

**Affordable Housing Advisory Committee  
Meeting Summary**

**March 27, 2009**

Co-Chair Conrad Egan called the meeting to order at 9:10 am. The Advisory members present at the meeting were as follows:

Advisory Members in attendance

Co-Chair Conrad Egan  
Co-Chair Jim Scott  
Pamela Barrett  
Marlene Blum  
Michael Bodaken  
Herb Cooper-Levy  
William Hanks  
Gerald Hopkins  
Michelle Krocker  
Preston Lee  
Shelley Murphy  
John Niemiec  
Michael Scheurer  
Patricia Szego

FCRHA Commissioners in attendance

Elisabeth Lardner

**State of the Housing Economy in Fairfax County**

Professor John McClain, Deputy Director of the Center for Regional Analysis, George Mason University, made a presentation on the state of the housing economy in the region and in Fairfax County specifically. After his presentation, a discussion ensued and Mr. McClain responded to questions from the Committee.

- Co-Chair Conrad Egan noted the homeownership affordability index included in the presentation and suggested that Professor McClain add a rental affordability index. Conrad Egan also noted that there is a need to continue educating the public and decision-makers on the issue of workforce housing.
- Jerry Hopkins commented that Fairfax County does not have enough workforce housing.
- Herb Cooper-Levy feels that the foreclosure crisis is placing increasing pressure on the rental market.
- Michael Scheurer indicated that rental properties in Northern Virginia are not always a good match for foreclosed families because of the credit requirements.
- Both Conrad Egan and Preston Lee noted that credit has tightened, further complicating the housing situation.
- Professor McClain reported that the issue of credit is a very significant challenge. He also stated that, from a social service perspective, many more families need assistance. He related that Mary Agee, Executive Director of Northern Virginia Family Service, reported that 35% of their current clients had never been in the human services system before.

- John Niemiec stated that the “last hired-first fired” nature of the county’s Reduction in Force (RIF) procedures could leave many entry-level workers without jobs and in need of housing assistance.
- Co-Chair Jim Scott, commenting on the relationship between housing and transportation, noted that Fairfax County really has a housing affordability problem not a transportation problem.
- Co-Chair Conrad Egan noted that the recently developed Center for Housing Policy report “*Beltway Burden*” is available and speaks to these issues.

### **Budget Update**

Paula Sampson, Director, Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), reported that consideration of the budget by the Board of Supervisors is ongoing and that there is discussion of whether the Penny for Affordable Housing Fund should be fully funded.

Ms. Sampson also noted that at the last meeting of the Board’s Budget Committee, Kevin Bell, Human Services Council, made a presentation on behalf of the Human Services Council which included full support of the Penny Fund.

- Marlene Blum reported that advocates have met with nearly every Board member. She commented that some Board members have misconceptions about the Penny Fund, such as: Board members did not know that it could be used for new construction. Ms. Blum noted that the Board can change the emphasis and rules for the Penny Fund, but that they didn’t understand that it could be used for housing purposes other than preservation.
- Ms. Blum commented that she might feel “more comfortable” with only half funding of the Penny Fund if the other half went to restore human services cuts. Ms. Blum also noted that she does believe the Board will restore the vehicle fee and that public safety will be restored first.
- Michael Bodaken said that the Penny Fund is a national model and was very positive about how Fairfax County has used and leveraged the fund. He also congratulated the county on how it reports on the progress of the fund, noting that transparency in the use of such a resource is critical. Mr. Bodaken commented that there is a strong link between foreclosures and homelessness and a very strong link between housing construction, rehabilitation and job creation. Mr. Bodaken noted research by the homebuilders industry which showed that for every 100 homes built or rehabilitated, approximately 130 jobs are created.
- Co-Chair Scott noted that the Council of Governments (COG) had a discussion about stimulus funds as they relate to homelessness and a regional preservation initiative.
- Marlene Blum suggested that some of the Board members simply do not support affordable housing. She also noted that Chairman Bulova commented how the county invests a lot of money in affordable housing by means other than the Penny Fund. Additionally, Ms. Blum indicated the argument that the Penny Fund makes Fairfax County more competitive for federal stimulus money is a powerful one.
- John Niemiec noted that circumstances have changed and indicated he would testify in favor of restoring the public safety cuts.
- Michelle Krockner commented that the Board sees a lot of funding for housing in the Stimulus legislation but is not aware of the funds specific purposes and flexibility.

- FCRHA Commissioner Elisabeth Lardner noted that the brochures recently prepared by the staff on Fairfax County's affordable housing programs are very helpful in setting for the facts.
- Shelley Murphy commented that the Board needs to be reminded that, without housing, other services don't matter.
- Patricia Szego noted that the foreclosure crisis is not nearly over with many more to come.

### **Overview of the Office to End Homelessness**

Dean Klein, Director of the Office to End Homelessness, provided an overview of the county's new Office to Prevent and End Homelessness. Mr. Klein noted his key objective is to set a sense of urgency to end homelessness in the nine years left. Mr. Klein also briefed us on the division's structural plan which will include all areas of the community.

### **Update on Fairfax County's Response to the Foreclosure Crisis**

John Payne, Deputy Director for Real Estate, HCD, provided a presentation on the status of the county's response to the foreclosure crisis.

### **Federal Stimulus Funding Relating to Housing**

Paula Sampson made a presentation on the additional funding available to the county through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

- Michael Scheurer noted that the VHDA Board is meeting soon to consider the use of ARRA tax credit funds.
- Michael Bodaken noted that the weatherization funding under ARRA is going to the State of Virginia, and Fairfax County needs to work with the state to help get these funds spent.
- Herb Cooper-Levy noted that the expansion of the income limit to 200% of the poverty level for the Weatherization Assistance Program funds (WAP) would make more households eligible in Fairfax County.
- Commissioner Elisabeth Lardner, FCRHA, noted that the perception of a large amount of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds coming to the county could make it harder politically to justify the continuation of the Penny Fund.
- Co-Chair Egan asked that the full presentation, the copies of which were missing pages, be e-mailed to the Advisory Committee.

### **At-Risk Housing Report**

Rex Peters, Associate Director for Real Estate and Acquisition, HCD, made a presentation on the at-risk subsidized rental housing in Fairfax County. Co-Chair Egan asked that vacancy and rental rate information be included in the statement to the Board of Supervisors. Co-Chair Scott thanked staff for the information.

### **Update on Follow-Up List**

Tom Fleetwood, Strategic Planner, HCD, provided highlights of the outstanding and ongoing issues being tracked by staff on the Advisory Committee Follow-Up List. Donna Pesto, Special Assistant to the Zoning Administrator, Department of Planning and Zoning, provided an update on land use related issues.

### **Other Business**

- **Task Assignment:** Jim Scott asked that the next Advisory Committee meeting have a presentation on the re-planning of Tyson's Corner by the Tyson's Task Force.
- Michael Scheurer recognized the new Executive Director of AHOME, Ms. Sharon White.
- **Task Assignment:** Conrad Egan noted that the Center for Housing Policy publication, "*Don't Put it Here*", was included in the Advisory Committee package.  
*Assignment:* Staff is directed to put a link to the new portal on housingpolicy.org on the next e-ffordable release.
- *Leveraging:* Pam Barrett said it would be helpful to have a list of the ways the Penny Fund could be leveraged. Marlene Blum asked that a list of ARRA funds where the Penny Fund "may" be leveraged would be helpful for the testimony.

### **Next Meeting**

May 29, 2009 -- 9:00-12:00 am  
Government Center-Room 232

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:00 pm