

Minutes of the June 11, 2021 Monroe County Affordable Housing Advisory Commission Meeting

Commissioners present: Lisa Abbott, Sarah Cahillane, Cathi Crabtree, David Henry, Mary Morgan, Deborah Myerson, Will Smith. Absent: Vauhxx Booker, Chris Cockerham, Doris Sims

Guests: Jana Perea, Sen. Shelli Yoder, Dave Warren, B Square Beacon, County Councilors Geoff McKim and Peter Iverson, County Commissioner Penny Githens.

MoCo AHAC chair Cathi Crabtree called the meeting to order at 8:01. She reported that because the May meeting minutes weren't distributed prior to the June meeting, the vote to adopt those would occur at the July AHAC meeting.

She noted that this would likely be the last meeting held exclusively via Zoom, as the governor's executive order expires June 30. She asked if there were any additions/changes to the agenda.

Deborah Myerson wanted to add a discussion item of recent housing proposals in Monroe County. She noted that some recent residential projects, including Southern Meadows, had been rejected by county commissioners.

Cathi Crabtree suggested adding it after the discussion with Sen. Yoder. Deborah Myerson moved to approve the agenda as amended. Seconded by Sarah Cahillane. Approved unanimously.

Cathi Crabtree noted that a proposed AHAC Meeting Attendance RSVP Policy has been distributed prior to the meeting. It was developed to help manage hybrid meetings that are expected to begin in July.

=====

AHAC Meeting Attendance RVSP Policy

In order to effectively and efficiently adhere to the regulations established under AHAC's Electronic Attendance Policy for Public Meetings (May 2021), the Commission shall adhere to the following supplemental rules:

1. The Chair shall include a call for RSVP for an upcoming meeting at least one week in advance of said meeting.
2. All members shall inform, at least three days prior to the meeting (e.g. the Tuesday before a Friday meeting), the Chair and Vice Chair regarding the member's planned attendance as follows:
 - a. In person;
 - b. Remote; or
 - c. Absent.
3. At least 50% of members must attend in person each meeting (i.e. 5 out of 10, or 6 out of 11 members); to ensure adequate in-person attendance, the Chair and Vice Chair shall promptly review the RVSPs. Should more members' preferred modes of attendance not meet the 50% minimum in-person threshold, then the Chair and Vice Chair shall determine who may attend remotely:
 - a. In the order requests are received
 - b. While prioritizing requests by members who have not attended remotely in the prior two months

- c. Note: HEA 1437 stipulates a member must attend in person for at least one meeting after participating remotely two times in row and absences do not factor into this count.
4. The Chair and Vice Chair shall maintain a record of members' attendance to ensure both no member attends more than two consecutive meetings remotely and that each member attends the legally required minimum of 50% of meetings in-person across the year (both of these numbers shall not include meeting attended remotely due to reasons listed in section 5).
5. Should a member need to attend a meeting remotely for one of the reasons enumerated by HEA 1437, the member shall inform the Chair and Vice Chair accordingly. The Chair and Vice Chair then shall record this type of attendance with cause and not factor in such remote meeting attendance when calculating eligibility for further remote attendance attendance during that calendar year:
- (1) military service;
 - (2) illness or other medical condition;
 - (3) death of a relative; or
 - (4) an emergency involving actual or threatened injury to persons or property.

=====

Mary Morgan asked if the policy had been reviewed by county legal staff. Will Smith reported that it had not been reviewed. He said AHAC could approve it pending legal review or wait to approve it at the next AHAC meeting.

Lisa Abbott moved to approve the policy pending legal review. Deborah Myerson seconded. Approved unanimously.

Will Smith solicited feedback on rules related to public commentary. Mary Morgan asked if other county boards or commissions had formed a policy that AHAC could use as a model. Following discussion by commissioners, Cathi Crabtree said that she and vice chair Will Smith would draft a policy that could be brought forward for discussion at a future meeting.

At 8:12 a.m. Cathi Crabtree introduced State Sen. Shelli Yoder to discuss the state study session on housing.

Sen. Yoder congratulated commissioners, noting that it was a discussion at the February 2021 AHAC meeting that had been the impetus for working on this issue. She had asked Sen. Ryan Mishler (R-District 9) to add an amendment to the state budget bill that would create the study session on housing. Getting it into the budget bill was a "heavy lift," she said. Beyond that, leadership in both chambers needed to assign it to a committee, which was another hurdle that it overcame. It was assigned to the Fiscal & Tax Policy Committee, chaired by Sen. Travis Holdman (R-District 19). Sen. Yoder is not a member of that committee, but she plans to attend.

