

# REGIONAL HOUSING COUNCIL

Thursday April 28, 2021 Meeting Minutes

## **ATTENDEES:**

Lacey: Carolyn Cox, Lenny Greenstein, Scott Spence, Kelly Adams

Tumwater: Michael Althaus, Joan Cathey, John Doan, Mike Matlock, Brad Medrud

Olympia: Jim Cooper, Dani Madrone, Keith Stahley, Cary Retlin

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

South County: JW Foster

Public: None

Meeting began at 4:30 pm.

### **Agenda Item 1:** Agenda approved

Carolyn confirmed that everyone received a copy of a letter from City of Lacey regarding Agenda Item 5.

### **Agenda Item 2:** Public Comment. None.

### **Agenda Item 3:** Minutes from March: Motion and second, all approved.

### **Agenda Item 4:** Update on RHC Interlocal Agreement (ILA) Amendment

Tom gave an update, in February they discussed an ILA amendment to add how the 1406 funds will be handled. All of the jurisdictions have approved the amendment, and it will be circulated this week for signatures. If they decide to do any bonding, they will have to address that at the time. Discussion followed about 1406 reporting, and how reporting will be handled by the County.

### **Agenda Item 5:** Funding a Major Regional Housing Project

Jim gave some background on this topic, there are a lot of funding sources currently available, including American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), 1406, 2163, plus other additional funds coming. Have asked staff for a summary of what is known about the amount of funds, want to generate discussion about what projects could be funded. There is a large need for housing, more units, shelter beds, question to answer is what is the best way to utilize these funds?

Tom gave a summary of funding, including both existing resources as well as new and potential resources.

Carolyn gave an overview of the Lacey letter, the letter aims to start the conversation on a project, and the considerations that need to be addressed. General agreement is these funds are not likely to be available again. Questions to consider: timeframe, when can they come to agreement on the needs to be addressed by an identified project. Lenny added that the majority of Lacey Council is thinking big, how to use this money to make a dent in homelessness? Thinking of putting the majority of these funds into the capital expense of creating beds/housing/PSH. Goal is that the funds coming in now are used in best way to make the most of what is available. Scott added that they should consider how to best

combine these ARPA funds, leverage other dollars, and address this big need that they have been talking about.

Keylee gave information on the current homeless system. Currently have about 300 beds in the system, about 100 fewer than in the past due to social distancing. Shelters are at 95-100% capacity. PIT counted 995 unsheltered folks, but that is an undercount. About 60% of the individuals could be considered chronically homeless and would possibly need PSH to be successful and maintain housing. Roughly 500 unique households enter our system each quarter. For the last several years only about 2% of households exit the system into PSH, which is a huge bottleneck to the system.

Discussion follows regarding how to set goals, information gathering including an estimate of how many people need PSH, who are the partners, what do partners bring, what is the funding gap. Proposal is to form a subcommittee to work with the tech team to gather information, develop proposal about funding sources and ideas. Michael asks for clarification about the structure and relationship with other subcommittees, Jim adds it is to quickly gather and develop ideas for the use of various funding for new housing projects, and determine an achievable goal for unit creation. Discussion follows regarding fund sources, bonding, timeframe/limits on funds, need for capital and operation funds, diversity of projects, workplan for short and long term, and using existing plans and projects identified in existing plans. Discussion follows regarding who to invite to join, some representation from housing developers, Continuum of Care (CoC), however need to keep group small and focused. Participants will be Jim, Michael, and Lenny, Carolyn as alternate, and Carolina alternate. Meg Martin is also to be included, and some other representatives from CoC.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Technical Team working group updates**

Keith gave a Scattered Site update, working on an interlocal agreement with the County to complete work and services associated with the scattered site plan. Tom gave an update on the Case Management RFP, the County has issued the RFP, closes May 12th. Contract will be expandable to different sites.

Rental Assistance update, Tom added that the County has issued contracts for the Treasury rental assistance funds. CAC and CYS have started taking applications. CAC has contacted everyone on their waitlist, also utilizing ERAP and 1406 funding sources. CYS is just starting to process applications.

Funding update from Tom, the RFP has closed, they received 7 Basic Needs, 8 Housing Basic Needs, 6 Capital, and 26 homeless services applications. The combined total ask is significantly higher than the funds available. Tom gave an overview of some administrative follow up needed on some applications, and review of a few applications that were determined by the RHC Funding Team to be not responsive and not reviewed. The May RHC meeting will be the final review of the funding recommendations.

#### **Agenda Item 7: Communications Team**

Megan gave an update on the Communications Plan. The intent of the plan is to establish the identity of the RHC, to include a new website, an article in Thurston Talk, news releases on RHC milestones, sharing information on social media platforms, and reaching out to Community groups. Also looking at developing an RHC logo.

#### **Agenda Item 8: Good of the Order**

Olympia ARPA funding, they are setting aside funds to forgive unpaid City utility bills. Lenny added that Olympia should be sure to utilize other ARPA funds for utility payments prior to using their general ARP funds.

Schelli gave an update on Covid and vaccines. The number of cases has been going up in the County, hospitalizations have gone up and test positivity rate is going up. Please remind people to mask and distance. They have administered 198,000 doses, about 30% of County population is fully vaccinated. They are starting to see appointments decline, asking leadership to get message out about the importance of vaccination. They are also doing Community-based vaccine clinics, and vaccinating unsheltered people in encampments. Also noted that Thurston County Covid rates are very low compared to counties of similar size, rated as 4<sup>th</sup> best in country for county size. Discussion follows regarding the possibility of moving back to Phase 2, and possibility of middle and high schools having to return back to hybrid.

**Agenda Item 9: Upcoming Meetings**

Meeting Adjourned: 5:25 pm

Next Meeting: May 26, 2021, 4:00 pm