p>Yes: 11 No: 0 Abstain: 1</p>
<p>9. Development fund allocation approach</p>	<p>Chris presented development fund allocation approach consisting of three buckets: 1) housing services, permanent supportive housing operations and maintenance, and/or rental assistance 2) small development and remodels 3) LIHTC leverage. The following schedule for small development and LIHTC projects seeking funding to leverage was proposed. This schedule aligns with the City of Bellingham's NOFA schedule: have a draft NOFA for committee review in August, release the NOFA in January, create a review committee in February, being cautious of potential conflicts of interest, and announcing awards in April 2024. Tara suggested assessing the need and being flexible with targets for small and large development on an annual basis because it will change year to year and some larger projects will require a couple years of banking. Members of the committee generally supported the approach and there will be follow up at future meetings.</p>	<p>Chris presented, Committee discussed</p>
<p>10. WCHCS Update</p>	<p>A job posting was created for a Capital Projects Manager that will focus on affordable housing and childcare facility development.</p>	<p>Chris</p>



11. City of Bellingham update	Samya thanked Brien and the folks at Mercy Housing for speaking to the City Council about affordable housing. The public comment period for the City of Bellingham's Consolidated plan is closed and the report will be published in May	Samya
12. WHSC update	Teri shared the following updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Whatcom Homeless Service Center is fully staffed. • The Point in Time Count report is expected to be released some time in May. • Outreach is supporting Public Works by working with Honey Bucket to pump out RVs that are leaking sewage into waterways. 	Teri
13. Public Comment	Diana sent an invitation through the chat to the Sch'lang'en Crossroads Halfway Homes Grand Opening on April 26. There was no other public comment.	Brien
13. Adjourn	The meeting was adjourned.	Brien

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

