

ALEXANDRIA HOUSING AFFORDABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE DRAFT MINUTES

In-Person | October 7, 2024

	Members Present	Members Absent	Staff
1		Aschalew Asabie	Eric Keeler, Housing Deputy Director
2		Yeshewase Ayele	Tamara Jovovic, Housing Program Manager
3	Felicia Brewster		Kenneth Turscak, Housing Analyst
4	Annette Bridges (Zoom)		Christopher Do, Housing Analyst
5	Michael Butler		Jared Alves, Planning and Zoning
6		Michael Doyle	Natalie Talis, Department of Health
7	Betsy Faga		
8	Jon Frederick		
9	Michelle Krocker		
10		Coss Lumbé	
11	Jan Macidull		
12	Shelley McCabe		
13	Melissa Sathe		
14	Peter Sutherland		
15	Sean Zielenbach		
	Helen McIlvaine*, Housing		
	Alison Coleman*, DCHS		
	Guests	Affiliation	
1	Mary Catherine Gibbs	Wire Gill, LLP	
2	Cathy Puskar	Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley & Walsh	
3	Micheline Castan-Smith	Paradigm	

*non-voting

1. Introduction and Chair Remarks (Chairs)

Co-Chair Sean Zielenbach called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Co-Chair Zielenbach asked if there were any corrections or comments on the September 11, 2024 Minutes. The Committee voted to unanimously pass the September 11, 2024 minutes, with Shelley McCabe and Melissa Sathe abstaining.

2. Consideration of an Affordable Housing Plan for 5216 Seminary Road (Kenny Turscak/Cathy Puskar)

Cathy Puskar presented the Affordable Housing Plan for 5216 Seminary Road. The project is anticipated to construct seven townhomes on the site of an existing single-family home. The project will offer one committed affordable unit in exchange for Section 7-700 bonus density.

One Committee member asked if there were any parking requirements. Ms. Puskar responded that parking was not required due to the project's location in an enhanced transit corridor, but each unit has a two-car garage. Another member asked if the affordable rental unit would be converted into an affordable homeownership unit in the event the project converts to for-sale units. Ms. Puskar confirmed that it would. One Committee member expressed their appreciation for the provision of an affordable unit in a seven-unit project.

Michelle Krocker motioned to recommend approval of the Affordable Housing Plan; Mike Butler seconded the motion. The Committee voted to unanimously approve the Affordable Housing Plan.

Ms. Puskar presented an update on the Silverado memory care project. The project will increase the number of beds from 66 to 90. Each bed includes a bathroom, but no kitchen. Silverado will introduce a companion room model for some beds, which has been shown to improve outcomes and reduce costs. Existing residents will not be moved into a companion room unless they elect to do so.

Renovation of the garden and rear of the building will increase open space for the building. At completion, the project will provide a total of three beds at a 40% discount on room/board, services, and fees, including the existing two beds which are being provided under the original development approvals. Ms. Puskar explained that they are looking to tie affordability to the individual as residents often move between rooms as they progress in care. The project already has an existing waitlist. At the request of AHAAC, Ms. Puskar spoke to the Commission on Aging. Ms. Puskar has also met with the Taylor Run Residents Association.

One member asked if there was increasing demand for memory care units. Ms. Puskar replied that the waitlist is an indication of unmet demand, but that does not necessarily mean demand is increasing. Currently, individuals who are interested in the property contact Silverado and then the residents are directed to the Office of Housing.

3. Overview of Community Health Improvement Plan 2025 (Natalie Talis)

Natalie Talis, the Population Health Manager of the Alexandria Department of Health, presented information to the Committee about the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The plan is currently working on the Community Health Assessment (CHA), which assesses how healthy Alexandria is based on socioeconomic factors, the physical environment, health behaviors, and health care. The physical environment includes housing. The CHA's quantitative and qualitative analysis of community health will inform

the CHIP process. The process includes a community survey, community walk and talks, data analysis, and community conversations.

