

ESSENTIAL HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
March 17, 2021, 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 17th day of March 2021 at 4:00 p.m. at the Commission Chambers, James S. Page Governmental Complex, Yulee, Florida. Present were committee members Chairman Thomas Ford, Greg Matovina (arrived at 4:13 p.m.), Jenna Emmons, Betsie Huben, Carlene McDuffie, Mary Pitcher, and Taylor Riffey. Absent were Lisa Rozier, Suzanne Willis, and Mark Durham, representing the School Board. Representing the Planning Department were Holly Coyle, Assistant Planning Director, and Abby Weiss, Planner 1. Also present were Carol Gilchrist, SHIP Coordinator, and, Heather Nazworth, Recording Secretary.

Chairman Ford called the meeting to order at 4:09 p.m.

It was moved by Ms. Huben, seconded by Ms. Pitcher, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the February 17, 2021 meeting as presented.

Ms. Momi Malspeis representing Congressman John Rutherford's office came forward to discuss the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) annual update to local areas. She explained that HUD can provide a virtual presentation and have a variety of subjects to speak on. Ms. Pitcher inquired whether there are grants available through HUD for affordable housing. Ms. Malspeis stated that she is unsure of the availability. HUD would conduct a review for Nassau County needs. Ms. Malspeis informed the committee that if there are any concerns or subjects they would like to discuss to contact her. Ms. Pitcher requested that HUD provide a list of available housing in Nassau County.

It was moved by Ms. Huben, and seconded by Ms. Pitcher to invite HUD to the April 21, 2021 meeting to provide a presentation of the HUD possibilities in Nassau County. The vote carried unanimously.

Regarding Tab B, Ms. Coyle provided a PowerPoint presentation addressing the Ranking of the Affordable Housing Strategies. She commented that at a previous meeting, the strategies were reviewed. She stated that there needs to be a ranking in order of priority as to the most to least important strategies. She requested there be discussion in order for the committee to provide their rankings at the end of the meeting. The first strategy is Workforce Housing Zoning category. She stated that Nassau County currently does not have a zoning category specifically for workforce/affordable housing. She explained that the pros would be that there is a flexibility without having to go through the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process and the con would be that there might be a lengthy implementation process. Mr. Matovia stated that he ranked this as an "A" priority, because a similar process was completed in St. Johns County. He explained that there is more of a price pressure; this strategy would cost the County nothing. Ms. Coyle stated that since St. Johns County has completed this process, there is a template to use. Ms. Huben stated that the pressure on housing from the pandemic is incredible with prices out of control and no inventory in Nassau County. Mr. Matovia, as the Interim Executive Director of North Florida Builders Association (NEFBA), volunteered the Builders Association to draft an Ordinance or Land Development Code (LDC) amendment.

Next, Ms. Coyle discussed the strategy Flexible Lot Configurations which would allow relief from setbacks or lot sizes that typically require a zoning change. The process is currently allowed through a PUD process; however, it can be burdensome. The con would be that there could be a capability issue in certain areas of the County. Mr. Matovina commented that there would be difficulty getting any builder of any volume to modify their product. He ranked this as a “C” priority due to not being used unless there was affordable land on the island. Ms. Pitcher agreed that it could be used with a tiny home; however, not a priority in other areas of the County. Ms. Huben expressed that the strategy can be done under certain specifics and in the future there will be expansion to other areas of the County. She provided her ranking as being between a “B and C”. Ms. Emmons ranked the strategy higher due to there being no cost associated with the strategy. Ms. Coyle stated that everyone has a ranking sheet to place their score on and staff will collect at the end of the meeting. (Attachment “A”)

Ms. Coyle discussed the Impact Fee Waiver or Deferment strategy. She provided an update on the Mother-in-law waivers that went before the Board of County Commissioners who have directed staff to work with the County Attorney’s Office to draft an Ordinance. She stated that the pro with this strategy is it would create great benefits for anyone doing affordable housing and the con is that the money will have to come from somewhere which would require the Board of County Commissioners to establish a fund for these types of projects although the budgets are tight right now. Mr. Matovina ranked this strategy as an “A”; however, he understands the Board’s budget situation. He suggested reviewing the SHIP funds that are received which may assist with the funding the fees. Ms. Huben suggested considering a HUD contribution to help provide funding. Chairman Ford questioned what is the absorption or how many requests need this waiver. Ms. Coyle responded that there is no income threshold verification now and there is no information available. Ms. Coyle explained that once the Ordinance is passed for Impact Fee waiver for mother-in-law dwellings there will be a way to keep track of the information. The group discussed a payment plan for the fees. Further discussion ensued.

Next, Ms. Coyle discussed the strategy, Inclusionary Zoning. She provided the committee with a memorandum that provides additional information regarding Inclusionary Zoning and also refers to which costs can be offset. The costs that can be offset include the following: construction costs, land costs, parking space costs, soft costs such as impact, approval and permitting fees and other development costs such as landscaping and structural standards. The incentives to pay for the costs were density bonuses, reducing fees, reducing parking construction costs, and allowing lot configurations. She explained that Inclusionary Zoning would require that every project includes some form of affordable housing and that the pro would be to ensure that all development includes a portion of affordability and creates a potential revenue source with the option of a fee-lieu-of creating a program for affordable housing. The con is that Florida is a property rights state and developers would oppose this type of zoning. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Coyle discussed the strategy, Permitting/Development waiver. She stated that unlike Impact Fees these fees do not have to be repaid; however, they provide funding to the County departments with no effects to the Level of Service provided. Mr. Matovina ranked this strategy as a “B” due to the permitting and development costs not being high. Ms. Emmons stated that with some funding sources there is weight placed upon the local government regarding implementation. The waiver of the fees may not be helpful to a large development; however, receiving the waiver shows the local government supporting affordable housing.

Next, Ms. Coyle discussed the strategy of the Re-evaluation of the Density bonus. She advised that the current Comprehensive Plan allows for a density bonus of one (1) market-rate unit for each affordable unit constructed and not to exceed 150 percent of the maximum density permitted

by the underlying Future Land Use Map designation. Ms. Coyle stated that there is also criteria that will have to be met for the affordable housing and currently there is no specific income requirements for affordable housing. She advised that there is no length of time established for a development to provide affordable housing. Mr. Matovina stated that the density bonus should be included in the affordable housing category. Ms. Wiess stated that other areas have the density bonus in other categories. She further explained that the affordable housing zoning category would require a price limit on the house. Further discussion ensued.

Ms. Coyle discussed the strategy of Tiny Home Developments and smaller lot sizes. She explained that the William Burgess Overlay District allows for smaller lot sizes in some of the transect zoning districts and the transects will be replicated in the Timber to Tides Overlay District. She advised that the pro with the strategy that it is available in the two areas. The con is that the strategy encourages development where it may not be appropriate or compatible. Mr. Matovina suggested including reduced parking due to tiny homes not having garages. Further discussion ensued regarding tiny homes.

Ms. Coyle requested that the committee to rank the strategies in order of importance and staff will collect in order to later provide summarized ranking to the committee.

Ms. Emmons inquired regarding the status on the approval of the January minutes. Following discussion, the minutes will be available for approval at the meeting to be held on April 21, 2021.

Chairman Ford noted that the next EHAC meeting is scheduled for April 21, 2021.

There being no further business, the Essential Housing Advisory Committee meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.