

City of Oxford Housing Advisory Commission
Minutes of the June 15, 2020 **Virtual** Meeting
Held via Zoom App and Uploaded to YouTube in accordance with HB 197

HAC members in attendance: Sherry Lind, Glenn Ellerbe, Jason Bracken, Shana Rosenberg, and Steve Schnabl.

HAC members excused: Nicola Rodrigues and Scott Straker

Staff members in attendance: Zachary Moore and Sam Perry

Meeting was called to order at roughly 1:36 p.m.

Shana moved to approve the agenda, Steve seconded. Roll call: Ellerbe-yea; Bracken-yea; Rosenberg-yea; Schnabl-yea; Lind-yea.

Steve moved to approve the May 18, 2020 meeting minutes. Jason seconded. Sherry commented she wanted to see two changes to the minutes: (1) Quotation marks and indentation for Ms. Rodrigues' report; and (2) clarifying Scott's report as being from College Property Management, a subsidiary of Coldwell Banker. Sherry asked for a new motion inclusive of those two (2) changes. Glenn made the motion, seconded by Steve. Roll call: Ellerbe-yea; Bracken-yea; Rosenberg-yea; Schnabl-yea; Lind-yea.

Sam had nothing new to report on either the Cottage Community project or Western Knolls.

Steve shared with the group that he had tried to reach County Commissioner [Carpenter] to have a conversation about CDBG funding and potential for funding the tiny housing project.

Sherry shared the following report from the Family Resource Center on behalf of Nicola:

"We are continuing to receive calls at the FRC to assist with rental payments. Some of our clients have been able to go back to work and others are still out of work. Never the less, they are behind in rent payments or unable to make current ones. We hope to be able to assist all of them with FRC funds and with help from the church coalition to avoid evictions. Brad and I chatted very briefly about the fund and we hope that we might be able to use some of it to help with rent assistance if needed. We need to have a more in depth discussion about how to use that money effectively.

We were also on a zoom meet recently where we heard about a bill being introduced to help families with rent assistance in Ohio. If that goes through a lot of families will be able to stay in their homes but it sounds like it will take a while to go through if at all!

<https://www.10tv.com/article/news/politics/sen-sherrod-brown-introducing-bill-provide-100-billion-emergency-rent-relief-2020-jun/530-4a1875c1-22c4-40e8-8d8e-49151ee721e0>

We also have been having discussions about the possibility of a [homeless shelter] here in Oxford and we are current researching what that might look like and how that could happen in a town like ours. We are visiting the HIT foundation <http://hitfoundation.org/> in Eaton early July to see how they started and operate their shelter. I have also reached out to Shalom shelter (operated in

the winter months only) by a group of churches. Once I hear back, I hope to have more information to share. There are many criteria that go into starting a shelter-clientele (male, female, families, with or without children), staffing, proper room and board, meals and most importantly the funding. We hope to get a head start on getting answers for some of our questions regarding shelters when we visit the HIT foundation in July.

It would be nice to perhaps have some more affordable HUD housing like PVA or low income like Day Estates so people can be housed directly. I know I shared in the past that we had clients living at the Budget Inn/ Butler Inn. One of our former employees at FRC had once suggested that perhaps it might be worth considering buying one of those Inns and putting up low income housing apt in its place. Just a thought for discussion.

Brad Hoblitzell, FRC Director, adds:

“We are looking forward to using the funds from the Housing Advisory Commission and have a couple of cases in process that we would be using those funds for. We will use these funds in the agreed upon situations - 1. For Rent Payments. 2. To pay back rent in cases to avoid evictions. 3. For deposits on leases. and 4. Temporary motel charges not to exceed 7 day stays. As mentioned before, we are working on some cases now that these funds will be of great use for.

Nicola and I will also be visiting the H.I.T. Foundation shelter and agency on July 9th at 2:00 p.m. We are excited to hear first hand about the services they provide (they maintain a 24 hour surveillanced 10 bed shelter just outside of Eaton). They also provide other services that we here at the FRC are very familiar with. If anyone would like to join us for that trip we would be open to that. We don't want to overwhelm them with too many folks, but we are really looking forward to visiting and learning from them.”