The CHIP recognized housing as one of the three key factors to health. The Healthy Homes initiative was based on significant community engagement and identified pests, mold, smoke, repairs, and clutter/hoarding as major challenges to healthy homes. The CHIP aligns with other local assessments, including the Housing Master Plan, and the Department of Health is coordinating community engagement with other departments. Partners, Boards and Commissions, and other organizations are key to implementing the CHIP.

One member commented that the planning process is comprehensive and thoughtful. Another member asked if the Department of Health is coordinating with the Age-Friendly Plan. Ms. Talis noted that they are. Another member asked if the equity tool is being used in the CHA. Ms. Talis responded that the Department of Health is using the same source of data as the Equity Tool for its indicators. One member asked if the CHA is showing impacts from COVID-19. Ms. Talis noted that they will be analyzing that data.

4. Development Preview: Eisenhower East Block 20 (Kenny Turscak)

Kenny Turscak presented a development preview of Eisenhower East Block 20. The project proposes constructing 110 condominium units in Eisenhower East. The project will offer two committed affordable homeownership units. The project is building within the allowable density and is not seeking any bonus density.

Helen McIlvaine asked what interest the market is showing in condos. Mary Catherine Gibbs, representing the Applicant, noted that they do not have presales yet, but they are receiving a lot of interest in the condominium units.

5. FY2025 Legislative Proposals (Helen McIlvaine/Chris Do)

Chris Do explained the FY2025 Legislative Proposal process and the letter drafted by the Co-Chairs that the Committee will vote on. One member requested that the letter be edited to be more specific in terms of what the Committee was asking for, including a \$75 million funding amount for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund and naming specific project costs and funding needs in Alexandria.

One member asked what the difference was in the inclusionary zoning proposal from the existing Virginia State Code. Helen McIlvaine explained that the current code only allows the City to require affordable housing in exchange for additional density or height.

The Committee discussed the right of first refusal proposal, which addresses committed affordable units that are nearing expiration and was proposed by Delegate Parker last year before ultimately being vetoed. Helen McIlvaine commented that the importance of affordable housing preservation was being discussed at the state level and suggested identifying properties that are vital for preservation in the City. One member noted that Virginia Housing opposed the right of first refusal legislation last year but

some of that could be attributed to pressure to weigh in on the topic on short notice and self-interest in keeping the ability to offload properties quickly. Another member noted that Arlington and Alexandria have implemented a right of first refusal when local funds are used in projects.

One member asked what the current funding sources are for permanent supportive housing and rental assistance and how much is being provided by each source. Another member noted that the current source is Community Development Block Grants (from HUD).

One member brought up inclusionary zoning and what was being proposed specifically. Another member noted that it would be enabling legislation to allow jurisdictions to require a percentage of affordable housing in new projects. Ms. McCabe noted that including inclusionary zoning has the benefit of keeping the idea on everyone's radar. Ms. McIlvaine noted that inclusionary zoning is on the list of topics for the Housing 2040 Master Plan to explore. One member explained that the increasing cost of units means monetary contributions may not provide the same unit return. Another member noted that Virginia Housing presented data on housing vouchers and showed that the cost of housing is rising. Another member remarked that developers used to ask for \$40,000 to \$50,000 per unit in funding for affordable housing, but that number is closer to \$120,000 per unit now.

Another member commented that the value of providing a unit stays the same over time. Ms. McIlvaine noted that in 2019, the Office of Housing conducted a study comparing the value of providing a unit versus what the City was able to leverage with monetary contributions. One member raised the point that inclusionary zoning can cut down on negotiations, particularly for affordability levels where 60% and 80% AMI are standard. Inclusionary zoning may also mean the City will need to provide its own funding for nonprofit projects without monetary contributions from development.

One member spoke out against rent control legislation, which can cause markets to act differently from how they need to act in market-rate projects but agreed that rent restrictions on publicly subsidized projects make more sense. One member commented that in exchange for maintaining rents in a certain range, the property could qualify for tax abatement.

