

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Housing Opportunity Fund Advisory Board of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, City of Pittsburgh YouTube channel. September 3, 2020.

Members present: Lena Andrews, Oliver Beasley, Joanna Deming, Knowledge Build-Hudson, Mark Masterson, James Myers Jr., Paul David Spradley, Derrick Tillman, Diamonte Walker, Adrienne Walnoha, Kellie Ware-Seabron, Megan Winters

Staff members present: Breanna Benjamin, Jeremy Carter, Vethina Hage, Doren Hilmer, Victoria Jackson, Shaina Madden, Evan Miller, Brett Morgan, Jessica Smith Perry, Gloria Taylor

General present: Alexander Fisher, David Finer, William Lamar

#### **A. Public Comment**

Jessica Smith Perry stated there were no registered public commenters.

#### **B. Roll Call**

J. Smith Perry called the meeting to order. A quorum was present.

#### **C. Review and Acceptance of Minutes from the August 6, 2020 Minutes**

Kellie Ware-Seabron stated that she arrived during the presentation from Fair Housing Partnership.

Mark Masterson moved to approve the meeting minutes from August 6, 2020 with section C modified to reflect that Kellie Ware-Seabron joined the meeting during the fair housing presentation. Derrick Tillman seconded the motion. The motion carried.

J. Smith Perry welcomes Dr. Paul David Spradley, Oliver Beasley, and James Myers Jr. to the Advisory Board. They fill the seats for Lending Institution, Mayor's Office, and Central Neighborhood, respectively. Diamonte Walker, who held the seat for the Central Neighborhood, now holds the seat for the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

#### **D. Fair Housing Follow-Up Discussion by HOF Advisory Board Members**

Adrienne Walnoha facilitated a discussion to recap the presentation from the Fair Housing Partnership during the August meeting. She began by asking for members' reactions to the presentation.

Derrick Tillman stated that the presentation was powerful and would be beneficial for the new members. Also referred to the suggestion from the previous meeting to have ongoing engagement with The Fair Housing Partnership to ensure fair housing-thinking will be implemented in the HOF policies moving forward.

A. Walnoha asked the board what data it would need to help with decision making moving forward.

J. Smith Perry summarized the presentations from the CMU CREATE Lab and the Fair Housing Partnership for the new members. The CREATE Lab produced data on racial divisions on homeownership rates and disparities in mortgage applications in the City of Pittsburgh. The Fair Housing Partnership also shared data on homeowners and renters in the City. J. Smith Perry noted that the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) also has market-related and policy-linked data available to share with the board.

Paul David Spradley asked if these presentations would be available for the new members.

J. Smith Perry responded that the presentations were recorded and available on the city's YouTube page, but noted that the PowerPoint can also be sent to the new members.

Mark Masterson suggested sending the link to the presentation and copies of the PowerPoint to all members.

A. Walnoha asked board members if they felt they have a deep and rich sense of what the City of Pittsburgh looks like demographically from an income perspective, race perspective, and percentage of homeowner versus renter's perspective.

K. Ware-Seabron stated that she does not.

Oliver Beasley stated that this is information the board should have, especially regarding the homeowners versus renter's data.

D. Tillman stated a need for the data on racial demographics, particularly as it pertains to the impact on African American communities.

M. Masterson stated the need for understanding of neighborhoods in terms of vacant properties. He noted there may be different data markers to observe what change is happening over time. He referred to the housing affordability study from the Reinvestment Fund which showed rent year-over-year from 2000 to 2015 as a factor of housing affordability. This marker gave a good indication of location specific data.

Lena Andrews agreed with M. Masterson and referred to conversations at ACTION-Housing about the usefulness of data as an early-warning system for market change given that market changes create difficulty in implementing affordable housing projects. She proposed the question of how to track market data in real time to identify where people are at risk of displacement.

Knowledge Build-Hudson stated the need for more data as it pertains to the integration of neighborhoods. He referred to mobility studies and work on this topic from the Housing Authority and DHS.

K. Ware-Seabron stated interest in data regarding resource availability and deprivation in neighborhoods.

D. Tillman added that in addition to data on resources, data on access to jobs and business opportunities within communities as well as commuter-heavy neighborhoods would be good to have.

A. Walnoha stated that the board faces the issue of identifying who holds that information sought by the board and how to create a connection with that entity to share that data. She asked the board to brainstorm where those sources of information may exist.

Joanna Deming asked if UrbanKind had this type of data.

D. Tillman reiterated that the organizations that had previously presented to the board had data rich presentations. He suggested starting with those organizations and reaching out to the University of Pittsburgh, who have published various studies over the years.

K. Ware-Seabron suggested the Center for Race and Social Problems at the University of Pittsburgh and the Housing Authority.

K. Build-Hudson affirmed that the Housing Authority has data pertaining to Section 8. He suggested the Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center as another resource for data.

M. Masterson stated that the Reinvestment Fund uses a tool called Policy Map that has an extraordinary amount of data. He volunteered to speak with Amanda High to receive data lists.

