



AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AHAC)

MINUTES ~ February 26, 2025

, Advocate for Low-Income Persons, Vice Chair
David Myers, For Profit Housing
Mark Mucher, Planning & Zoning
Linda Morgan, At Large
Jeff Francisco, Non-Profit Housing
Sam Carroll, Town of Indian River Shores

Chip Landers, Real Estate Professional
Christopher Nunn, City of Sebastian
John Cotugno, City of Vero Beach
Noah Powers, City of Fellsmere
Cherry Stowe, ALT – Town of Orchid

IRC Staff: Chris Balter, Planning & Development Services Director
Commissioner Susan Adams, District 1, Commissioner Representative (Voting Member), CHAIR

The Indian River County (IRC) Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) met:
February 26, 2025, AT 9:00 AM
Indian River County Administration Building B, 1800 27th Street, Room B1-501, Vero Beach, FL

11 Voting Members/6 for Quorum

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Susan Adams, Chair called the February 25, 2025, meeting of the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present

Commissioner Susan Adams – Voting Member, Chair
Jeff Francisco, Non-Profit Affordable Housing
Fred Jones, City of Sebastian
Linda Morgan, Member at Large
Mark Mucher, Planning & Zoning Appointee
John Cotugno, City of Vero Beach
Noah Powers, City of Fellsmere
Chip Landers, Real Estate Professional
Sam Carroll, Town of Indian River Shores
Cherry Stowe, Town of Orchid, Alt for Indian River Shores

Members Absent

David Myers, For Profit Housing

Others Present

Chris Balter, Chief, Long-Range Planning
Ryan Sweeney, Assistant Planning & Development Services Director
Susan Prado, Assistant County Attorney
Kimberly Moirano, Recording Secretary

QUORUM WAS MET

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

John Cotugno made a motion, seconded by Jeff Francisco, to approve the Minutes of the October 30, 2024, Regular meeting. The motion passed unanimously (10-0).

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Planning and Development Services

1. SHIP Updates

Ms. Sipi Chinyanganya stated that they did send out a summary of proposed changes for the LHAP. One of the changes that they've made is to add the demolition reconstruction strategy proposal. We have a lot of older homes in our Community that they cannot rehabilitate due to the condition of the houses. The maximum rehabilitation amount would not be sufficient to bring the houses to code. So, this strategy would allow them to demolish and reconstruct eligible homes as and when funds permit. The proposed amount award is \$380,000 in line with the median property prices. They had a homeowner who came in to apply for assistance to get their house rehabbed. In the condition that it was, there was no way they could have done it within the maximum eligibility limits. So, they had to turn the homeowner down. There was absolutely nothing they could do. As of December, she took the average sales price from the agencies listed below. The average price came out at \$370,131.20. They also added language relating to the use of Nepalese software for SHIP because their Application is now online. They did not have that language in our LHAP, so they went ahead and added that. They are proposing to increase the maximum home value from the current of \$300,000.00 to \$400,000.00. The value is based on the five agencies' average of \$370,000. What this value increase allows them to do is when applicants apply for SHIP rehab, they have to look at the property appraiser value for their home. They find that with some of the homes that are above the \$300,000 amount they can't help them. They will still be required to be income eligible even if the house is valued at over \$300,000. They had to turn back a couple of people from the program because their houses were valued at \$380,000 to \$400,000, but yet they were income eligible for the program. They also updated the definition of essential services personnel. They added County workers and laborers into that definition. This is in line with some changes that Planning and Development are going to incorporate where they are going to be asked to incorporate County workers and skilled laborers. They also increased the loan term for new construction, which is in line with the federal guidelines, the SHIP Statute. They are required to have it at 15 years for the SHIP Statute for rental properties. They do not charge interest in their loans.

