

Regional Housing Council

Agenda: Wednesday June 8th, 2022 (4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.) (via Zoom)

Carolyn Cox: Chair, Carolina Mejia: Vice-Chair

#	TIME	AGENDA ITEM	LEAD	ACTION
1	4:00 – 4:05	Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check-in• Review Agenda/Meeting Purpose	Carolyn	
2	4:05 – 4:10	Approval of May 25th minutes	Carolyn	Action
3	4:10 – 4:45	Retreat Review <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Artifacts• Next Steps	Keylee	Discussion
4	4:45 – 4:50	WA State Right of Way Update	Keylee	Information
5	4:50 – 5:00	Good of the Order	Carolyn	Information
6	5:00	Upcoming Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Next RHC Meeting Wednesday June 22nd 2022, 4pm Location: Zoom meeting		Information

REGIONAL HOUSING COUNCIL

Wednesday May 25th, 2022 Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES:

Lacey: Carolyn Cox, Kelly Adams, Rick Walk

Tumwater: Joan Cathey, Brad Medrud, John Doan

Olympia: Jim Cooper, Dani Madrone, Keith Stahley

Thurston County: Carolina Mejia, Ramiro Chavez, Keylee Marineau, Tom Webster, Jacinda Steltjes

South County: None

Public: None

Meeting began at 4:00 pm.

Agenda Item 1: Agenda approved, motion and second

Agenda Item 2: Public Comment - none

Agenda Item 3: Minutes from May 11th meeting, motion and second, approved

Agenda Item 4: RHC and HAT retreat follow up

Chair Cox asked for each member to identify one big takeaway and one item for follow up/areas of opportunity from the retreat.

County Manager Chavez: Very good conversation with the HAT members, opportunities include discussion about Interlocal and Home Fund, including RHC structure.

Chair Cox: Appreciated the strong agreement regarding the need for clearer governance and staff support. Hoped to have more progress regarding the interlocal agreement.

Councilmember Madrone: Appreciated the in-person meeting, relationship building, and agree with the need for discussion regarding RHC interlocal agreement, and need to address short term inefficiencies.

Keith Stahley: Value of the RHC was clear regarding their ability to respond to the State request to utilize funds to assist in moving camps out of the I5 corridor, a good example of what the RHC can accomplish.

Councilmember Cooper: The words of the Interlocal agreement are the correct words and mission. Appreciated the conversation regarding forming a stand alone organization, the real challenge is the Interlocal agreement and advisory committee and how to figure out integrating the HAT structure. How do we have an organization delivering funds centered with people with lived experience, and experts helping to make decisions?

Councilmember Cathey: Joined the retreat via Zoom so was not able to gather as much information. Agreed with many of the previous comments.

Brad Medrud agreed with the positive comments, the primary concern is what are the next steps?

Commissioner Mejia: Hoping for more, almost needed a third retreat day to finalize ideas and next steps. Didn't get to finalize the role of the HAT with the RHC, there are still many questions. They have a goal, but did not get to clearly identify next steps.

Rick Walk: Agreed that being in-person was good, and appreciated the break out groups and sharing the group conversations. Did not get a chance to discuss if the King County model would work for RHC, balance of homeless and housing, and the ILA next steps, and how to make progress in the short term to keep retreat goals moving forward.

Tom Webster agreed with thoughts that others have already shared, positive vision for where they want to go but looking for greater clarity on steps going forward, staff capacity, and RHC and HAT relationship, including subject matter expertise.

Keylee Marineau added that having one more day would have allowed them to dig deeper, although acknowledge that would be difficult. Appreciated the effort to all invest together in moving this work forward. Agreed with the need for more clear direction. Encouraged to get more into the expertise and lived experience.

Jacinda Steltjes: Appreciated the ability to discuss and connect in person. Would have liked a high level summary, a bit more time with each break out to discuss tasks and develop a workplan. Good to hear that everyone seemed to have the same vision.

Question about how the experience was for the HAT members? They have not heard feedback.

