

**ESSENTIAL HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**April 21, 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 21st day of April 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, Jenna Emmons, Betsie Huben, Carlene McDuffie, Mary Pitcher, and Taylor Riffey, Lisa Rozier, and Suzanne Willis. Absent was Mark Durham, representing the School Board. Representing the Planning Department was Holly Coyle, Assistant Planning Director. Also present was Carol Gilchrist, SHIP Coordinator; and representing the Clerk's office, Heather Nazworth, Deputy Clerk and Jennifer Marlatt, Recording Secretary.

Chairman Ford called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

It was moved by Ms. Emmons, seconded by Mr. Matovina, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the January 20, 2021 meeting as presented.

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

Dr. Alesia Scott-Ford, Field Office Director, United State Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), provided a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the policies, procedures, and priorities of the HUD Department. There are eight program divisions of HUD: Field and Policy Management, Public Housing for Single and Multi-Families, Community Planning and Development, Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, Office of Counsel, and Office of Housing Counseling. The two main HUD offices in the state of Florida are in Miami and Jacksonville. She introduced the staff that work at the Jacksonville Field Office; their main responsibilities include: supporting secretarial initiatives, collaborating with local governments and partners, providing resources and information about programs and grants, and assisting to reach annual performance goals. There are two distinctive components of HUD programs; giving money to community, and generating money for the community. The primary goals of HUD are to establish economic opportunities for HUD assisted residents, transform assisted housing, reduce the average length of homelessness, and protect families from lead-based paint and other hazards; more specifically, they work to enhance rental assistance, reduce barriers to Affordable Housing, develop Envision Centers, and bolster growth in Opportunity Zones. There is one Opportunity Zone in Nassau County located in Yulee. Dr. Scott-Ford pointed out that there is a very small amount of HUD funds, if any, allocated to Nassau County. She stated that her office would look into opportunities to generate funds in terms of reviewing the population to guarantee state or entitlement funds.

Dr. Scott-Ford explained that the purpose of the Section Three program is to ensure that employment and other economic opportunities generated by the Federal financial assistance for housing and community development programs shall, to the greatest extent feasible, be directed toward low – and very low – income individuals. Section Three and Healthy Homes are the two main programs they are focusing on this year. She highlighted the two grants under the Healthy Homes program; one for Senior Citizens to rehab their homes, and the other for the general population to rehab old housing inventory by promoting the importance of removing health hazards for children and families within the community. Last year, these grants provided \$324 million to families; they are expecting to exceed that amount this year. The main purpose of the

grant program is to maximize the number of children under the age of six protected from lead poisoning. This grant can be used to support, demonstrate, promote, and create safe and healthy environments in housing and infrastructure planning. Any unit of government, local or state, is eligible to apply for this grant.

Following the presentation, discussion ensued with questions regarding funding allocation and the possibility of future assistance. Ms. Huben asked for Dr. Scott-Ford's assistance by pointing out that Secretary Marcia Fudge announced that nearly \$5 billion of American Rescue Plan will go towards Affordable Housing and services for people who are currently homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. After a quick update from the School Board, the homeless child count for Nassau County is around 490 children. Based upon her own research, Ms. Huben discovered that out of the 38 counties scheduled to receive funding from the American Rescue Plan; Nassau county is not included. She also checked with the non-entitlement funds for outside counties and metro areas; Nassau county did not qualify for these funds either. It has been about ten years since Nassau County has implemented an Affordable Housing project, other than Habitat for Humanity. She requested assistance from Dr. Scott-Ford in securing funds to support Habitat for Humanity, include in the SHIP funds, or direct elsewhere in the county.

Dr. Scott-Ford agreed to check with the Community Planning Development Director to figure out why Nassau County is not included in these funds. She asked if Nassau County had an identified homeless organization? Ms. Emmons responded that Nassau County is included under the Changing Homelessness Agency which also covers Duval County. Dr. Scott-Ford suggested scheduling a call with Dawn Gilman, Chief Executive Officer of Changing Homelessness, to discuss funding options available to Nassau County. Ms. McDuffie clarified that from her understanding, Nassau County is expected to receive funding through Micah's Place.