Evan Miller noted that the URA uses Policy Map as well. He noted that Neighborhood Allies also uses a tool called mySidewalk. The URA may partner with Neighborhood Allies to move forward with the data from mySidewalk to create neighborhood level snapshots.

J. Deming stated that the URA also has internal data on URA programs that could be broken down into more detail. She also suggested the creation of a long-term report loop for organizations receiving funds.

A. Walnoha agreed that project level data can be used to make decisions. She asked the board how it would want to receive this information.

K. Ware-Seabron suggested combination of receiving the information prior to board meetings and continuing with presentations.

J. Deming suggested adding data the board wanted to collect as criteria for projects so the board would have a discussion framework to make decisions.

D. Tillman suggested conducting working meetings with relevant organizations. He agreed with the continuation of presentations as well as in the inclusion of testimonials of people in need.

L. Andrews asked if the board would want specific data indicators during a project presentation. She noted that the URA provides a lot of information about the project but suggested the board may want information about the area to understand where specific investments are going.

Diamonte Walker recommended the board begin looking at the social determinants of health and how the work of the HOF might be impacted by those factors.

A. Walnoha asked the board if they desire to see the Fair Housing Partnership included in more of the board's dialog, and if fair housing should be a layer of the board's decision making.

K. Ware-Seabron stated that fair housing should be included as a foundational layer of the board's work. She recommended the inclusion of Fair Housing Partnership on committees as appropriate.

D. Walker agreed with K. Ware-Seabron. She stated that fair housing is very important to include in planning for 2021.

#### **E. Discussion of HOF 2021 Allocation Plan Community Outreach Process**

Vethina Hage stated that the Community Outreach and Engagement RFP closed on Monday, August 31<sup>st</sup> and the URA did not receive any responses; however, the URA is drafting the survey and will circulate it.

K. Ware-Seabron summarized the 2021 Allocation Plan meeting. The goal of the meeting was to build out the survey and discuss the timeline for creating the allocation plan. She detailed highlights in the creation of the survey, including: a discussion on how survey applicants may define community; the criteria of the RFP as it pertains to accessibility; ideal sample size for the survey; understanding from the community if HOF is providing the most relevant and significant programs; and feedback on HOF response to COVID-19. It was also decided that there will be a separate meeting in October in order to allow time to receive community feedback and input for the allocation plan.

J. Smith Perry described the timeline for the 2021 Annual Allocation Plan. During October, the advisory board will have a meeting to review the survey data and decide how to draft the allocation plan. There will need to be a special Advisory Board meeting to approve a preliminary plan that will be made available on the website for public feedback, and a final plan to be approved by the board at the beginning of November. Following Advisory Board approval, the URA Advisory Board will need to approve the plan so that it can be introduced to City Council at the end of November.

K. Ware-Seabron asked what the plan will be to distribute the survey given that there were no responses to the RFP.

J. Smith Perry responded that V. Hage met with the city to discuss utilizing its capacity to host a larger Zoom meeting. Additionally, there may be a discussion with the non-profit firms to understand why they did not respond to the RFP.

D. Tillman asked if the public meetings are an opportunity for dialog with the community.

J. Smith Perry responded that the public meetings will be like the public meetings held in the past but via Zoom. The RFP was envisioned as a way for the consultants to conduct the meeting for the Advisory Board by utilizing their distribution lists.

J. Deming agreed with reaching out to community organizations to see if there are ways to partner. She emphasized that the survey responses must be representative as well as statistically significant.

J. Smith Perry agreed and noted that was the goal behind the RFP for the surveys.

V. Hage also agreed and noted that the survey will have demographic questions to ensure diverse geographic reach.

#### **F. Chair / By-Laws / Committee Update/Discussion**

J. Smith Perry provided an update on the contract with HR & A Advisors. HR & A is drafting a survey to ask the board about their thoughts on the bylaws and role of the board as well as interview a subset of the board.

#### **G. Programmatic Discussion**

J. Smith Perry presented a map of commitments and closings to date of consumer programs and development programs.

M. Masterson observed that the development programs are concentrated above the Monongahela and Ohio Rivers, but there are no projects on the southside. He asked if there were projects in the works in that area.

J. Smith Perry responded that the Pittsburgh Housing Development Corporation (PHDC) has projects in the areas of Sheraden, South Hills, Carrick, and Beltzhoover.

J. Smith Perry presented tables detailing the expenditures of the HOF programs.

D. Walker requested that future presentations of these tables forgo acronyms in service to the general understanding of those who may be unfamiliar with the programs.

#### **Rental Gap Program**

J. Smith Perry reported that the line items for the 2018 and 2019 Rental Gap Program funds have been committed and are in the process of being expended. In 2020, the board approved a line item of \$4,500,000. At that time, the board discussed implementation of an RFP process to allocate funds to projects. The Housing Opportunity Fund and the Housing Department merged into the Housing Lending Department, which allocates HOF, CDBG, HOME, and city funding. Prior to this merger, the Housing Department issued preliminary commitment letters for developers seeking Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency awarded LIHTC to six projects which require URA funding in the total amount of \$6,741,000. The URA's total 2020 sources of funding is \$7,192,080. Given this, the recommendation to the board is to not issue RFPs for 2020 and use those funds to close the LIHTC projects.