One member commented that the Committee is targeting a large array of legislation and could focus on specific proposals. Chris Do noted that staff will take the letter and ensure that six proposals are submitted online to the City Manager.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the letter for submission.

6. Housing 2040 Master Plan Update (Tamara Jovovic)

Tamara Jovovic provided an update on the Housing 2040 Master Plan process. Ms. Jovovic summarized the kickoff meetings and October Education Month activities, including panels on affordable housing, homeownership, and evictions. The Office of Housing will also host open houses in affordable housing projects throughout the City at the end of October.

Ms. Jovovic noted that the November AHAAC meeting, which is being rescheduled to November 6, is intended to be a joint Landlord-Tenant Relations Board and AHAAC meeting. The meeting will discuss the local rental subsidy study, Housing 2040 Goals and Principles, and Housing 2040 topics of interest to both committees.

7. Consideration of September 11, 2024 Minutes

The Committee approved these minutes earlier in the meeting.

8. ARHA Updates (Michelle Krockner)

Michelle Krockner provided an update on ARHA. The new CEO, Eric Johnson, has started and would like to attend an AHAAC meeting in the future. The agency should be moving out of trouble status.

9. Housing Alexandria Updates (Jon Frederick)

Jon Frederick provided an update on Housing Alexandria's projects. Construction is underway at both Sansé and Seminary Road. Sansé is due to begin vertical construction and close with its funders. Seminary Road construction is going well and recently hosted Hudson Housing and Fannie Mae for site visits.

10. Information Items (Eric Keeler/Staff)

Eric Keeler shared the updated financial report.

Kenny Turscak noted the four vacancies on the Committee: the person appointed by the Commission on Persons with Disabilities, the licensed and practicing attorney slot, the slot for Landlord in the City, and the representative of an affordable housing developer. Staff noted that someone has been appointed to the attorney position and someone from the Chamber of Commerce might be interested in the landlord position.

Sean Zielenbach explained that each Committee is also being asked to provide budget recommendations to the City Manager's Office. The process is for the City Manager and will be used to provide budget guidance. One member noted that during the last budget process, an additional \$3 million out of \$10 million was allocated in the budget and was used to fund CLI's Elbert Avenue project. Another member expressed the need to focus on the affordable housing pipeline so that projects with zoning approvals can receive the funding to start the construction process. Another member agreed that more affordable housing funding is the budget priority.

Another member commented that community foundations, the Chamber of Commerce, and other groups are planning a summit on affordable housing. Ms. McCabe noted that the Committee can stress that affordable housing targets set by City Council will not be met without meeting these funding needs. One member asked for clarification on DSUP expirations. Staff explained that projects typically have three years to begin substantial construction. Mr. Zielenbach asked if any projects had

expiring tax credits, and Ms. McCabe explained that soft money is lined up before applying for tax credits.

Mr. Zielenbach asked to outline which projects need to be funded and when their zoning approvals expire. One member highlighted that the City approved these projects and needs to support them.

Betsy Faga motioned to give the Co-Chairs the authority to respond to the City Manager's Budget priorities request; Mike Butler seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to allow the Co-Chairs to draft a letter to the City Manager.

11. Staff Updates (Staff)

Staff provided updates on the November meeting date and Committee vacancies during previous meeting items.

12. Announcements and Upcoming Meetings

[Common Interest Communities Training Series](#)

October 5: 9:30-11:30 a.m.

[Virtual \(register online\)](#)

Housing 2040 [Lunch & Learn Panel: Alexandria's Affordable Housing Development](#)

October 8

Virtual

Housing 2040 [Panel: City Homeownership Assistance](#)

October 16

Virtual

[ARHA Redevelopment Work Group Meeting](#)

October 17: 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Council Work Room, City Hall, 301 King St.

Housing 2040 [Panel: Alexandria's Eviction Landscape](#)

October 24

Virtual

Housing 2040 [Affordable Housing Site Visits](#)

October 28-31

The Nexus (October 28), Southern Towers (October 29), The Waypoint at Fairlington (October 30), and the Spire (October 31)

13. Adjournment (Chair)

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:57 pm.