

CITY OF FORT MYERS LOCAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
06/06/2023

The **Local Affordable Housing Advisory Committee of The City of Fort Myers**, met in **Council Chambers** located at 2200 Second Street, Fort Myers, Florida 33901 @ 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday May 2, 2023.

Call to Order: Patricia Chafatelli

Roll Call: Present Committee Members from Housing and Real Estate Division, **Councilman Johnny Streets, Kelly Gabourel, Carl Baxter, David Poisson, Lt. Dion Freeman, and Patricia Chafatelli.**

Committee Members not present **Justin Thibaut, Phillip Ford, Steve Wood, and Chauncey Solinger**

Pledge of Allegiance to The Flag of The United States of America. Led by David Poisson

Minutes of meetings, May 2, 2023, minutes were approved and seconded.

Steven Belden, Director Community Development presented:

- Public Land Inventory
- Fair Housing Ordinance
- Affordable Housing Trust Fund

Public Land Inventory

Mr. Belden began with Public Land Inventory indicating that there are 9 parcels currently available.

These parcels became city property by foreclosure and donation. He indicated that there is always interest in building on these lots and the City does try to work with the developers to utilize the properties. However, they are typically given 3 years to build and if not, the land comes back to the city.

The city is taking the initiative to build on the lots through a contractor. The contractors have presented their bids with their credentials through the purchasing process and City Council. The plan allows for the houses to be built and sold at cost. This allows for the funds from the sale to be reinvested to build another home if we have lots available.

Ms. Chafatelli asked how the process is determined, what house is to be built on which lot and how the builder is chosen.

Lt. Freeman asked what the process is to put it all together. What are the guidelines for who has chosen to buy the house, what their process is or what is the RUBIX that puts it all together?

Mr. Belden asked if that was the question that Ms. Chafatelli was asking also. It was agreed. He said they have not done any yet but were getting close because contractors were chosen to give bids and the council had approved the project.

Ms. Chafatelli asked what discussion had been involved in getting to this point and how the buyers would be chosen.

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Lt. Freeman asked who selected the builder.

Mr. Belden said the first lot will be on Lincoln Avenue, house plans and specifications would be sent to the approved builders, and they will bid, and the project will be awarded.

The process is underway to determine the criteria for the applicants and when that is ready, which should be soon, it will be advertised to the public.

Ms. Gabourel asked who would determine the floor plan. Were the plans going to be purchased off the internet?

Mr. Belden said meetings were taking place with him, the City Manager, and the Assistant City Manager. He said that they needed to fit on the lots and wanted to give upgrades where possible and still fit into affordable housing. Plans will be purchased off the internet or other affordable, reliable sources.

Ms. Chafatelli asked how we acquired these odd sized lots.

Mr. Belden said it was possible that they were acquired with a larger parcel at one time. He said there were other lots that the city has such as C Street and Delaware near the cemetery and that the city is working with a consultant to determine how to re-size for better use. He again noted that the plan was to get a house built, sell it at cost get the money to build the next home.

Ms. Gabourel asked who the city is working with to close these deals (Title Company)

Ms. Chafatelli suggested that maybe they would be willing to donate some fees to the project.

Mr. Belden said the city works with a company called Duncan and that would be a good idea.

Mr. Baxter asked when the committee would receive a listing of the developers.

Mr. Belden said he would get with staff and prepare that for the committee.

Fair Housing Ordinance

Working for quite a while and it has made it through legal. A draft will be provided to the committee before the next meeting or even earlier.

Ms. Chafatelli asked what the hold-up had been.

Mr. Belden said priorities have not been there and now it is back on top.

Mr. Belden continued: There are things that pertain to this committee, and he wanted to provide the information to the committee as soon as possible so that the committee would be comfortable discussing with the people that come before them for assistance with discrimination. The type of discrimination could be anything where the individual feels that they are a victim of discrimination. It does not have to be just affordable housing it can be any area where they feel they were mistreated, rent, or buy does not matter.

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Affordable Housing Trust Fund

Council adopted the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and have put money into the program of about 1.5 million. (Some has been used)

The purpose was to find ways to come up with or assist with Affordable Housing

Programs had to be developed to provide incentives so that our builders and developers would build these units. The Affordable Rental Assistance supplemental funding will help to fill the gap between what a person is paying and their affordability.

