

REGIONAL HOUSING COUNCIL

Wednesday, January 24, 2024, Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES:

Lacey: Carolyn Cox, Jennifer Adams, and Ryan Andrews

Tumwater: Michael Althaus, Joan Cathey, Lisa Parks, and Brad Medrud

Olympia: Rich Hoey, Dani Madrone, Darian Lightfoot, Robert Vanderpool, and Jacinda Steltjes

Yelm: Gary Cooper and Trevor Palmer

Thurston County: Robin Campbell, Carolina Mejia, Emily Clouse, Tom Webster, Keylee Marineau, Elisa Sparkman, Alex Persse, and Leah Tangeman

Affordable Housing Advisory Board: Talauna Reed

Homeless Services Advisory Board: Tammie Smith and KayVin Hill

Meeting began at 4:00 p.m.

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

Agenda Item 2: Minutes from December 13 meeting, motion and second, approved.

Agenda Item 3: Public Comment – No Comment

Agenda Item 4: Affirm Commissioner Clouse as Vice Chair & Scheduling of Election for Chair & Vice Chair

Dani motioned to approve Commissioner Clouse as a member of the RHC and as Vice Chair of the RHC, Michael seconded, unanimously approved. Carolyn recommended delaying the election of Chair & Vice Chair until the March meeting, as Trevor and Emily are new members.

Agenda Item 5: 2024 Request for Proposal/Request for Information

Keylee reported on the Homeless Services Request for Proposals (RFP) for 2024. Thurston County is accepting applications for the use of 2163 funds for Cold Weather Shelter and Hazardous Weather Shelter. Cold Weather Shelter programs provide overnight emergency shelter beds during the cold weather season of November 1, 2024, through April 30, 2025. Hazardous Weather Shelter programs provide services during hazardous or dangerous weather events as defined in the Thurston County Hazardous Weather Plan. Both programs are awarded on an annual basis. All other contracts for Thurston County Homeless Services will be up for renewal.

Next, Keylee shared a chart that detailed the Estimated Homeless Services Revenues for February 2024 RFP. Based on the County's estimation, 2024 revenue for 2163 funds will be 1.5 million. The County also projected that the Local Home Fund will be 5.1 million with 30% of those funds used for Homeless Services. The sub-total for Homeless Services Revenues equals \$3,048,000 dollars. The Human Services Fund (HSF) is projected to be awarded \$350,821 in 2024 which is an increase from their \$333,323 award in 2023. The Homeless Services Advisory Board (HSAB) met and discussed spreading the extra HSF proportionate to the contracts that are out for renewal for that fund.

Last, Keylee presented the 2163 Set Asides for 2024. The one year set asides are projected to remain the same in 2024 as they were in 2023; Cold and Hazardous Weather projected at \$265,800, Point in Time

Count at \$25,000, and Emergency Funds at \$200,000. The two-year set asides are also projected to remain the same for Coordinated Entry (CE) at \$350,000, Housing Basic Needs (HBN) at \$270,963, Lived Experience Housing Steering Committee (LEHSC) stipends and support at \$50,000, Advisory Board stipends up to \$25,000, and DEI Training for Agencies at \$22,500 totaling \$1,109,263 in set-asides for 2024.

Michael and Carolyn asked about remaining Emergency funds for 2023 and 2024. Keylee clarified that, although there are \$0 spent as of January 2024, the 2024 Emergency Fund contracts began September 1, 2023, and will end August 31, 2024. Tom clarified that any Emergency Funds that were unspent in 2023 will roll into available funds for future RFPs. Dani expressed concern that the projections in 2024 remain the same from 2023 which may not address issues like inflation and cost of living increases. Tom explained that values remain the same because the 2163 Document Recording Fees revenue is projecting to be flat. There was discussion around using remaining funds, such as Emergency Funds, to offset inflation by distributing them to providers at the end of the year.