L. Andrews asked if there are extra CDBG funds through the CARES Act available to go into these deals.

J. Smith Perry responded that the city received \$8,000,00 in CDBG funds through the CARES Act, of which \$5,000,000 will provide business and commercial support; \$2,000,000 will provide rental and

mortgage assistance; and \$1,000,000 will go to other agencies. She noted other potential upcoming sources of funds, including:

- the HEROES Act or other federal legislation, which may include an increase in HOME dollars;
- the city's capital budgeting process for 2021 funding;
- the 2021 HOF Allocation Plan;
- the East Liberty Transit Revitalization Investment District Revitalization Authority (ELTRIDRA) which may make funding available dependent on the geography of the LIHTC projects.

L. Andrews asked if the board can be made aware of opportunities to advocate for federal funding sources that may be coming up.

J. Smith Perry agreed.

D. Tillman asked if the recommendation applied to 2020 Rental Gap Program funds and not 2021.

J. Smith Perry affirmed.

D. Tillman noted that the state Senate passed the housing tax credit bill S.B. 30 that is still in need of state House approval. He suggested this may be an opportunity for board members to advocate.

K. Ware-Seabron asked when 2021 funds will be disbursed.

J. Smith Perry responded that if the allocation plan is approved by the City Council in December then the funds could be disbursed as early as April or May

D. Walker asked if this could be impacted by any real estate tax transfer revenue decreases experienced in 2020 due to COVID-19.

J. Smith Perry responded that the legislation legislated \$10 million per year for 12 years, and it is not tied dollar-to-dollar to the transfer tax. It would take city council authorization to change the amount.

M. Masterson noted that city council added a half a percent increase in transfer tax three years after the enactment of legislation.

D. Tillman asked if the \$10 million in revenue from transfer tax has ever been less than \$10 million.

M. Masterson confirmed it has always been over \$10 million.

D. Tillman suggested that this may be an opportunity to advocate for an increase.

K. Ware-Seabron stated that asking for an increase may be easier once there is no longer a COVID deficit.

J. Deming stated that this time highlights the importance of affordable housing.

D. Walker stated that affordable housing is a priority, but it is necessary to be sober about the realities being faced by the entire system and to have as much impact as possible with whatever resources already at hand.

J. Smith Perry stated the URA will move forward with the recommendation. The URA will work with the tax credit developers and instruct them to apply to HOF for the amount in the preliminary commitment letter. Within the few months, the applications will be presented to the Advisory Board for review.

L. Andrews expressed gratitude for the Housing Opportunity Fund and funds permanently in place to be allocated to support Pittsburgh residents in this time of crisis.

D. Walker agreed and thanked those who advocated for a fund focused on affordable housing.

### **Homeownership Program**

Breanna Benjamin presented on the Homeownership Roadshow. The goal of the roadshow will be to help as many Pittsburgh residents as possible understand the benefits and affordability of homeownership with homeownership programs. The presentation will be developed in conjunction with the Financial Empowerment Center.

Jeremy Carter provided an update on the Down Payment and Closing Cost Assistance Program. Approximately 10 loans are processed and approved per month. To date, the HOF Down Payment Program has provided 131 loans. In terms of demographics: over 70% of applicants are 80% AMI and below; homeowners are in eight of the nine council districts; and borrowers are 48% Black, 40% white, and 4% Asian.

J. Carter provided an update on the Homeowner Assistance Program (HAP). There are 90 projects currently in construction and Roof-a-Thon is nearing completion. He noted that as of August 28<sup>th</sup>, HAP is temporarily not accepting applications to service a waitlist of approximately 150 homeowners. In the interim, the URA will recommend other resources to interested applicants and try to procure additional qualified applicants.

J. Carter provided an update on rental and mortgage assistance through the Housing Stabilization Program (HSP). Since mid-March, 830 households have been processed and paid while ten households are currently on the waitlist. As of this meeting, approximately half of the program's funding has been used. Rental assistance is the most in-demand need, and 74% of the need has been COVID-related.

J. Deming asked about the number of home repairs.

J. Carter responded that 50 projects are completed and 90 are in progress.

J. Smith Perry noted that HAP is a very time intensive program. The program has six non-profit program administrators and four for-profit contractors. Based on the available resources given the process length and the increase in volume of applications, it is necessary to temporarily close the application.

## **H. Announcement**

D. Walker welcomed the new advisory board members.

J. Smith Perry thanked Adrienne Walnoha and Kellie Ware-Seabron for leading discussions during the meeting.

The next HOF Advisory Board meeting will be held via Zoom on October 1, 2020 at 9:00 am.

## **I. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.