Dr. Scott-Ford emphasized the main challenge communities are faced with is the inability to effectively connect the right individuals and organizations in order to construct and maintain Affordable Housing; "It's about putting the right team together to accomplish these goals." She implied that the Board of County Commissioners are in the perfect position to identify and connect experienced organizations with devoted individuals who are equally committed to achieving the same goal. Ms. Huben explained the difficulties of understanding how to disseminate existing funds in order to establish Affordable Housing or to continue to support homelessness. Ms. McDuffie specified that the base root of the affordable housing problem can be linked to zoning; she explained that Affordable Housing cannot be built in areas where it is not permitted to do so. Dr. Scott-Ford expressed that when a community determines that Affordable Housing is a major priority; they work together to address that as a main priority. She reiterated that Affordable Housing requires time, good partnerships, commitment, and a contributing group effort among all community members to achieve these goals. Dr. Scott-Ford concluded by offering her contact information, and advised the committee to reach out to her with any questions or concerns moving forward.

Ms. Coyle came forward to follow up on the Affordable Housing Strategies Final Rankings that were discussed during the March 17, 2021 meeting. She listed the following rankings in order of priority: (1) Workforce Housing Zoning Category (2) Tiny Home Developments (3) Flexible Lot Configurations and Impact Fee Subsidies (4) Reevaluation of Density Bonuses (5) Inclusionary Zoning and (6) Permitting Fee Waivers. This information will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners for further consideration; she will keep the committee informed of any updates or progress.

Ms. Gilchrist came forward to discuss minor revisions that Florida Housing recommended to the Local Housing Assistance Plan (LHAP). Page six, Tab W, they suggested adding more information about how affordable rental housing is addressed. The main option is to refer individuals to the Nassau County Housing Authority at (904) 261-5051. Ms. McDuffie raised concerns about the phone number listed due to the lack of response when dialing that number. Discussion ensued regarding the best contact number, and the simultaneous issues involved with communication among the Housing Authority and Affordable Housing requests. The committee members discussed the advantages and disadvantages of alternative solutions that could potentially benefit Nassau County's Affordable Housing and homeless population.

The next suggestion was to move the paragraphs on pages seven and eight onto page nine under Additional Information. On page 13, they requested clarification of \$52,497.00 specifying whether it was the total award or per eight units. Ms. Gilchrist stated that she was unclear on this exact number. She decided to add total award, but suggested reconsidering this amount for future discussion. Mr. Matovina raised concern that the total award number implies \$6500.00 per unit for eight units which he stated was not realistic; he advised reconsidering this number. Ms. Gilchrist agreed, but proposed submitting the recommended LHAP changes, and addressing the actual dollar amount later. She emphasized that if the LHAP is not submitted then the funds will remain in limbo; Mr. Matovina agreed. The final revision on page 14, recommended adding more descriptive verbiage under Tab E, Emergency Repairs. Ms. Gilchrist added the words in red which included: but not limited to, dangerous flooring, roof repair, water leaks, and electrical repairs. She concluded by saying that these changes are on the next agenda for the Board of County Commissioners to review.

It was moved by Ms. McDuffie, seconded by Ms. Pitcher, and unanimously carried to accept these LHAP changes to be presented to the Board of County Commissioners.

Ms. Coyle came forward with a request to consider an alternative meeting schedule. She proposed changing to a bi-monthly or quarterly schedule until the end of the year, or until the Planning Department is fully staffed.

It was moved by Mr. Matovina, seconded by Ms. McDuffie, and unanimously carried to move to a bi-monthly schedule.

Chairman Ford reviewed the procedures for attending the meeting in-person and remotely.

Chairman Ford stated that the next EHAC meeting is scheduled for June 16, 2021.

Mr. Matovina brought up the discussion of Peppertree Village, and the expiring subsidies in 2025. The committee agreed to reach out to owners every year as a reminder of expiration dates, and to raise awareness of the potential funding available to them.

Chairman Ford addressed designating a Vice Chair or alternate in the circumstance that the Chairman is absent.

It was moved by Ms. Huben, seconded by Ms. McDuffie, and unanimously carried to appoint Jenna Emmons as the Vice Chair of the Essential Housing Advisory Committee.

There being no further business, the Essential Housing Advisory Committee meeting adjourned at 5:07 p.m.