

ESSENTIAL HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
July 15, 2020, 4:00 P.M.
COUNTY COMMISSION CHAMBERS,
JAMES S. PAGE GOVERNMENTAL COMPLEX
YULEE, FLORIDA

The Nassau County Essential Housing Advisory Committee (EHAC) met in regular session this 15th day of July 2020 at 4:00 p.m. at the Commission Chambers, James S. Page Governmental Complex, Yulee, Florida. Committee members present were Jenna Emmons, Betsie Huben, Taylor Riffey, Suzanne Willis, Mary Pitcher, Greg Matovina, Lisa Rozier, and Chairman Justin Taylor. Absent were Laureen Pagel, Carlene McDuffie, and Mark Durham, representing the School Board. Representing the Planning Department was Valerie Feinberg, Assistant Director. Also present were Carol Gilchrist, SHIP Coordinator, and Peggy Snyder, and Kimberly Minter, recording secretaries.

Commissioner Taylor called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

Chairman Taylor pointed out that this committee lost a big chunk of the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He was unclear how long the meeting would be held remotely via Zoom or Go to meeting in order to ensure the State's social distancing requirements. He thanked the committee for all they are doing.

Regarding Tab A, it was moved by Ms. Huben, seconded by Ms. Pitcher and unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the July 15, 2020 meeting as presented.

Next, for Tab B, Christopher Walker with Lippes, Mathias, Wexler, and Friedman, LLC, attorneys, provided a PowerPoint presentation titled "Making Affordable Housing Affordable." Mr. Walker provided a brief background of his career highlighting his success in closing over \$1.5 billion in real estate acquisitions and financing matters including over \$700 million of affordable multifamily housing. Growing up in an impoverished coal mining town in western Pennsylvania, he realized how hard it was for families to find affordable housing. His goal was to find a way to provide affordable housing where he could cover his costs, making a little money, and helping somebody out. In 2009, he put together a small one-residential property and put a structure in place with a very affordable monthly lease-to-own payment of \$450.00. He has also worked with patriot organizations housing for veterans. Those organizations came with nothing but an idea; however, he was able to structure stabilized multi-family properties, using tax exempt bond financing and direct issuers. In addition, Mr. Walker placed land use restrictions on those properties which require buyers to keep the rent affordable. He takes the profits he makes from the sale and buys more properties with more mandatory land use restrictions. He owns fully renovated, affordable housing properties in Nassau County; a one bedroom, one bath unit rents for \$700.00 and he has a waiting list of 35 people. In his opinion, Nassau County is thinking outside of the box and he lauded Mr. Pope, the essential Housing Advisory Committee, and County staff for all the help they provided as he went through the process.

Mr. Walker discussed the national drivers of the affordable housing crisis are: (1) The national affordable housing policy was focused on homeownership over renters. (2) Rising cost of labor and materials means affordable housing is expensive to build for rentals and ownership; (3) "Not

In My Back Yard” [NIMBY] problems still persist; and (4) Access to reliable capital and finance to invest in affordable housing development. He provided several methods to generate affordable housing options. He encouraged the committee to get creative about finding a way to get a rent to own program or work with a developer to encourage incentives to set aside units for rentals. He has been encouraging county commissions to go-together with other county commissions and developers to form a Public Privet Partnerships (PPPs) and form a level of buying groups dedicated to affordable housing in order to increase purchasing power to drive down costs. He explained that he was a firm believer in county’s and local government’s using their bonding ability to entice people to come through with tax exempt bonds through a bonding/funding structure to buy and/or renovate and maintain affordable housing because there is a massive underserved market of tax-exempt bond buyers such as large corporations, or life insurance companies for investment. Government needs to be more involved in structuring these deals. He also commented on how the high income earners on the island affect the rental market for the lower income workers which is another reason why affordable housing committees need to be involved to break down what people can actually afford. Next, Mr. Walker discussed proving developers with incentives such as streamlined the zoning application process if they provide a certain number of affordable units in their development or PUD. Mr. Walker suggested turning State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) funding into an affordable housing load program. His goal is to try to develop more simple, clean, safe and affordable housing units in Nassau County. In response to a question posed by the committee, Mr. Walker advised that there were modifications required for underlying zoning regulations to push some of the programs through. Discussion followed.

Chairman Taylor addressed Tab C, which was the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund and Federal Cares Act Funding. He explained that 2020 was the year that Sadowski Trust Fund was going to be funded; however, the funding was vetoed. Ms. Gilchrist advised that she was involved with a conference call with members of Sadowski Trust to speak regarding the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) funding. Besides what each county is receiving in CARES funding, the Sadowski Trust has been given \$250 million dollars for rental and mortgage assistance which will go through the SHIP program for distribution beginning next week. In her opinion, these funds will be handled similar to disaster mitigation funds and be distributed within three to five days without extensive processing time to bring people current on their rent or mortgage. She also advised that the Sadowski Trust Fund Currently has funding; however, that may change in November when legislature meets. Mortgage brokers, realtors, and others are encouraged to campaign legislators to not remove the funds from the Sadowski Trust.

Chairman Taylor addressed Tab D - The Local Housing Assistance Plan [LHAP] which was included in the agenda for the committee to begin reviewing for possible changes such as incentive strategies. He suggested that the committee members review this document and the August 19, 2020 meeting will be dedicated to updating the LHAP in order to approve it prior to it going before the Board of County Commissioners for approval before December 31, 2020. Ms. Gilchrist pointed out that changes do not have to be made if the members are satisfied with the text.

Commissioner Taylor advised that the next EHAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 19, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. Ms. Feinberg advised that the meeting most likely will be by Zoom.

There being no further business, the Essential Housing Advisory Committee meeting adjourned at 4:51 p.m.