

HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES & REDEVELOPMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

July 8, 2021

Members Present: *Council Member, Vice-Chair Alison Coombs*
Council Member, Marsha Berzins

Others Present: Dayna Ashley-Oehm, Melinda Townsend, Lana Dalton, Jessica Prosser, Rodney Milton, Tim Joyce, Mindy Parnes, Juan Marcano, Heather Lamboy, Marlo Alston, Mike Franks, Brittany Mcgaughy, Sharon Duwaik, Andrea Amonick, Christina Amaran, Angela Garcia, Jeffrey Hancock, Sandra Youngman, Scott Campbell, George Adams, Clarise Canales, Daniel Brotzman, Emma King, Daniel Kryzanowski, Teresa Sedmak, Roberto Venegas

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Council Member Coombs welcomed everyone to the meeting.

MINUTES

CM Coombs asked CM Berzins if there were any changes to the minutes. CM Berzins noted that there were no minutes to approve. CM Coombs stated that there will be minutes in August.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

NEW ITEMS**ALTERNATIVE SHELTERING OPTIONS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESULTS****Summary of Issue and Discussion**

This item was moved up on the agenda due to technical difficulties.

Staff presented the results of the community engagement effort to discuss alternative sheltering options. The results found that pallet shelters are the preferred option and tiny homes came in second. Safe parking ranked third, followed by tents. Comments reflected the belief that pallet shelters are the more fiscally responsible option, but tiny homes seem to fit into neighborhoods better. Other comments reflected an interest in more options for single women and the LGBTQ community, as well as the belief that a combination of all options may be best.

With regards to the safest options, pallet shelters ranked first. Tents came in second, and it was theorized that people may feel this is a safe option for people currently in encampments who may be interested in going to a safe type of camping site. Tiny homes came in third and safe parking ranked fourth. A location finder also identified the areas in the City that were thought to be best suited for these options. The preferred locations were in Ward 1, 3, and 5.

Questions/Comments

CM Berzins asked about the difference in price between pallet shelters and tiny homes. Lana responded that pallet shelters range from \$6,800 to \$10,000 a piece, while tiny homes range from \$10,000 to \$20,000 depending on what one wants in their tiny home. CM Berzins also asked if staff had considered repurposing railroad cars that are no longer in service for people to live in. Lana said she has seen that model built into an actual apartment building, but she did not know the cost associated with that or no additional research had been conducted.

CM Coombs asked if the locations in Ward 5 centered around Cherry Creek State Park or were spread out. Lana said it was spread out and she thinks that specific component did influence the Ward 5 selection.

CM Coombs asked about next steps. Lana stated that the pilot program for safe camping with the Salvation Army has been approved and staff hopes to collect data on that program over the next 90 days. The safe parking initiative has started at Restoration Christian Ministries and is going well, but staff would like to put up additional sites and have submitted requests to use American Rescue Act dollars for additional sites. Jessica added that staff is working through the budget process and ARPA funding requests. She acknowledged that Council will have a myriad of options to consider and once more assurances are available, staff will begin actively working with the community more.

CM Berzins asked if this will go to study session. Lana said this presentation was specifically informational for HORNS, but she would be happy to bring it to study session if it would be valuable. CM Berzins expressed a desire for the whole Council to hear the presentation and Lana said she would get it on study session. CM Coombs pointed out that it might be worth waiting until there are more updates on next steps, but that she would leave it up to Lana and Jessica.

Outcome

Councilmembers Coombs and Berzins supported this item moving forward to study session.

AURORA HOUSING AUTHORITY UPDATE

Summary of Issue and Discussion

Director Prosser introduced Melinda Townsend, Deputy Executive Director, and Dayna Ashley-Oehm, Housing Developer with the Aurora Housing Authority (“AHA”). Melinda began by describing the AHA as a quasi-governmental agency that has been in operation since 1975. The mission of the AHA is to develop and promote quality housing while supporting and encouraging economic opportunities leading to self-sufficiency and independence. The AHA operates with 60 employees on a \$55 million budget and receives low-income housing tax credits to assist residents in need of rental assistance. The AHA offers 810 units of affordable rental housing that house over 1,700 households. Additionally, there are 1,492 units where the AHA is the limited partner including Range View, Cornell, Hoffman, Alameda View, and Providence at the Heights. In 2020, they administered vouchers to over 1,800 households for subsidized housing and assistance. Additionally, between 2017 and 2020, \$53 million was used for construction and rehabilitation on housing in the City. Melinda discussed the various types of available vouchers, and Dayna explained how these vouchers work and the competitive nature of the resource. She also provided statistics on the demographics and locations of clients.

There was a technical issue at 33:23 which caused Melinda to fall off the call. Dayna Ashley-Oehm took over the presentation in Melinda’s absence. Once Melinda rejoined the call, she discussed the Aurora @ Home program and their new and existing partners in the community. She explained that historically, Aurora @ Home has provided HORNS with a statistical report annually to be accountable for the funds and services provided. Melinda said they could provide such a report if the committee would like, but it would need to be directly from the collaborative since the AHA does not own Aurora @ Home.