Next, Sam gave a short update on the Housing Fund transfer to the FRC. He said that staff is working on setting a Council date in July to consider the transfer. There will not be a first meeting in July, so it will probably be later July. FRC currently does not have the money.

Steve mentioned that he had received a list of projects selected by the County to receive CDBG dollars, and that Congress had allocated more CDBG dollars due to COVID. He also voiced his opinion that CDBG dollars could be redirected to other housing-related endeavors as opposed to putting the money toward wheelchair ramps each year. Sam reported that the Service Director had informed him the City will be done installing ramps within about 2 years, so long as projects continue at the current rate.

Glenn gave an update on Miami University housing requirements in light of the COVID pandemic. Miami has changed their academic calendar so that students will be leaving right before Thanksgiving, and will not return as they normally would following a fall break period. There have not been any changes in actual housing requirements/policies, as far as residency, commuting, or off-campus residency. Steve asked how this would affect off-campus leases. Glenn replied that it was a civil issue, but did mention his observation that Oxford lease contracts tend to use the phrase “week after finals” to define the end of the leasing period. Two years ago, the semester calendar was changed to account for J-term, thus the wording of many contracts was adjusted at that time. J-term is still planned to follow the 2020 Fall Semester.

Next, Zach gave a presentation on Affordable Housing Incentives as a follow-up to Shana's report at the prior April meeting ([see slides here](#)). To briefly summarize, Zach explained that the conversation boiled down to mechanisms to achieve affordable housing: either (1) incentivize the developers to provide it themselves, or (2) allow developers to make payments in-lieu of providing it, in order to qualify for incentives, and then the City using the money at a future point in time. The various possible incentives covered by Zach included: (1) density bonuses; (2) reduced parking requirements; (3) dimensional standard adjustments; (4) tax abatements; (5) fee waivers; (6) expedited permitting; and (7) cash payments.

Following Zach's presentation, Shana inquired about how changing lot size requirements would affect the density allowed. Zach replied that there was definite overlap between the two, because decreasing the lot size could in effect increase the potential density. Shana also asked about what penalties might be put into place if a development falls out of compliance. Zach noted that was a good question, which could be explored further to make sure that the developer/owner fulfills their end of the deal. Jason suggested a natural consequence could be switching to the in-lieu fees, if the units fell out of compliance with the affordable rent range.

Sherry stated she appreciated the comparisons to Bloomington and Columbus, but pointed out that both are much larger cities with larger universities, so it is not really apples to apples. She asked about whether the Western Knolls property could have a portion devoted to affordable housing, with the rest devoted to market-rate. Sherry also expressed she felt the County's figures would be better to use, because it would include lower income areas outside of Oxford and thus provide a lower baseline. Sam stated the staff's preference is to work with a single developer to create a master vision for the site, vs. parceling out a piece of it for a separate standalone development. He mentioned that the City has received some inquiries about splitting up the property. Sherry asked whether the City would go in with a percentage requirement on affordable housing, and Sam responded it could go either way, or ultimately ending up with a development agreement that incorporates concepts from the Charrette.

Sam also revisited Shana's comments about lot size and density. He mentioned there could be a reason to decrease the lot sizes while maintaining the same density, in order to account for and be sensitive to ecological areas on the site. He also expressed appreciation for Shana bringing up penalties. Shana asked whether staff was leaning toward a certain percentage of units to be kept affordable, stating her research and uncovered percentages ranging from 7 to 13 percent. Sam replied that hadn't been discussed at the staff level, but said he was open to input. Shana asked what an appropriate in-lieu fee amount would be. Zach shared that Bloomington, Indiana has a fee of \$20,000 per unit [correction: after the meeting this was later determined inaccurate, it is actually \$20,000 per bedroom], that it is adjustable annually based on construction costs, and it would be interesting to find out how Bloomington arrives at this number.