The other change that they're proposing is the window replacement of projects to be classified as a major rehab. They cannot use window rehabs as emergencies only because the window suppliers require a deposit before the job can be done and the SHIP Program does not pay a deposit up front. They are proposing to schedule them as a major rehab which will allow their inspector to go in, do an inspection, draw up a scope of work, and then put the job out to bid. They also added a mandatory training video for first-time homebuyers. They did find a program on the Fannie Mae website for first-time homebuyers. It's a three-hour course. It's very comprehensive and it will allow the homeowners to understand the home buying process.

Chip Landers made a motion, seconded by Jeff Francisco, to approve Recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. The motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Stacy Bush from Housing Services Division spoke regarding their Housing Choice Voucher Program. She stated that their Housing Choice Voucher Program wait list (formerly known as Section Housing) will be opening Wednesday, March 5th 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The Applicant can go onto our County website to complete the Application. The Application will only be on our County website, not through Google. They will not be available for printing.

2. Planning Updates

Ryan Sweeney stated the Board of County Commissioners did adopt the Duplex Ordinance removing that from the Site Plan Approval Requirements back in January. The Gifford Gardens Project is moving forward with Habitat. Habitat has another project in the hopper with the County that will be going to P&Z. They are also working on some additional LDR changes to make affordable housing more streamlined or quicker to improve or remove barriers. Ms. Adams stated that the parameters around building affordable housing and then qualifying for some of the affordable housing programs with the State and Federal level are so onerous that it's not worth it to incorporate that in a regular development process for like a for-profit developer. Mr. Balter stated that how the PD process

works is it's a give and take on both the County side and the developer's side. They'll ask for Waivers, and we ask for public benefits and they have to equal out to what they are. They've had a little bit of traction with one developer possibly because these smaller sites don't really lend themselves to having a whole lot of public benefits because they're old grove sites. They don't have a lot of ecological factors or there's just not room to really do any public benefit other than maybe some additional sidewalks or some road right-of-way. One of the things that Mr. Balter had talked about last year was beefing up their density bonuses and possibly a height bonus to be able to have something to motivate developers to start doing this. We're unique in the fact that we don't have a whole lot of density, so that's why you don't see a whole lot of affordable housing developers come in here because they can't get their ROIs to work or their performance to work. So, we have to incentivize it in another way. This year you're going to see incentives coming forward that are going to make it more appetizing for developers to start doing affordable housing instead of, you know, paying half a million dollars to make roadway improvements. It'll be easier for them to do affordable housing, so we have to make them even more appetizing for them to want to build an affordable housing project. There are possibly a couple of properties that the County may be able to get through some reverted clauses that they might be able to do an affordable housing project on.

There was a discussion among the Board members regarding the presentation.

b. Local Affordable Housing Action Updates:

1. John Cotugno – City of Vero Beach

Mr. Cotugno stated that they are still working on the referendum. Child Care Resources is moving into the old Fish & Wildlife buildings in the downtown area and will be going through a series of renovations for a period of time supported by local philanthropy. The second phase is they will be putting up the 54 units of affordable housing. They also have 14 acres, which was the old nursery which they are still working on.

2. Fred Jones – City of Sebastian – No Report

3. Noah Powers – City of Fellsmere

Mr. Powers stated that the City of Fellsmere for a number of years has been considered affordable housing is that that picture is changing. The last sixteen homes that they have built in Fellsmere the average cost was \$511,000. They have two developments. One is just getting ready to cut survey for their sewer. They're going to be coming out of the ground at any moment. There's 334 units. They'll be priced somewhere between \$225,000 to \$250,000 in that range. They've got another 210 that are in the books. They're meeting with them now. Within the next five years they'll probably have somewhere in the neighborhood of a thousand new homes. When you talk about the credit score, affordable housing, one of the challenges that they're running into is the fact of the transportation, the actual moving of the vehicles because when you look at that kind of growth, you're looking at a lot of vehicular traffic back and forth. So, they could be looking at two thousand extra trips a day with those kinds of numbers. They're having difficulty being able to adjust their traffic patterns to accommodate that kind of growth and that kind of input on 512. So, traffic signalization is expensive. He thought it was somewhere in the range of about a million dollars. The City has done probably 30 or so parcels that they need to get with Council to see what they want to do with them. There are 58 square miles which is the largest land mass in the County. The Corrigan property on the west side of I-95 which goes from State Road 60 almost all the way to 512. That's going to start developing somewhere in the near future. It's going to be a different Fellsmere in another ten years. They are concerned about the residents there having affordable housing with this growth but it's hard to get contractors to buy into affordable housing when we're needing access to roadways and roadways are expensive. Ms. Adams stated that the road situation is something that they've been at least 512 working at MPO to kind of address. It's a problem beyond the new development that's coming. It's a current problem.

