

REGIONAL HOUSING COUNCIL

Wednesday September 22nd, 2021 Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES:

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

Tumwater: Michael Althaus, Joan Cathey, Brad Medrud

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

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

South County: JW Foster

Public: Meg Martin

Meeting began at 4:02 pm.

Agenda Item 1: Agenda approved

Agenda Item 2: Public Comment

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

Agenda modified: Item 5 moved up

Agenda Item 5: 1277 Funding Request for Proposals

Tom gave some background on HB 1277, the \$100 document recording fee. Commerce is expected to issue the majority of 1277 funds in 2022. They have allocated some funds immediately. Thurston County will receive \$1.6M for hotel leasing and rapid rehousing. To access these funds, the County must submit an application to Commerce. Funds must be spent by June 30, 2023. The County plans to release an RFP to solicit proposals. The RHC funding workgroup reviewed the plan for identifying projects, which includes issuing the RFP on October 1, responses will be due Oct 15, and the review team will bring recommendations to the RHC in October. It was recommended by staff and the funding workgroup to include a preference to fund one project to provide rooms on an Emergency basis, for example as a result of a camp sweep. If the RHC approves, the RFP will go to the BoCC next week.

Councilmember Althaus asked if there is local match? No local match. Councilmember Greenstein asked if there is an estimate on 2022 funds? Staff expects another approximately \$3M in 2022. Scott Spence asks what is the estimated number of people to be helped? Depends on the project, if it was exclusively hotels it would be about 25 – 30 hotel rooms over a 2 year period. Is there a requirement for follow up with clients staying in hotel rooms? The funding includes operational funds to provide services and support.

Motion to approve the RFP process for 1277 funding as recommended by the RHC Funding group and forward on to the BoCC. Moved and second. All approved.

Agenda Item 6: Technical Team working group updates

The Technical Team has been working on a plan for creating Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units using ARPA funds. The goal was to create 150 - 200 PSH units by 2024. The Technical team invited providers and the Affordable Housing Team (AHT) to get input and comments on the draft plan. The PSH Plan outlines the goal, identifies funding sources, including ARPA, HOME ARPA, 1406 funds, plus 1277 funds that can support operations. Possible that there may also be County Home Funds if this is approved. RHC funds will not be sufficient to construct the units, funds will need to be used to leverage other funding.

Staff and the Funding Team are recommending projects under 3 categories:

1. Hotel acquisition, ARPA funds would be good for this use, PSH group has discussed the use of an acquired hotel (initial shelter or convert immediately to PSH units).
2. New construction activities, HOME ARPA funds and another source of funding, such as a Home Fund would be needed for these activities. AHT recommended identifying the operator early on in the process.
3. Purchasing existing units, either through a multifamily property purchase or lease. Does not increase housing but can increase PSH units.

Next steps: hotel acquisition, siting, identifying partners. If this Plan is approved by the RHC they would need to discuss increasing County staff capacity.

Councilmember Althauser asked about the primary owner/operator of projects, Tumwater has discussed having some housing associated with their Community Center. If PSH was connected to the Community Center could it work with City ownership? Generally speaking, government is not the landlord/operator/owner. Discussion follows regarding what other local governments are doing regarding purchase and transfer of property, or leasing of property.

Chair Cooper asked if there will be a requirement that the operator of any PSH units to go through the Coordinated Entry system. Discussion follows regarding target population and eligible populations. The process would be a parallel pipeline project, separate from current pipeline.

The ARPA rules and long-term restrictions of ARPA are still unknown, but the County can include restrictions. Councilmember Althauser suggested adding to the section identifying the goal of 150 – 200 units add some background and context for how this number of units will address the current system shortfall. Councilmember Greenstein asked if different percentages of rooms could be used for different target populations. Yes this is possible.