Discussion follows regarding possibly adding a group (staff and members) to work on proposals for the next steps regarding the Home fund, structure and staffing. Possibility of 2 RHC members, 2 staff, and HAT representatives included in this group to develop structure and immediate next steps. The Home fund ordinance includes a mandate to develop the Interlocal agreement and to amend the RHC interlocal agreement to create an executive arm to guide the RHC in the use of the Home fund. Next steps should include the executive structure, amending the RHC ILA, as the revenues will be coming in soon and structure needs to be in place prior to revenue coming in. There are also a variety of projects currently being worked on, the Tech Team could develop a project schedule, prioritizing projects, as well as the retreat follow up tasks. Discussion follows regarding who will join the new group for structure development, to include Commissioner Mejia, County staff, Lacey staff, possibly Councilmember Cooper, and Keylee will reach out to HAT for participants. Discussion follows regarding ensuring that people involved in this group are equally representative of stakeholders, balanced with efficiency.

Agenda Item 5: RHC Interlocal Agreement

Tom pointed out that this item was discussed under the previous agenda item, and poses the question of how/next steps to move forward on amending the RHC ILA. Ramiro added that this should include an organizational chart, decision making process, structure. Timeline: Olympia should be providing feedback to the County shortly.

Agenda Item 6: Technical Team Working Group updates

Department of Commerce has reached out to Thurston County for use of funds to move people living in State Rights of Way. Funding is expected to help find housing options for people. The State is looking at immediate solutions (June) and medium timeframe (fall) and longer term over the next few years. There

is a draft MOU from the State that is under review. Discussion follows regarding where people might be moved to.

Scattered Site update, the pilot project is wrapping up, they are continuing to support established camps but the funding is winding down. There will be a final report available that summarizes the impact to clients who received services.

Built for Zero update, Chicago conference was attended by many local agencies and jurisdictions. Significant progress was made in terms of understanding how to achieve a by name list, including gathering and sharing data. Discussion included goals, data, current tasks. Discussion also included implications of end of scattered site program and how this service might continue.

Agenda Item 7: Good of the Order

Councilmember Madrone gave an update on the rental housing code for Olympia. Changes include increased noticing for rental increases, moving costs (fees and deposits) to be no more than 1 month's rent.

The County 5-year Consolidated Plan is ending, and will need to do a new plan for HUD compliance. Prior to the Consolidated Plan, they will need to be doing a fair housing assessment, this will be led by City of Olympia and Thurston County.

Lacey is working on an energy efficiency audit and retrofit program. They will be starting outreach to property managers.

Meeting Adjourned: 5:11 pm

Next Meeting: May 11th, 4:00 pm



112 4th Avenue E, Suite 200
Olympia, WA 98501
P: (360) 754-1954
F: (360) 252-6555
info@athenaplace.com
www.athenaplace.com

June 1, 2022

To Darian Lightfoot, Keylee Marineau, and Members of the Regional Housing Council of Thurston County:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide retreat design and facilitation services for you. It was a pleasure to listen to participants individually in advance of the retreat as well as to host all of you in conversation on the two days of the retreat, which was designed to engage RHC members and other major participants in Thurston County's affordable housing and homelessness systems. In fact, the idea for the retreat was originally born from a recognition that relationship-building between the HAT and RHC was needed. We were energized by the level of collaboration in the room and see good reason for hope for establishing a highly functional system with greatly improved relationships. As one participant said afterward, "...spending that time together in that way gave me hope I couldn't have imagined before."

To maximize time for individual interviews and retreat design, our contract did not include a written report or summary of the retreat and its outcomes. Alternatively, we promised to deliver artifacts from the retreat. [In this folder](#), you will find:

- Learning materials shared with participants
- Photos of participants, activities, and flip charts organized by major segments of the retreat: Relationships, Strategic Direction, System Design, and Future Considerations (plus a miscellaneous folder)
- Some produced items included in the Strategic Direction, System Design, and Future Considerations folders

The produced items are collections or summaries of key results from the retreat, including agreed-upon strategic direction with key words to describe "functional zero" in plain language, collective design of system and governance structure with identified benefits of these changes, and identified fears to avoid in future and next steps brainstormed in the final session of the retreat. These materials are not developed as formal reports for public distribution. They are offered as tools that we hope will help get to the next stage of the RHC's evolution. Please note that these are above and beyond what our team promised in our scope of work and are part of more than 40 hours of services provided pro bono, plus donated refreshments and other supplies for the retreat (total value of more than \$10,000).

