

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA
Affordable Housing Workshop
March 23, 2021**

The Board of County Commissioners of Leon County, Florida met at 3:00 p.m. with Chairman Rick Minor presiding. Present were Vice Chairman Bill Proctor and Commissioners Nick Maddox, Carolyn Cummings, Kristin Dozier, Brian Welch, and Jimbo Jackson. Also present were County Administrator Vincent Long, County Attorney Chasity O'Steen, and Clerk to the Board Beryl H. Wood. Because partnerships will continue to be integral to the County's achievements in affordable housing, several partner agencies will attend the workshop to discuss their role in supporting affordable housing, including Mark Hendrickson, Administrator for the Florida Housing Finance Authority of Leon County, Brenda Williams, Executive Director of the Tallahassee Housing Authority, Karen Miller, Executive Director of the Tallahassee Lender's Consortium and the Community Land Trust, and Courtney Atkins, the Executive Director of the South City Foundation.

Chairman Minor called the meeting to order at 3:40 p.m.

Commissioner Dozier moved to waive the 3-minute limit proclamation of debate, seconded by Chairman Minor. The motion carried 5-0. (Commissioner Cummings and Vice-Chairman Proctor out of Chambers).

Wanda Hunter, Assistant County Administrator to Citizen Services, introduced the partners in attendance at the workshop. Previously, the Board asked for staff to research affordable housing options in the County.

Shington Lamy, Director of Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships, gave a presentation on affordable housing in Leon County. He reported that 64% of Leon County households are not cost burdened, meaning that they do not spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs.

Commissioner Maddox asked for clarification on housing costs and what the definition included. Mr. Lamy reported that all costs, including utilities, insurance, and maintenance, are included in the cost.

Mr. Lamy reported that of the 36% of those who are cost burdened, 51% are severely burdened. The area median income for a household of 4 in Leon County is \$72,700. He continued to share the challenges that the County, as well as the state and nation, face regarding affordable housing for lower income households. Funding shortfalls and restraints continued rise in the costs of labor and materials, and stagnant wages for cost burdened households are the three challenges highlighted in the agenda. Leon County has taken deliberative approaches to tackle these issues. The goals and opportunities are to increase the stock of affordable homes and maximize resources when possible, to address the highest need, as well as to promote and preserve home ownership in unincorporated parts of Leon County to help ensure that established families maintain their homes.

Partners include the City of Tallahassee, Housing Finance Authority of Leon County, Tallahassee Housing Authority, South City Foundation, and Tallahassee Lender's Consortium.

The primary source of funding comes from the State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP). This funding must be spent in the unincorporated parts of Leon County as the City of Tallahassee

also receives SHIP funding. The majority of funding must be spent on initiatives for homeownership. Florida statute requires that SHIP recipients must form an Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC).

A Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund was launched by the City in January. It incentivizes landlords to rent their units to “high risk” tenants. 17 landlords have already been approved for the program.

The Local Government Area of Opportunity Funding Tax Credit is a state program that subsidizes affordable rental housing development construction projects with federal tax credits. This is another opportunity for the County to pursue.

Mark Hendrickson, Administrator for the Florida Housing Finance Authority of Leon County, gave a presentation on its recent work. The Housing Finance Authority is chartered by the County. Its services are available in both the City of Tallahassee and the unincorporated parts of Leon County. The Magnolia Terrace refurbishment will be completed later in 2021. Additionally, Phase 1 of the Orange Avenue Apartments will be discussed later by the Tallahassee Housing Authority.

Commissioner Dozier asked for clarification on Mr. Hendrickson leaving the meeting. It was noted that Mike Rogers, the president of the HFA, will be available to answer questions.

Brenda Williams, with the Tallahassee Housing Authority, reported that it owns and manages over 500 homes and apartments. It employs 50 people and has a \$26 million budget.

Courtney Atkins, South City Foundation, reported that it is focused on a 3-pronged approach of mixed income housing, cradle to college services, and community wellness.