4. Sam Carroll – Town of Indian River Shores – No Report

5. Cherry Stowe – No Report

6. Jeff Francisco – For Profit Affordable Housing

Jeff Francisco stated they're currently working in Vero Lake Estates, Oslo Park and Cavalier Estates in Gifford. is working on contracts for four houses that he is trying to buy they're going to remodel and put in their program. They are in the queue for Citrus crossing and it's moving fast, and they have lots in Sebastian out there now that's in the future as well. Trevor stated they have two permits in hand for Gifford Gardens in hand. They're just waiting on stormwater permits from St. John's and from the State and then they'll be ready to go on that. They've already got a contractor lined up for site work. They have to be completely finished within 20 months. The two biggest impediments that they have right now are FP&L and being Number 2 and being Number 1 being the stormwater Division here in the County whose enforcement is completely out of control. It is now taking their Director of Construction five weeks out of the year simply to do the checklist at all of their properties. It has to be done again every time it rains. It will cost them more than six figures this year to deal with the Stormwater Protection Plans that are being forced on individual lots where the State says they're not required to be enforced. They've got 25 homes under construction which is a ton of work simply to be doing checklists and repairing fences. It's taken their time of individual construction on homes from on average four months five years ago to somewhere anywhere between six and ten months now per home. It will cost them more than \$200,000 a year to comply with the stormwater issues. Those two items significantly affect the rate at which they're able to build and develop. Mr. Francisco wanted to let folks know that Julianne Price stepped down from Coalition for Obtainable Homes and she had asked him to fill her seat as the Chair of the Board which he had been doing since October. They are stable now. Camp Haven is getting imminent domain by the State so they are interested in any available land from the County that might be suitable for them.

7. Julianne Price – Advocate for Low Income persons

Ms. Adams stated that Ms. Price has resigned as well from this Committee, so we are going to be seeking a person to fill her spot. She serves in the Advocate for Low Income Persons slot so if anybody knows anybody that would be a good fit for that and would like to serve on this Committee, please have them fill out the Committee Application Form that is on the County Commission Website. They are actually going to be discussing new Committee appointments at the March 11th BOCC meeting.

8. David Myers – For Profit Affordable Housing – No Report

9. Chip Landers – Real Estate Professional

Mr. Landers stated the duplex scenario of 12,000 square feet was an unusual size lot in our area. Now, 10,000 square feet, 80 x 125 lot is the standard lot. Three bedrooms, two baths for less than \$300,000, we have 18 houses in the county. That's a lot more than we used to. Three bedrooms, one bath house there's 4 more. That's the entire County and that's houses built in 1957, and square footages are anywhere from 984 up to larger. Most of them are going to be around 1,200 square foot range which is a decent size. The interest rates aren't going anywhere so you've got people who are waiting for them to drop. Inventory is not really increasing either. Vero Lake Estates has a ton of inventory now that's all brand new.

