

REGIONAL HOUSING COUNCIL

Thursday March 18, 2021 Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES:

Lacey: Carolyn Cox, Lenny Greenstein, Rick Walk, Scott Spence

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

Olympia: Jim Cooper, Keith Stahley, Cary Retlin

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

South County: JW Foster

Public: Peter Cook, Jeff Thomas, Pat Cole

Meeting began at 4:30 pm.

Agenda Item 1: Agenda approved

Agenda Item 2: Public Comment

Peter Cook with the Faith Alliance Initiative: spoke to the RHC a few months ago about tiny homes on faith-based property. He gave an update on churches working together in the Olympia area, they are interested in partnerships with jurisdictions.

Jeff Thomas, contractor in Olympia, wanted to mention that small buildings and high occupancy can help with creating housing units and environmental impact. We need more exceptions for tiny houses and small apartments, also please consider energy code modifications for tiny houses.

Pat Cole wonders if this group addresses the condition of the camps, in particular cleaning up the camps.

Agenda Item 3: Minutes from February: Motion and second, all approved.

Agenda Item 4: Proposed change to meeting day/time

Options are to stay at the current day and time, or change to the 4th Wednesday. 4th Wednesday of the month at 4:00pm is selected for future meetings.

Agenda Item 5: Thurston Regional Planning Council Housing Needs Assessment/ Action Plan

Katrina Van Every from TRPC presented, with Amy Buckler for additional information, and Michael Ambrogi from TRPC. TRPC has been working with the three cities on the Housing Needs assessment, a joint effort to identify affordable housing needs in the community. Presentation includes trends in demographics, gap analysis of amount and type of housing needed, landlord survey to get understanding of local rental market including single family rental homes, and a menu of actions that cities can use to implement housing plans. Funding was from Department of Commerce. Note that the sources of data are from pre-pandemic, so the analysis does not include the impact of Covid on housing. Equity is an overarching factor in the analysis as well.

Katrina gave an overview of current demographic statistics as well as projected growth, and affordable housing and low-income demographics and statistics. Needs Assessment key findings: reduce the cost of housing, increase the inventory of housing, increase housing types, maintain existing housing stock, increasing household wealth, increasing permanent housing options for those with disabilities and increased risk of homelessness.

Katrina gave an overview of current housing stock, and current rent vs current income and disparity in income and rent costs. Household sizes have gotten smaller but houses have gotten larger. Middle sized housing options which are more affordable have very limited availability. Senior population is also growing and therefore we need to look at senior housing, and include a variety of options. Data on condition of housing stock is limited, do not know mold information, lead information, pest issues etc. Stable rental housing and pathways to homeownership are ways to increase household wealth.

All the data and detailed analysis, and Needs Assessment, is available on TRPC's website. Needs Assessment includes strategies for addressing the findings. The next steps that the cities are taking will be to consider their own jurisdiction actions and their own community outreach. Each City will also adopt their own Housing Action Plan.

Questions: JW pointed out that this data is important and a very helpful document and resource for the jurisdictions to make informed plans. Michael asks if the grant is renewable, to keep the data updated over time in terms of current housing stock data and housing needs. Amy adds that all the strategies are important, we need both private sector development of housing as well as low income housing unit development. Cities may need to focus more on helping partners develop more affordable housing, make sure they are using all the available tools to build affordable housing.

Carolyn asks if TRPC has been in touch with Thurston Thrives, and HAT to access housing data as additional data sources. Carolyn also mentioned the 1590 legislation for establishing funding, is the RHC interested in promoting this? Brad stated they have been meeting with the HAT data group to make sure they have available data. Jim asked about the UGA, what will the County plan be for the UGA for affordable housing. Brad responded that this is part of the joint planning committee. Discussion follows regarding development of units in urban, UGA, and other parts of the County. On 1590, RHC would need to make a recommendation at the next meeting in order to meet the July deadline. Discussion follows on merits of moving on 1590 and ability to proceed. A 1590 discussion went to the BoCC in January, and the County and Lacey will be having a joint meeting in April which includes the 1590 topic. Difficult timeline to try to make the July deadline.

Agenda Item 6: ILA Update – 1406

Tom gave an update, 1406 language has been agreed upon, currently ready to circulate to jurisdictions for Council and Commission approval. Final language is that RHC recommended projects would go to each jurisdiction's Council to approve and then the BoCC for final action.

Agenda Item 7: RFP Update

Tom gave an RFP update, the RFP has been issued and staff held a bidder's conference. Applications are due April 2nd. Currently working with the Review Team for review and scoring training.

Agenda Item 8: Safe Parking/Scattered Site Update

Keith gave an update, the Technical team met and continued developing the scattered site support program. The program will provide two services, site support and case management, and they are proposing a 12-month pilot program. Tom added that they are looking for RHC support to move forward to amend Olympia ILA, and issue an RFP, the purpose is to set up a pilot project to help people move into housing and reduce impacts of people living in these sites. Funds will be used for initial clean up of camps, as well as ongoing waste removal, and the services. The locations would be Deschutes, Ensign, and Wheeler sites. LOTT has agreed to fund an RV pumping program as part of the scattered site plan as well. Data management will include the use of HMIS and the Coordinated Entry system, to track placement of people into housing. Details on this proposal can be found in the agenda packet on the RHC website.

Agenda Item 9: Communication Plan

Meghan Porter gave an update on the Communications plan, the team met last week and discussed best places to start communications. First, they need to establish the identity of the RHC, including who, what, why, the committees, and the intent. Next, they will develop FAQs and add to the website, to be followed by some possible town hall type meetings.

Agenda Item 10: Good of the Order

Ramiro has presented a proposal for the BoCC to consider purchasing a hotel for quarantine and isolation which could be converted to transitional housing in the future. Still under consideration by the BoCC.

Agenda Item 11: Upcoming Meetings

Meeting Adjourned: 5:55 pm

Next Meeting: April 28, 2021, 4:00 pm