Dani motioned to approve the one-year set asides as proposed, Michael seconded, unanimously approved.

Jacinda reported on the Affordable Housing RFP for 2024. She shared the recommendations from Thurston Affordable Housing Advisory Board (TAHAB) concerning the RFP for Housing Capital Funds. Thurston County is soliciting applications for federal HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME), HOME American Rescue Plan Act (HOME ARP) funds, local SHB 2060 Affordable Housing (2060), local SHB 1406 (1406), and Thurston County & City of Olympia combined Local Home Fund. There is an increase in estimated projections with a sub-total of \$8,990,401 in 2024 compared to \$7,925,621 in 2023. Jacinda outlined the scoring criteria at a high level. The TAHAB has spent a lot of time discussing how projects should be scored, including adding points to Supports Vulnerable and Historically Disadvantaged Populations and By and For/Culturally Specific Organization and/or BIPOC leadership in Organization. The TAHAB is recommending that 80% of the total funds be made available to the RFP, to reserve 20% of the total funds for an Opportunity Fund, to not set any funding priorities, and to approve the scoring criteria.

Dani motioned to approve the Affordable Housing RFP for 2024 as proposed, Trevor seconded, unanimously approved.

Next, Jacinda reported on the RHC's 2024 Request for Information (RFI): Priorities and Scoring Criteria. Historically, a RFI has gone out at the same time as the RFP. The timing is the same, but the application looks slightly different. The last RFI was put out in 2021. The recommendation from the TAHAB is to reestablish the RFI to place projects into the Housing Pipeline for years 2025, 2026, and 2027 with a set aside of 60% of annually anticipated available funding for these three years to be dedicated toward projects placed onto the Pipeline through the 2024 RFI process. Like the RFP, the board has decided not to set funding priorities for these projects. Per funding requirements, projects must serve low-income households, primarily those with incomes at or below 60% area median income. The board decided not to solicit applications for these three years for rental assistance through the RFI process. Additionally, the TAHAB is recommending the approval of the RFI Scoring Criteria.

Trevor motioned to approve the 2024 RFI Priorities and Scoring Criteria, Dani seconded, unanimously approved.

Agenda Item 6: Off-Cycle Funding Request Policies

Keylee and Alex presented the HSAB and TAHAB proposed Off-Cycle Funding Request Policies. TAHAB recommends that the RHC reserve a portion of local funds available for capital projects for potential off-cycle requests. As stated previously, the board recommends that 20% of the total RFP funds be reserved for an Opportunity Fund. The policy states that if funds remain unobligated at the end of a calendar year, the RHC may either roll unused funds back into the following year's annual RFP processor maintain or add to the reserve for future Opportunity Fund awards. Within this request, the board intends to include requests for activities that support the preservation of manufactured home communities (MHC) or to assist residents to acquire the MHC. These funds are primarily intended to be used for acquisition. Rehabilitation may be appropriate when accompanied by acquisition of a property or building. The process for this Off-Cycle Funding Request would be to apply for the Opportunity Funds within the RFI application. The application would come to the RHC Technical Team, and they would review it for eligibility before presenting it to the TAHAB to determine if it is a priority or crucial project. The TAHAB would decide whether to recommend the project to the RHC for funding. If the project is presented to the RHC and the RHC decides to recommend the project for funding, the Thurston County Office of Housing and Homeless Prevention (OHHP) will recommend the project to the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) at the next available meeting.

Trevor motioned to approve the Opportunity Fund Policy, Dani seconded, unanimously approved.

