



Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

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

Committee Members Present: Ashley Thomasson (late arrival), Brien Thane, Bruce Bosch, Dan Dunne, Dean Fearing (late arrival, early exit), Diana Phair, Kayla Schott-Bresler, Samya Lutz, Tara Sundin, Teri Bryant, Von Ochoa

Committee Members Absent: Adrienne Renz, Ann Beck, Dawna Morse

WCHCS Staff/Guests: Ashley Geleynse, Barbara Johnson-Vinna, Chris D'Onofrio, Eric Chambers / Adrienne Solenberger and Turner Campbell – Opportunity Council

Agenda Item	Report/Discussion	Action/Who
1. Call to order, introductions, and roll call	Introductions commenced and quorum present.	Brien
2. Approval of June 2023 minutes	Samya moved that the minutes from the February 2023 meeting be approved, Dan seconded the motion. The motion passed.	Brien Yes: 9 No: 0 Abstain: 0
3. Agenda review	There were no proposed changes to he agenda.	Brien
4. Funding for services	Starting State Fiscal Year 2024, The Department of Commerce's Consolidated Homeless Grant includes two new budget lines: a document recording fee offset and an inflationary increase. Commerce is also dispersing a new grant called the Emergency Housing Fund. With COVID-related funding expiring, and with these additions to the budget from Commerce, the housing program will be within a couple hundred thousand dollars of the 2023 services budget in 2024, and will experience much less of a funding cliff than was anticipated. The committee discussed shortcomings of the new services budget, including a drastic decrease in the amount of funding available for eviction prevention and shifting away from the status quo when sheltering families with children, specifically related to motels.	Chris
5. RFP for acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of	Eric introduced a Request for Proposals (RFP) process for acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation of affordable housing (non LIHTC projects), anticipated to be released on an annual or biannual basis beginning this fall. The County anticipates about \$1M for the first round of award(s), and there will probably be a match requirement above a certain	Eric



<p>non-LIHTC projects</p>	<p>amount. Funding awarded in the RFP process will be a combination of 1406 and 1590 funds, so projects must comply with the associated RCWs.</p> <p>City staff recommended mirroring the City's application materials and timeline, as well as being ready to commit awarded funds over a couple of years as developers will often leverage other state funds by having a local commitment.</p>	
<p>6 & 7 Bellis Fair Family Housing – 9% Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) project</p>	<p>Adrienne Solenberger, of Opportunity Council, presented on the organization's Bellis Fair Family Housing and Early Learning Center project. The property is located next to the Bellis Fair Mall, and it's anticipated that the parcel will be acquired by the end of the month. The project has two phases. Phase one is 63 units of low-income housing for families and a co-located childcare and resource center with 88 slots (5 classrooms). The project is currently committed to prioritizing 30%, 50%, and 60% of the Area Median Income, 20% of units will be set aside for households exiting homelessness, and another 20% will be set aside for households with disabilities. Phase two would be a future tax credit project.</p> <p>Secured funding includes approximately \$7M from COB, Whatcom County, and a federal appropriation. Other potential funding sources include 9% Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), the State Housing Trust Fund, National Housing Trust Fund, Whatcom County, and WELLS and ELF funds for the early learning center. The total anticipated project cost is approximately \$30M.</p> <p>Following to presentation, the committee asked questions and reviewed the local process for recommending a project to the Washington State Housing Finance Commission for 9% LIHTCs.</p> <p>Brien asked for a motion to endorse Phase one of the Bellis Fair Family Housing project for Whatcom County's allocation of 2024 9% Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and designating Samya as our representative to the Washington State Housing Finance Commission. Tara motioned, and Ashley T. seconded the motion. It was confirmed that there were no other projects competing for 9% LIHTCs at this time. The committee voted and the motion passed. Teri and Kayla abstained.</p>	<p>Presenters: Adrienne Solenberger and Turner Campbell, Opportunity Council</p> <p>Yes: 8 No: 0 Abstain: 2</p>
<p>8. Past EDI fund uses and application to housing development</p>	<p>The County has a rural sales tax credit called the Economic Development Investment (EDI) Fund, which generates funding for public facilities serving economic development purposes. Small amounts of this funding have been used to support affordable housing by way of impact fees and infrastructure (i.e. stormwater). The current fund balance is about \$20M.</p> <p>Recently, there was a statutory change that was theoretically supposed to make using the funds easier to use for affordable housing development, but it actually made it more convoluted. Additionally, the EDI Board has preferred to offer loans instead of grants, which isn't</p>	<p>Kayla</p>



	<p>favorable to the development of affordable housing. Overall, the fund is not currently the County's best tool to support the type of housing discussed in this committee; however, over the next 16-18 months the County will be working to fix this from a policy standpoint, and with the EDI Board and Council. In the meantime, developers can still apply to the County for impact fees and infrastructure. The committee discussed, and in response, Kayla indicated that further discussion would be helpful and that the EDI Board would benefit from a policy recommendation letter from this committee or a group of developers after the legislative session (i.e. land banking, loans vs. grants, and level of income eligibility). In addition, this committee or a couple of housing developers could send a legislative letter if a bill goes forward in the upcoming legislative session.</p>	
<p>9. City of Bellingham update</p>	<p>Samya reported that the City submitted its Consolidated Plan, effective July 1. Before fully diving in, the City has to report on the previous plan, and the public comment period will be opening soon. Samya also acknowledged the conversations that have been occurring at the state level regarding capacity building for by and for organizations, and to assume that to be more of an expectation going forward.</p>	<p>Samya</p>
<p>10. Whatcom Homeless Service Center (WHSC) update</p>	<p>Teri provided the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next week is the groundbreaking on the Way Station project. • The Homeless Outreach Team is partnering with the Lighthouse Mission to provide showers on Thursdays, and will soon be offering showers in partnership with the City until the Way Station opens. 	<p>Teri</p>
<p>11. County update</p>	<p>Chris provided the following updates from Health and Community Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The housing team is looking to hire another staff member, possibly to be introduced at the next meeting. • The County plans to partner with local organizations around winter and severe weather sheltering, including Ferndale Community Services. Another RFP is out right now for Bellingham-based shelters. • Staff are working on an analysis of the Coordinated Entry program in order to inform local planning in the coming year. <p>Kayla provided the following updates from the Executive's Office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is approximately \$1.1M of unallocated ARPA funding for homeless services. • Organizations providing services to children and families are welcome to join ongoing conversations around the Healthy Children's Fund implementation. • The County is seeing a need for early predevelopment for housing and childcare projects, particularly for small agencies who don't know where to start. 	<p>Chris</p>



12. New Business	<p>Von shared what was learned from a tour of the Block Project in Seattle. He is currently exploring the model locally through discussions with homeowners who may be interested in participating and with Opportunity Council. https://www.the-block-project.org/</p> <p>Dan shared that he joined Whatcom County Business and Commerce Advisory Committee.</p>	Brien
13. Public Comment	There was no public comment.	Brien
14. Adjourn	The meeting was adjourned.	Brien

Next Meeting: Thursday, December 14, 2023, 8:30-10:00am