Sen. Yoder reported that the committee won't meet until October or November – a specific date hasn't yet been set. She hopes to gather more information and feedback before then. She mentioned that Prosperity Indiana, the Indiana Institute for Working Families, and the Indiana Youth Institute issued a [joint brief on housing instability](#), and that those groups could be a helpful part of the conversation. She said that the Board of Realtors and Builders Association have strong lobbying at the statehouse, and that it's important to have a broader range of input on the housing issue.

Cathi Crabtree stated that Andrew Bradley of Prosperity Indiana talked to her and Mary Morgan about housing issues. He is someone who might be invited to a future AHAC meeting.

Cathi Crabtree then opened up the floor to feedback from commissioners. Before the meeting, she had asked commissioners to think about these three questions: 1. What should guide the work of the State Housing Study? 2. What questions/issues do you want the State Housing Study to investigate? 3. What would a successful end product look like from the State Housing Study?

Deborah Myerson noted that in January 2020, the Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCDA) had issued an RFP (request for proposals) for a statewide housing study. She wondered what that status was.

Sen. Yoder reported that the IHCDA study is happening now. They're drilling down on what is available county-by-county in different housing units. They're gathering data, which the Senate summer study session will be analyzing. She met with IHCDA and Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, and they were excited that there is something in the works to address the study results. Sen. Yoder was hopeful that issues raised in the study can be addressed in next Indiana General Assembly session.

Penny Githens said the Institute on Working Families has looked at the cost of living in each county. She asked if the study will look at that.

Sen. Yoder said that IWF will be asking this question, as they were instrumental in the study that Prosperity Indiana put together. It wasn't yet clear what questions the Senate study committee would formally consider, though.

Deborah Myerson posted in Zoom chat a suggested outline for items in the housing study:

- Renters
- Owner-Occupied
- Cost burdened households
- Racial disparities
- Gap between housing costs and incomes
- Housing affordability by occupation
- Housing for seniors
- Housing for people with disabilities
- Housing development and affordable housing
- Regional breakdowns

Cathi Crabtree asked if the study session would be open to the public. Sen. Yoder replied that all meetings are public and public commentary will be allowed. She's working to try to identify what will be informing the committee chair's priorities and agenda.

Dave Warren, a member of the public, posted in chat: "Fantastic to see everyone and to hear Senator Yoder! One question: What needs to be done up front to result in this study having a different fate than so many other housing studies? There have been several housing studies here that some important decisionmakers tend to ignore."

Sarah Cahillane noted that as long as the state has a minimum wage of \$7.25/hour, that should be guiding the work of the study.

Cathi Crabtree suggested that AHAC compile ideas that can be sent to Sen. Yoder. Also, potentially some AHAC members could do public commentary for the study committee.

Sen. Yoder reported that she'll be attending Prosperity Indiana's Opportunity Starts at Home webinar next week. Deborah Myerson posted a link to that event in chat: <https://prosperityindiana.org/OSAH>

Will Smith said he'd like to see what changes need to be made at the state level and at local areas to make a difference. He also wanted to see what changes are needed at the nonprofit and business levels.

Cathi Crabtree reported that the discussion she and Mary Morgan had with Prosperity Indiana included the issue of legislation that ties hands of local communities.

David Henry noted that there are structural things that impact housing. Perhaps there can be a meta conversation about home rule and state decisions that impact housing.

Sen. Yoder said that someone earning minimum wage in Indiana would have to work 72 hours to rent a bedroom. The Senate study session shouldn't just focus on home ownership. Coalition building is so important.

Dave Warren posted in chat: "I'm also curious to know what the appetite in the legislature is for doing what other states are doing on a bipartisan basis for seeking ways to prevent local governments from excluding various types of housing. It's an enormous problem in almost every growing community in Indiana and the U.S. in general."

Penny Githens posted in chat: "IIWF did a report in 2016 that looks at self-sufficiency by county. You can access it at <https://iiwf.incap.org/assets/docs/Reports/Report-2016-Self-sufficiency.pdf>"

Deborah Myerson posted in chat: "Also - addressing David's comment on state/local governments: State Preemption of Local Equitable Housing Policies (Indiana is the only state that pre-empts all 4 categories) <https://www.supportdemocracy.org/equitablehousing/>"

Cathi Crabtree read Dave Warren's chat question about bipartisan. She told Sen. Yoder that AHAC wants to stay engaged and will be putting together recommendations for her to consider and give advice on how to push that forward.

Sen. Yoder said that every year there's encroachment on home rule about issues like minimum wage, plastic bags, public transportation, renter protection. These are unique needs that communities have and the state strips away the power to address local issues.

Dave Warren posted in chat: "The state isn't preventing local governments from allowing more types of housing in their communities, though."