The need is great, and we have already had 450 applicants.

Ms. Chafatelli said that she feels this is unsustainable, that rent is not coming down and the people that serve are not getting higher wages. This seems like a band-aid to her.

Mr. Belden said, yes, it is a band-aid but it will help those that are suffering now, they will be able to have subsidized rent for a year and can re-apply for up to 3 years. He said it comes down to money, but they are trying to provide relief for those that are suffering.

He said that they have committed a 3% fee on Building Permits that will go to the Housing Trust.

Mr. Belden was asked about Accessory Dwelling and he said it had come again for review.

Councilman Streets introduced a program that the Council reviewed at the Council Workshop.

1.1 billion in funds.

He said HUD had held 17 meetings around the area and that the Dunbar High School meeting was the largest crowd.

He said affordable housing was not getting better and that we had to research every option to provide our citizens with safe housing.

He wanted the committee to see what was happening and have available to them the information from the council and workshop.

Speakers from the Audience were recognized by Ms. Chafatelli.

Bryan Cunningham, introduced himself as a non-profit developer who was just awarded June 6, 2023, a contract for \$875K.

HHRP award and working in conjunction with the Center for Independent Living and partnering with Alysia Howard.

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Ron Matthew, a Developer spoke to address the options that he offers to help with Affordable Housing.

He presented himself as a solution not just an idea. He said he represented a Mortgage company, builders. He said he was the whole package that his mortgage company would loan anyone the money to buy a home if they qualified for \$180,000, they would build the house for the amount they qualified for, and the mortgage company would finance it.

The issue was that many times if they qualify the home needs to be smaller than the size now required by the city. He said that the city needs to reduce the size to 800 sq. ft. for the affordable home's ad that the setbacks required by the city are too much because when you are building homes for affordable housing that you need to use the land creatively to meet the need, so he wanted the setbacks to be adjusted to make it work.

He said that he had met with the Director of the CDD and the City Manager and said that he had presented the plan. However, in the search process was not requested to bid.

The program is called NACA and has been in this field for 35 years.

Ms. Chafatelli said she would research.

Ms. Villacis asked if the program was like Habitat for Humanity

Mr. Matthew, said no because the owner is not involved in the work and that the NACA completes the entire home based on what that customer can pay.

Mr. Baxter then asked him; you initiated a program and presented it to the city but that when the program was discussed for consideration NACA was not allotted an opportunity.

Mr. Matthew acknowledged.

Mr. Streets said that this was something that would not be settled at the meeting and that would have to go before the Director of the CDD and City Manager and the Council and that he (Councilman Streets) would take full responsibility for reporting back to Mr. Matthew.

The meeting for July 4, 2023 will be cancelled and the next meeting will be August 1, 2023

The advisory board vacancies were listed by designation of need.

There was a motion to adjourn and seconded.

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said that “setbacks” have been proposed on March 1, to move from 10 feet to 7 feet assisting developers to utilize property for affordable housing. This will go to the Council for final approval.

A variance on Residential Units has been approved by the Board of Adjustments on April 26, 2023, to move from 750 Sq. Ft. minimum down to 625 Sq. FT. for 14 units and 637 Sq. Ft. for 36 units t 637 Sq. Ft. at 3611 and 3621 Cleveland Avenue providing more options for the developers to finalize these affordable properties.

Zoning code is being approved for guest house (non-commercial) on residential property.

Minimum of 10,000 square foot lot and guest house to be 400 to 1200 square feet.

Owner must have homestead exemption, nothing commercial.

CDD is working on updating land development code changes. (Housing Element and Peril Flood)

A couple of developers have changed to mid-town but have not utilized them yet.

Most mid-town development has had no change in zoning and is underutilized.

City is concerned and addressing the fact that we have a need for making changes and said that out of the 800 employees that work for the city only 100 live in the city.

Mr. Mitchell asked if the 10 ft to 7 ft. variance is for just affordable housing or is it for all. It is for all that have residential single-family zoning.

Ms. Chafatelli brought up gentrifications and mid-town, specifically studio apartments that are \$1400 per month which are not affordable for the working class. Mr. Palermo said that the city recognizes this and is taking it seriously and working to find new ways to address through better utilization of the mid-town plan.

Motion to Adjourn: Mr. Wood, A Motion was given and unanimously carried and approved.