Staff is asking for RHC support for the Plan, and feedback, and comments. Discussion followed regarding next steps, merits of approving this plan this month or next. Questions to still consider: what will the other partners do regarding ARPA funds, how to fund large projects on an ongoing basis. Discussion followed regarding what upcoming units will count toward the 200 units, including projects with Family Support Center and LIHI. City of Olympia is contributing funds toward 248 units. The HCRP identifies the need for 300 units through 2024.

RHC consensus is they are happy with the PSH Plan and staff should keep moving forward. Motion to approve the PSH plan as discussed, and second. All approved. Clarify that once the Plan is updated the Plan will be sent back out to the RHC.

Agenda Item 4: Interfaith Works Request for Funding

Meg Martin presented a request for funding. An update on the 3444 Martin Way project, RHC previously provided assistance to help acquire the property and build a prefabricated structure. Several factors have contributed to construction delays including Covid, construction scheduling, and supplies.

Interfaith has been given an extension for use of the current temporary location for continued sheltering of clients during construction, so the request is less than expected, approximately \$182,560. Tom added that the funding work group considered the proposal and recommended using a portion of the \$200K Emergency Fund for this request. Councilmember Althaus asked staff how well the system is prepared for a challenging winter, do we anticipate any need for Emergency funds over the winter? Tom added that the County has contracts for hazardous and cold weather. In recent years the budget for Hazardous weather has been adequate, they have not needed to use the emergency fund.

If Interfaith is able to start construction next week the building could be ready for occupancy by the end of October. They do have through November at the temporary shelter location. Chair Cooper asked how they will be managing the opening of the 2 new shelters within a month, plus 65 apartments. They are planning ahead with LIHI, Housing Authority, CAC to have a plan in place to transition people out of the shelters into apartments.

Motion to close the gap on 3444 Martin Way project with Interfaith Works in the amount of \$182,560. Carolyn discloses that she serves on the Interfaith Board and serves on the Funding Group that recommended this. Motion seconded. All approved.

Agenda Item 7: Communications Update

Meghan gave an update, they are making progress with Communications plan and have a logo for review at the next meeting.

Agenda Item 8: HAT and RHC Retreat Update

RHC and HAT executive teams met last Friday. This discussion is about how to have a formal connection between the HAT/RHC and is not in any way about Thurston Thrives. The Chairs want to explore the possibilities to ensure a good partnership between HAT and RHC. The Chairs will be attending HAT subcommittee meetings in October. Estimated retreat meeting timeline is likely April.

Agenda Item 9: Good of the Order

Ramiro gave an update on the Martin/Carpenter Rd plan. The most pressing issue is to relocate 15 – 20 RVs, to alleviate pressure on Ensign Rd. Different options have been discussed, and the Martin/Carpenter option was presented to the Board last week. The proposal is on a temporary basis, maybe 6 – 7 months, and Ramiro's responsibility is to provide a long-term solution. The County and Olympia are working on a plan to purchase a piece of property as the second step of this move, for the longer term. They are currently working on permitting and a plan for which RVs would move. The Hospital has also offered financial support for this plan.

Councilmember Greenstein asked how moving 15 – 20 RVs out of about 70 RV's total will help emergency access? The proposal is to move the 15 – 20 that are impeding access to medical facilities in the area. The Emergency access issue will be resolved with the longer term relocation to the newly purchased property. The timeline for the second site to move RVs off of Martin/Carpenter is about 6 – 7

months. Chair Cooper asks for a list of talking points that other jurisdictions can use to answer questions. Meghan indicated that by Friday or Monday they will have the talking points sent out.

Councilmember Althaus added that at Council they voted to allocate the next 3 years 1406 to the LIHI project that was discussed at RHC last month.

Schelli added a Covid update, currently at 17,000 cases and 187 deaths in the County. Very high death rate recently, our hospitals are at 110% capacity. There have not been any outbreaks in the shelter system. Vaccination rate is slowly but steadily improving, reached the goal of 70% of 16 and older are vaccinated. Both PHSS and Health Care are experiencing severe health care staff shortages.

Meeting Adjourned: 5:33 pm

Next Meeting: October 27th, 2021, 4:00 pm