Karen Miller, with the Community Land Trust, provided an overview of its work. She noted that the Land Trust owns the land on which homes exist, allowing low-income homeowners to only pay for the construction of the home itself.

WORKSHOP ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVES IN LEON COUNTY

As requested at the Board’s June 16, 2020 meeting, this workshop provides an update on Leon County’s affordable housing policies and programs. It includes an analysis of local housing data as well as program goals to improve access to housing for low-income citizens. Specific housing topics raised by the Board after the Workshop had been scheduled will also be discussed at the workshop.

Option #1: Accept the status report on affordable housing in Leon County.

Option #2: Request the Housing Finance Authority of Leon County (HFA) develop a procedure to evaluate and recommend projects seeking Local Government Area of Opportunity Funding Tax Credits for local government support.

Option #3: Continue to redistribute PILOT fees provided by the Tallahassee Housing Authority back to the agency to support property maintenance services, security and resident services including after-school programs and summer programming.

Option #4: Direct staff to prepare a future agenda item to consider a partnership with the City on the Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund focusing on individuals returning to the community from incarceration, to be funded through the County's existing Jail Diversion budget.

Option #5: Continue to support previous Board direction to Planning staff on the development of inclusionary housing policy recommendations as part of the Future Land Use Element Update of the Tallahassee-Leon County Comprehensive Plan.

Public Comment:

- Stanley Sims, 1320 Avondale Way, stated that in other areas of the country, communities are providing innovative solutions to affordable housing, especially for housing for people of color. He also mentioned the lack of inclusion for the Frenchtown area. There is a large amount of homeless people in that area that require aid as well.

Commissioner Maddox noted that he approved of the projects that the Tallahassee Housing Authority is working on at Orange Avenue.

Commissioner Maddox moved to approve Options 1-5, seconded by Commissioner Dozier.

Commissioner Cummings commended the presenters on the work they do in Leon County.

Commissioner Dozier noted that she would like to continue to support the Tallahassee Housing Authority, however many people have reached out to her on the process of applying to the Area of Opportunity Tax Credit Program. She asked Mr. Lamy if broadband was included in housing costs. He stated that because it is new, it is not currently included as utilities, however the federal government may change the classification. She also asked if the data may change as the stereotype of a family of four is currently less popular.

Commissioner Maddox asked for information on the inclusionary housing act be sent to the Commissioners at a later date.

Commissioner Jackson thanked the presenters for the information they provided.

Commissioner Welch thanked the presenters for their presentations. He noted that he will tour the South City Foundation later in the week.

Chairman Minor asked what other opportunities the County can use to work with private developers. Brenda Williams noted that she would like to see policy changes from the State of Florida for developers and for tax credits. Mr. Lamy stated that they can push for more SHIP funds as it is instrumental for their projects. Mike Rogers added that SHIP funding from last year was vetoed but is currently available. Karen Miller noted that she will be attending a workshop regarding shared equity between private entities and non-profits.

Commissioner Maddox noted that there may be policy direction the Board can take to incentivize affordable housing. He would like to see current Leon County policy compared to other counties. Shington Lamy noted that the committee is working on a report.

Commissioner Dozier stated that she would like to schedule the next joint meeting with the partners on the homelessness issue and affordable housing information. She provided a friendly amendment to include the scheduling of a joint meeting. Commissioner Maddox approved of the friendly amendment.

Commissioner Maddox moved to approve Options 1-5, seconded by Commissioner Dozier, with the amendment that staff will bring back Option 2 as an agenda item once current projects are completed, and staff will begin to investigate scheduling a joint meeting with the City on homelessness and affordable housing. The motion carried 6-0. (Vice-Chairman Proctor out of Chambers).

Commissioner Dozier also noted that she would like to see more involvement in the Frenchtown area.

Vice-Chairman Proctor thanked the presenters for their work. He noted that he would like to see more information on the issues at hand with affordable housing, including wages.

ADJOURN:


There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA

ATTEST:



BY: 
Rick Minor, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners

BY: 
Gwendolyn Marshall, Clerk of Court
& Comptroller, Leon County, Florida