Steve commented on imbalance between the slight increase in density and the requirement for affordable housing units; that it seems we would need to set a minimum number of units. He also wondered how long it would take for the Housing Fund to build up enough money from in-lieu payments to be able to do something meaningful. Sam recommended HAC bring it up with Council, in terms of specifying, for example, an affordable housing goal of achieving so many units within a certain number of years. Sam stressed that staff needed clear direction first, stating we have a small number of staff and we would want to do our due diligence by investigating how

other successful programs work so our own program is not doomed from the start. Jason commented that everything was inter-related; all variables have to be considered at once.

Sherry shared she had found some housing affordability statutes in San Marcos TX that might be valuable to the conversation.

Shana brought up how lodging taxes levied on Transient Guest Lodging could potentially contribute toward affordable housing endeavors. Additionally, she mentioned Glenn's idea for taxing non-performing residential properties to contribute to collected funds as well. Those two items, plus in-lieu fees, could generate significant revenue. Rather than using Housing Funds to pay developers directly for affordable housing, she wondered whether this money could be directed toward individual landlords to rent to families or rent as workforce housing. Steve said he liked Shana's idea, and that as more upscale units are favored by students, then older housing may become more marketable to families. Sherry predicted there could be a market shake-out once students return.

Glenn stated he agreed with Shana's desire for TGL taxes to go toward affordable housing, but clarified he would rather implement the tax and let the funds roll in for a while. Then, once enough of a pool was generated, then look to pursue something with it. Steve inquired about fund uses, and Glenn said a special assessment fund may be the answer as opposed to a trust fund with stricter guidelines. Sherry expressed her desire to make the fund broad enough that staff would not have to keep going back to Council to ask whether the money can be spent on certain things. Sam wasn't sure whether the special assessment fund was the right answer, but felt it was appropriate to apply the tax first and see what amount of revenue is collected before deciding how it must be used. Sam thought an appropriation amount from the tax revenue could be set by Council annually, but clarified his uncertainty on how exactly the Finance Department would choose to implement any new policies.

Jason voiced his support for the density bonus and dimensional standard adjustments, as the top two most favored incentives. Upon Sherry's question about building height adjustments, Jason agreed it was something he'd like to see. Steve said he felt uncomfortable about tax abatement, in terms of bringing the school system into the equation. Glenn said he was in favor of all listed incentives, except those that would reduce revenue for the City. Sherry commented that reduced parking requirements could go hand-in-hand with spaces for alternative modes of transportation, such as bikes and scooters.

Shana inquired about the expected timeframe was. Sam stated he felt setting a deadline was not as important right now, but rather finding out whether this was something City Council wanted to ask the City Manager to perform. With a smaller staff on hand, it may be something where the services of a consultant are retained. Shana proposed that the work session with Council be held as soon as possible, and Steve and Shana agreed that the TGL tax should move forward soon as well. Steve also stated Glenn's point about incentives costing the City revenue was very well-taken. Sherry said she agreed with Steve and Glenn on their points, but again stressed there was potential for turmoil in the housing market and we may not want to put our stake in the ground yet until things settle out. Sam offered to get some feedback from the City Manager and Law Director about tying increase in density or decrease in dimensional requirements to a percentage of affordable units, if a larger development was proposed prior to a major policy change. With

enough support at the top, there might be a possibility to adopt some kind of action in the short-term. Jason expressed his support for that idea, but again that action was sorely needed for TGLs.

Glenn made a motion to recommend to Council that transient resident housing be included under the hospitality tax. Sam asked for a clarification, to reduce the number of beds to 1 or more so that TGLs would be applicable to the tax; Glenn replied yes. Roll call: Ellerbe-yea; Bracken-yea; Rosenberg-yea; Schnabl-yea; Lind-yea. Sherry thanked Glenn for his motion.

Steve moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Glenn. Roll call: Ellerbe-yea; Bracken-yea; Rosenberg-yea; Schnabl-yea; Lind-yea.