Cathi Crabtree thanked Sen. Yoder and moved to the next agenda item.

Deborah Myerson wanted to discuss the impact of two county commission votes on Southern Meadows and Clear Creek Urban. The projects seek higher density than what's currently allowed. The developer of Southern Meadows wanted to build paired-patio homes rather than single family houses, in order to lower the cost. That was rejected – county plan commission approved it, but it was rejected by

commissioners rejected. Clear Creek Urban was seeking a mix of residential and office/retail, and that was rejected. Myerson suggested creating an AHAC subgroup to come up with questions or ask how to address housing needs and what is the county's vision.

Cathi Crabtree read Geoff McKim's comment in chat: "Clear Creek Urban was an amendment to an existing mostly industrial PUD."

Dave Warren posted in chat: "Also important to note that all these proposals (including one more in Clear Creek) are located by really vital assets like schools, a coming library branch, and the Clear Creek/Btown Rail Trail) Would have been great to increase the value of that trail and allow more people to use that coming library branch without having to drive."

David Henry said it would be nice to have a consensus about what development looks like from the county commissioners' perspective. He would like to see what options are in development for the next few years.

Will Smith pointed out that these decisions impact transportation options. Having a cluster of projects presented the possibility of a less car-dependent future for that area. That might not be enough to merit approval, but how does the county create more options for people to walk or bike to? It impacts affordability.

Lisa Abbott said the county also needs to think about the fact that when we push people who work in Monroe County out of the county to live, they take their income taxes with them so the county doesn't benefit from local employees. We still have to provide transportation pathways to get them to those employers. So we're spending money on roads without the benefit of taxes. Also, we add to their living expenses when we make them commute (gas, car maintenance, etc.). She wanted to know what the county's vision is regarding housing.

Cathi Crabtree said she had concerns and questions about the county's vision, and its bias against anything that isn't a luxury single family home. Paired housing was treated as blight and it isn't. She asked AHAC members what they thought about holding a joint working session with county commissioners to discuss their plans and thoughts and vision around housing in general, affordable housing and how to meet the needs of a community that is growing. This would need to be a longer discussion to dive into.

Deborah Myerson supported that idea. She offered to help develop a draft vision to guide that discussion.

Cathi Crabtree said she'd first like to hear what the commissioners' vision is. Will Smith agreed, saying that AHAC doesn't know what commissioners would agree to. He noted that AHAC has made other recommendations that haven't been adopted, adding "I'm frankly at a loss."

David Henry noted that AHAC's mandate is to provide county commissioners with recommendations. Members need to understand AHAC's scope so it aligns with vision of county leadership.

Penny Githens posted in chat: "I would like a good definition of 'affordable housing.'"

Cathi Crabtree then opened the floor to public commentary.

Dave Warren said it was great to hear from Sen. Yoder. He noted that the state didn't prevent projects like Southern Meadows from being approved. In every growing community, it's a problem, and it's not the state that prevents housing from being built. A lot of people get hung up on what affordable means. For him, the most unaffordable housing is housing that doesn't get built. It increases prices and rents of existing housing. For homeowners, less housing is good because equity is skyrocketing. But when a community doesn't allow housing, everything is more unaffordable. He agreed with Lisa Abbott's comment about local income taxes that aren't accruing to County if people can't live here. It's important to think about these issues at a broader level.

Penny Githens said she also thought that Lisa Abbott's point was good. The county is following an outdated CDO [county development ordinance] that is being updated. She said she's trying to listen and learn.

At 8:53, Cathy Crabtree moved to the next agenda item: Updates on paired working groups.

David Henry noted that there's a strategic pause on the best practices report to find out what other groups in the community are doing. He reported that he and Vauhxx Booker are still working on an outreach plan, which they will present at the July meeting.

Cathi Crabtree reported that she and Sarah Cahillane continue to attend the Inclusive Housing Working Group (IHWG) meetings. Mary Morgan also attends as a Chamber of Commerce representative. The group is proceeding with three committees: (1) Data and Dashboarding; (2) Map and Gap; and (3) Promising Practices. Sarah is part of the Map and Gap Committee and Cathi and Mary are part of the Promising Practices Committee. The committees briefed the entire working group on May 27, 2021.

Sarah and Cathi will be attending the Heading Home group meeting on June 17, 2021. The final Housing Insecurity Working Group meeting (outbrief from the Heading Home meeting) is on June 24, 2021. Sarah and Cathi will do a report/presentation on the results of the effort at either the July or August AHAC meeting.

Cathi Crabtree told commissioners that she appreciated their work. The meeting adjourned at 8:58 a.m.