We hope your retreat experience and access to these artifacts will help you to make the decisions that are needed next and to take action on those decisions as soon as possible. Key decisions that we noted at the end of the retreat include:

1. **Will the RHC become a separate organization like LOTT or the King County Homelessness Authority?** Concerns about funds to support such an organization were expressed. However, virtually all interview participants recognized the need to make system improvements that would improve regional focus and capacity to effectively collaborate and that dedicated staff (not borrowed from each local government member) are needed to do so. Could it be workable to create a lean organization that is responsible for coordinating/leading a regional approach and managing/distributing funds, along with support from a committee/governance system that can advise the organization, promote local implementation of regional recommendations (including collecting and submitting selected data), and review and make decisions on funding allocation?
2. **How will funding work to address both homelessness prevention (expansion of affordable/attainable housing options and support for people at risk of losing housing) and homelessness response?** A funding model is needed and should be an immediate next step once question number 1 is addressed. As shown in the [Funding and Activity Quick Guide](#), some funds are already dedicated for prevention or response. For those funds that could be used for both purposes, the RHC might consider a prioritized or apportioned system. This is something that can evolve as the system learns. Requirements heard in interviews and during the retreat include accountability mechanisms and need to prevent conflicts of interest among those responsible for making funding recommendations.
3. **Will the RHC create a refreshed strategic plan that is inclusive of affordable housing/prevention and homelessness response objectives?** Many participants expressed interest in creating a strategic plan that will guide the RHC's work in a more comprehensive way, a way that is more aligned with the overall purpose of the RHC, which all seem to agree is captured in its existing ILA. If the RHC is going to become an independent organization or to otherwise establish co-funded and dedicated staff to lead the work of the RHC, this would be an important first step for that regional leadership. An interim work plan with basic guideposts to support a more effective regional effort while developing an independent organization may also be advisable. It could:
 - a. Establish policy to guide RHC members' independence in support of regional decision-making;
 - b. Identify how funds will be apportioned across key strategies (creation of new affordable/attainable housing stock/options, housing retention, and homelessness intervention) as a kind of system trial/test;
 - c. Establish a timeline and steps toward creating the new independent, regional system/organization; and
 - d. Include plans for hiring an interim director/staff to manage the transition.

We heard a strong desire in the interviews we conducted to build a highly functional system that allows people to access housing across the spectrum of need. Though it is not possible to fully develop a system that can be immediately implementable after only 12 working hours during which relationship-building was a necessary first step, we believe a strong foundation and framework was developed. The next steps that RHC leadership and partners take will determine whether this collaboration will flourish into the thriving and impactful system that is desired. The critically important next step, underlying the questions and potential action items discussed above, is to make a decision about whether the RHC will truly be a regional system. While making this decision, we urge you to remember how each of you described what the future looks like if no change is made, as reflected in the [fears captured from a discussion on day 1](#).

We understand that taking the leap to a truly regional system feels risky for some. It is clear that some participants hold reservations about making a transition, largely due to concerns of loss of jurisdictional influence in the system - the very thing that virtually everyone noted as a current problem. A regional approach does not disregard the unique needs, community dynamics, and cultural norms of participating jurisdictions. We believe the best regional approach is one that is deeply collaborative, honors each jurisdiction's strengths, and shares in benefits and burdens. When you get the right person to lead this, existing concerns can be allayed. You expressed your fears about the future if no change is made, we captured your own words about the [benefits of taking this leap](#).

Additionally, we offer that RHC members, in your current organization and in any way you decide to evolve, attend local meetings, sit with and listen to people who are closest to the problems you aim to solve, i.e., the GROWL (Greater Regional Outreach Workers League), HAT (Housing Action Team), PiPe (Partners in Prevention Education), TTCC (Thurston Thrives Coordinating Council), Senior Housing Team, Rental Housing Workgroup, Affordable Housing Team, or community gatherings with people experiencing homelessness (seniors/adults and people on fixed incomes struggling to find housing that meets their needs). Relationships, educational opportunities, and ideas for impactful solutions can be born and nurtured in those places.

We offer these thoughts for your consideration as you prepare to take next steps. Please let us know if we can offer additional support in the future.

With gratitude and respect,



Meagan Picard, Partner, The Athena Group



Ava McGee, InnerWork Consulting,
Contractor/Friend of Athena