Affordable Housing Committee
January 7, 2020, 1:00-2:30 pm
30 Valley Street

DRAFT MINUTES

Committee Members Present
Joe Belcher, Amanda Edwards, Brownie Newman

County Staff Present
Matthew Cable, Donna Cottrell, Phillip Hardin, Sybil Tate, Michael Frue, Christina McEntee, Amanda Stratton, Heather Parkinson, Cataldo Peronne

Discussion

- Commissioner Newman called the meeting to order.
- Commissioner Belcher motioned to approve the minutes from the December 3, 2019 meeting and Commissioner Newman seconded the motion. The motion was approved.
- Matt Cable briefly overviewed the New Business items under consideration and recognized Donna Cottrell.
- Donna Cottrell reviewed the existing tenant-based rental assistance program and its criteria and historical funding. She explained which households were benefiting from the existing program and outlined options for the program going forward. The options included: continuing the program with no changes, transferring the program and associated funding to Health and Human Services (HHS) as a supplement to its existing tenant-based rental assistance programs, or ending the program. She introduced Phillip Hardin.
- Phillip Hardin, HHS, provided an overview of HHS's emergency assistance programs, which include tenant-based rental assistance. He explained that a large component of the program is operated under a contract with Eblen Charities. He described how HHS and AHSP tenant-based rental assistance programs differ and where they are consistent.
- Matt Cable suggested moving the program to HHS, and including the program under the contract with Eblen Charities (the AHSP applicant who has historically received the funding), may be of benefit.
- Commissioner Belcher expressed concerned about the funding moving to HHS and the program being discontinued or otherwise lost over time as the AHSP connection was diminished or lost.
- Chairman Newman reiterated these concerns and recommended that establishing a level of recurring funding within the AHSP, of approximately $40,000, is something to be considered.
- Donna Cottrell then reviewed the existing permit fee rebate program, its criteria and historical funding. She explained the program benefited developers already constructing affordable housing units and outlined options for the program going forward. The options included: continuing the program with no changes, transferring the program and associated funding to Permits and Inspections, or ending the program. She explained that Matt Stone, Director of Permits and Inspections, was aware of the second option.

- Matt Cable pointed out that the program is not a motivating factor for developers to build affordable units instead of market rate units, due to the relatively low incentive value of a permit fee rebate on a single family unit (less than $500).
- Andrew Mayronne, City of Asheville Community and Economic Development, provided a general overview of the City's permit fee rebate program for informational purposes.
- Chairman Newman recommended the County's permit fee rebate program, unfunded in FY 2020, be eliminated in FY 2021.
- Commissioner Belcher agreed that eliminating the Permit Fee Rebate Program was preferred.
- Donna Cottrell reviewed the existing Buncombe County Employee Housing Assistance loan program, its criteria and historical funding. She explained the principal benefit was to Buncombe County employees meeting income eligibility requirements and outlined options for the program going forward. The options included continuing the program with no changes, modifying the program terms, transferring the program and associated funding to Human Resources as an employee benefit, or ending the program.
- Commissioner Newman felt the program administration could remain within the AHSP and that it might be sensible to move the funding to Human Resources at some point in the future.
- Commissioner Belcher agreed that the program should continue in FY 2021.
- Commissioner Edwards asked if there was a way to gage how the Employee Housing Assistance program might be more beneficial for and helpful to employees.
- Sybil Tate indicated there were potential avenues to reach out to employees on how this program might be more beneficial.
- Cataldo Perrone indicated that communications would like to promote the program to employees in the future.

Next Steps

- January 21, FY 2021 Affordable Housing Services Program Budget Discussion. Matt Cable explained the purposes of this meeting were to review the FY 2021 anticipated budget request.
- February 4, Affordable Housing Committee Retreat. Matt Cable explained that this date was tentative and would be determined based on invited expert attendee availability.

Public Comment

- Amanda Hunsucker, On-Track Financial, provided comment regarding the County's Employee Housing Assistance loan program and suggested the program could be improved.

Meeting Materials

- Agenda
- December 3, 2019 Minutes
- Affordable Housing Services Program Activities Presentation