

# REGIONAL HOUSING COUNCIL

Wednesday October 25, 2023 Meeting Minutes

## **ATTENDEES:**

Lacey: Carolyn Cox, Ryan Andrews, Jennifer Adams

Tumwater: Michael Althaus, Joan Cathey, Brad Medrud

Olympia: Dani Madrone, Clark Gilman, Rich Hoey, Darian Lightfoot, Jacinda Steltjes

Yelm: Gary Cooper

Thurston County: Carolina Mejia, Tom Webster, Keylee Marineau, Elisa Sparkman, Cody Anderson

Affordable Housing Advisory Board: Talauna Reed

Homeless Services Advisory Board: Tammie Smith, KayVin Hill

Meeting began at 4:00 pm.

**Agenda Item 1:** Agenda approved, motion, and second.

**Agenda Item 2:** Minutes from the September 27th meeting, motion and second, approved.

**Agenda Item 3:** Public Comment

Victoria O'Banion joined from ROC Northwest who works with residents in manufactured home communities to form limited equity housing cooperatives and to purchase the communities they live in. She came to advocate for Claudia's Mobile Home Park which has 107 units within the community. The property has come up for sale and the residents have been given an opportunity to submit a purchase and sale agreement. Moving forward with their current lender would require a 124% lot rent increase. Victoria is here to request the RHC consider helping fund this purchase and sale to assist in lowering their interest rate to 2% which would bring their lot rent increase down to 38%.

Victoria stated residents have 70 days to get funding together and submit an offer. Claudia's 70 days started on September 12<sup>th</sup>, giving them until November 21<sup>st</sup> to secure additional funding sources. She also states the seller of Claudia's currently has an offer around \$10million.

Dani asked if Victoria is hoping to secure the full cost. Victoria clarified no, the residents have access to capital to purchase the park but it's currently at a 6% interest rate. She is hoping to be able to blend capital and lower that rate down to 2%. If they were able to secure \$3 million at a 2% interest rate, that would significantly lower the lot increase burden on Claudia's residents. She also wanted to bring this topic to the RHC as a broader conversation for future projects like this.

This conversation continues during Good of the Order

**Agenda Item 4:** CHG Inflationary Funds Distribution

Tammie presented the Homeless Services Advisory Board's recommendations for the CHG Inflationary Funds. There is \$749,702 available and the HSAB recommends funding 11 agencies at \$3,796.73 per FTE. These funds are intended to be used for salary increases or retention stipends for their homeless services workforce as well as to help offset any other inflationary costs. Keylee shared a PowerPoint

reviewing the survey results that went to providers about these funds and their workers. The survey was intended to gain information on how many frontline staff agencies have as well as how many full-time equivalent staff they have. 11 agencies responded and, in total, had 197.46 eligible FTEs. Dani moved to approve the HSAB's recommendations, Carolina seconded, approved.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Rent Assistance Survey Presentation**

Elisa gave a presentation on a survey that was distributed to Thurston County residents who received COVID-19 rent assistance through the Emergency Rent Assistance Program (ERAP) and Treasury Rent Assistance (T-RAP) between 2020-2023. Roughly \$53.5 million was distributed in rent and utility assistance over that 3-year period. Funds were distributed to families and individuals at or below 80% Area Medium Income (AMI) who were directly or indirectly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey's purpose was to see how this assistance helped Thurston County residents, and what current needs are in the community now that those programs have ended. The survey was sent to residents on August 10<sup>th</sup> 2023 and was open for 22 days, closing on August 31<sup>st</sup>. It was sent to 1,982 e-mail addresses in both English and Spanish and the goal response rate was 30%. They were able to meet that goal with 541 eligible surveys.

The Eviction Prevention Rent Assistance Program (EPRA) was awarded \$2 million for temporary assistance in 2023, which is significantly less than what has been made available the last several years. Currently there is no long-term rent assistance program in Thurston County, though the results of this survey establish there is significant need.

Based off these survey results the recommendation for the RHC is to support legislation and policy that would increase rent assistance funding and support rent stabilization within Thurston County.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Legislative Agenda**

Tom presented potential legislative priorities put forth by the RHC Tech Team for the RHC and individual jurisdictions.

The Housing Action Team had recommended 8 items including rent stabilization, more permanent funding for rent assistance, permanent operational funds for the Right of Way Initiative, funding for the Housing and Essential Needs Bridge program, eliminating junk fees in leases, and supporting the Washington Low Income Housing Institute's priorities around permanent sources of funding for homelessness.

The Association of County Human Services would like priority around continued funding for local shelters and increased capital funding for affordable housing projects.

In addition to these recommendations, the Tech Team suggested increased staff capacity to assist in implementing Housing Action Plans the jurisdictions have developed. As well as capital funding under Maple Court to continue to fund that project as it moves to permanent supportive housing.

Dani moved to approve this initial list but requested that the Tech Team bring back their top two priorities from this list for jurisdictions to discuss with their individual councils. Carolyn seconded this motion, approved.

**Agenda Item 7: Good of the Order**

Victoria joined the group to continue discussion about Claudia's Mobile Home Park. She asked if there is currently a source of funding that these residents can access at a 2% interest rate? If not, are there steps that can be taken so there are funds like this available in the future? Victoria shared one option being discussed in other counties would be to create a loan agreement.

Tech Team was asked to review this request to see what options are available to assist in this project and have Victoria return at the November 8<sup>th</sup> meeting to further discuss.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 6:02 pm

**Next Meeting:** November 8th, 2023 at 4:00 pm