The HSAB recommends that the RHC establish a Homeless Services Emergency Fund (HSE) to assist service providers facing an imminent loss of client housing and homeless services. Like the Emergency Fund, this fund would provide an interim solution to an urgent and acute problem that was unforeseen by the applicant. Keylee explained that it is not intended to solely address emergency needs based on budgeting shortfalls, however, the board recognizes that budgeting or funding gaps can cause an emergency. The policy states that requests for HSE funds must be submitted to Thurston County and discussion of the request will be added to the agenda for the upcoming HSAB meeting. If there is no HSAB/RHC meeting scheduled within two weeks from date of submission, an emergency meeting will be called. HSAB members will discuss and vote on the request at the first available meeting. The HSAB chair/co-chair will present the request and their recommendations at the first available RHC meeting. RHC will make the final decision to approve the request. HSE funding awards must be approved by Thurston's Board of County Commissioners (BoCC). Contracts will be executed in a timely fashion following BoCC approval. The HSAB recommends that the RHC set aside a minimum of \$200,000 of available homeless services funds to establish an HSE fund allocation.

Trevor motioned to approve the RHC Homeless Services Emergency Fund Policy and Procedures for Homeless Services, Carolyn seconded, unanimously approved.

Agenda Item 7: Right of Way Update

Tom began the update on the State's Right of Way Initiative (ROW). While the initial five ROW encampments have been cleared and individuals offered better housing solutions, the Department of Commerce has added new sites within the ROW during the past few months including the Desmond Encampment in Lacey and the Percival Encampment in Olympia. Keylee continued the update and stated that in the fall, the RHC discussed what to do about these remaining two encampments. On January 2, 2024, the Department of Commerce notified the County that they were moving forward with

clearing Desmond. From that point, there has been a question of who is on the By Name List from the encampment and how many individuals live on the site. Providers have described that it is difficult to determine how many individuals live in the encampment as many of them fear being trespassed. Ryan stated that the RHC Executive Team discussed requesting that the RHC create a letter that would give direction to Department of Enterprise Services to allow for more time create a new By Name List within the encampment. They also discussed requesting that the Department of Commerce open the balance of any additional ROW rooms for use by Coordinated Entry (CE). The intention is that the new By Name List at Desmond would be the first of any list to utilize available housing. There was discussion around the Desmond Drive Encampment Timeline.

Dani moved to authorize staff to write a letter to the Department of Enterprise Services requesting two additional weeks to create a new By Name List and a letter to Department of Commerce to open ROW beds for use by CE and for the RHC Executive Team to approve and sign it, Trevor seconded, unanimously approved.

Agenda Item 8: Advisory Board Recruitment Update

The RHC's two Advisory Boards, Thurston Affordable Housing Advisory Board and Homeless Service Advisory Board, are recruiting new members. Applications can be found on the County's RHC website and are due January 31, 2024.

Agenda Item 9: Communications Update

Elisa gave a communications update. Elisa created social media images for the Advisory Board Recruitment and distributed them to the communications specialists at each jurisdiction as well as emailed the Advisory Board Recruitment letter to a communications distribution list. She also created a Thurston County Rights of Way (ROW) Initiative 2023 Snapshot infographic that highlights the work that has been done with ROW within the past year. Additionally, she explained that Thurston County is looking to get new software for newsletters, which may delay when the first newsletter will be issued.

Agenda Item 10: RHC 2024 Meeting Schedule and Location

Tom presented the proposed RHC Meeting Schedule and Location. The board approved that all the 2024 RHC meetings will have a hybrid option and will be in person at the Lacey City Hall and virtual on Zoom. The meetings will be held on the fourth Wednesday of every month at 4:00 p.m. except for May, November and December 2024 which are rescheduled for the second Wednesday of the month.

Agenda Item 11: Good of the Order

Olympia: No update.

Thurston County: The Thurston County Annual Point in Time Count (PIT) is Friday, January 26 – Wednesday, January 31.

Tumwater: It is Tumwater's year for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). Within their work session, Tumwater decided to focus 80% of the funds on housing for low-income individuals and families. They will administer an RFP in the Spring.

Yelm: No update.

Lacey: No update.

Meeting Adjourned: 6:00 p.m.

Next Meeting: February 28, 2024, 4:00 p.m. – hybrid (Zoom & Lacey City Hall Rm 1037)