10. Mark Mucher – Planning & Zoning Appointee – No Report

11. Susan Adams – BCC Representative, Four County Affordable Housing Task Team

Ms. Adams stated she didn't have too much of an update. Legislative Session is getting going so there's a couple of different things that they're following there that may or may not affect affordability so we'll keep the Board updated on that. Deb Robinson from Laurel Homes stated that they're working on a project that is just west of the college on 16th Street. It's a 9 ½ acre parcel and they've long targeted a product that's affordable. It's looking to come in under \$300,000 for a two bedroom, 1 bath unit and their quadrplexes. In that process, the big issue is that everybody talks about density. What people don't realize is that it's not just about cramming units onto a piece of land. It's all the other requirements to develop the land that limit how many units you actually can build. At the end of the day, you have to take however many units you have and all the costs for that project have to apportion into those units as well as cost of

money and you've got to do a profit margin. There's only one way to do it. Everyone is always looking for more density because the more units you have the less, they can cost. They're trying to come up with a product that is in the affordable range under \$300,000. They're not looking to increase the density. They're not looking for money but what they are looking for is some movement, some help with some of the requirements that would allow them to pull this off. They have some really interesting things in the County. For instance, they're going to do a plat of a site plan and when you do a plat of a site plan this is just a way that you develop in Indian River County. You're required to have a 5-foot perimeter buffer. Now, if you were to do a planned development over the site plan and that gives you some room to say oh, we can't do this, can we do that? Then you have to have a 25-foot buffer but that's not an option to change that so they've built into their Code some obvious contradictions because a 5-foot buffer is adequate for the exact same community than why would one need 25 feet in another setting. For their project to go in for a planned development over a plat so that they can say this is what we want to do and we think this will work better and then give staff the opportunity to say yeah, we agree except for the hard and fast rule is the 25-foot buffer and that's not an option to change in a planned development for a plat. What she had seen as being a developer here for a very long time is that they've built us into a position where the reason we don't have affordable housing honestly is because we've built so many demands of the developer and the property that it's no longer effective. But when you take all of these little elements and you add them in our Code, now, we have to have 7½ percent of every subdivision has to be recreational. Now, we have very liberal views of recreation, so it doesn't have to be a playground or whatever, but 712 percent is no longer up for space to put units. She thought we have to look at our Code as a whole and start looking at what is rational. There's reason to have a 5-foot buffer on one and a 25-foot on another for the same exact project. They don't have the luxury of going in and saying oh, can we develop under a PD because we can't put that buffer in. So, they're not going to go through federal funding and HUD and so forth. They're going to build their communities themselves, but they need a pathway where they can take advantage of some of the affordable housing opportunities to say to staff and to the Commission this is what they would like to do and here's what impacts it negatively and we don't think that's in effect and not in the public good of the community. She wasn't sure that avenue exists yet. She was still trying to do the research to figure it out. If that is an issue and another issue is they've built hundreds and hundreds of units in this County. It never took her more than six months to get permitting. It's taking 12 to 17 months to get permitting. You have to have some time certain assurances, and their process is very cumbersome now. It's not that people don't care. It's just that we've gotten ourselves to a place where it's very difficult and if we don't start looking at ways to make those things. I mean just taking eight months off the time factor in which you need to get permitting is a huge amount of money. From her side of the table just of recommendation that they need to look at ways to make the permitting way faster and logically look at some of these rules that we have and say that doesn't make any sense for you to have a 5-foot easement here and a 25-foot easement here for the exact same footprint.

Trevor stated that he had two items. The first one is to say ditto to what both of you just said. They still have disaster relief funding available for Hurricane Milton, homeowners who suffered damage that may be uninsured and underinsured. There is still funding available to uh, to address those so please send them to the Habitat for Humanity Office.

6. **NEXT MEETING ~ April 23, 2025.**

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

Susan Adams, Chair, adjourned the meeting at 10:15 am.

A full recording of the meeting is on file in the office of the Board of County Commissioners.

Notice: Two or more County Commissioners may attend and participate in the discussion of the topics included on the meeting's agenda. Anyone who needs a special accommodation for this meeting may contact the County's ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Coordinator at 772-226-1223, at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. Anyone who may wish to appeal any decision made at this meeting will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which includes testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is based.