Questions/Comments

CM Berzins expressed her support of the AHA and her desire to give them more latitude to what do what they do best. She also mentioned she was on the Council in 2010 when Mayor Tauer started the Aurora

@ Home program, and that she voted for it. She thanked Melinda and Dayna for their work. Melinda thanked CM Berzins for the support and expressed a desire to be the best partners they can be with the City in order to increase the housing needed in the community.

CM Coombs asked if they could attend a Board meeting in-person to hear more about what the AHA is doing, and Melinda welcomed them to do so.

CM Coombs asked if people in subsidized housing have certain First Amendment protections from the AHA and HUD in response to concerns from residents being told that certain exterior decorations are a violation of their lease. Melinda suspects it is part of the lease to maintain a certain external appearance in the community, but she expressed a desire for further conversation on the issue.

Outcome

This item was informational only and no action was taken.

CM Coombs thanked the AHA staff for their time and the services they provide.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

Summary of Issue and Discussion

This is the Q1 report on the various homeless service funding agreements. Rodney discussed the reporting and performance requirements, and noted that anything receiving federal funds (including CDBG dollars) have federal requirements that are included in all the agreements. A template agreement was included in the documentation.

Lana discussed the redesign of the Aurora Flexible Housing Fund, formerly known as the House Aurora Partnership (HAP) which was launched March 1, 2021. Over 60 applicants were approved and about \$120,000 was spent. The top requests were for rental assistance, deposit assistance, and motel assistance. 50 households were assisted.

Lana discussed the homeless service agreements which include ESG funds, marijuana funds, and general funds. In Q1, four agencies spent funds allocated to them, but there are over ten nonprofit agencies that were funded through 31 different agreements. Funds were spent on emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, the Aurora Day Resource Center, street outreach, and homelessness prevention. 3,114 individuals and 2,797 households were served through these funds. Additionally, 696 crisis calls were answered, 111 households received counseling services, and 126,239 meals were served.

Rodney provided an update on rental assistance. Although there was no spending with CDBG CARES Act dollars in Q1, Council has seen most of these agreements already and these are agencies that have been funded.

Rodney also discussed activity with community investment and gap financing. Four projects were recommended and awarded: Aurora Housing Authority (\$750,000 in HOME funds), Community Housing Partners (\$500,000 in HOME funds), Habitat for Humanity (\$500,000 in HOME funds), and Elevations Community Land Trust (\$500,000 in general fund dollars).

Questions/Comments

CM Coombs asked if the utilization was 82% over the entire first quarter, and if there were fluctuations based on kind of weather or per month essentially within the utilization rate. Lana responded that the emergency shelter was open through April and then moved to the Aurora Day Resource Center. Over time, they had to taper the days down because they were being utilized regularly at maximum capacity when they were open.

CM Berzins asked whether these programs have an end date and if they will continue to be fully funded until HUD funds are exhausted. She also asked if they are on a sliding scale. Jeff Hancock explained that the COVID grants were one-time grants from HUD which were shared with the community. Those funds must be spent within a certain time frame determined by HUD, but once it is spent, it's done. He pointed out that at this time, no additional funds are expected.

CM Coombs noted that some of these programs are funded through other HUD dollars at other times, and that these are just the specific request came out of COVID funds. Therefore, the programs will not necessarily end when the COVID funds run out. Jeff explained that some programs receive funding from various sources like CDBG as well as CDBG-COVID dollars. Some of the agencies are first-time agencies that were specifically worked with COVID dollars so those may or may not continue depending on the availability of the funds and the performance of the programs. CM Coombs followed up by saying that those programs may receive other money from other sources are not through the City and through HUD funds that the City receives.

Outcome

This item was informational only and no action was taken.

CM Coombs thanked staff for their presentation.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING GAP FINANCING PROGRAM FUNDING RECOMMENDATION FOR HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Summary of Issue and Discussion

Staff explained that this item relates to the spring round of gap financing. The Habitat for Humanity allocation is \$500,000 in HOME dollars for permanent home ownership.

Questions/Comments

CM Coombs said this is an important model and work that the City should be doing. She added that if she understood correctly, Habitat for Humanity is also partnering with other people to have access to the land in order to do this, and that it is a benefit to the City when we work with folks that are building broader partnerships to help address the housing needs.

Outcome

Councilmembers Coombs and Berzins supported the item and approved to forward the item to study session.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF AURORA, COLORADO, AND AURORA/ARAPAHOE BATTERED WOMAN'S SHELTER, INC. DBA GATEWAY VIOLENCE SERVICES

Summary of Issue and Discussion

Staff shared this is a previous allocation that needs to go under agreement for \$300,000 in CDBG funds for rehabilitation of the Gateway Violence Services facility.

Questions/Comments

CM Coombs stated it is important to continue these services.

Outcome

Councilmembers Coombs and Berzins supported the item and approved to forward the item to study session.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES CDBG-CV GRANT AGREEMENT WITH WEECYCLE

Summary of Issue and Discussion

This agreement is for roughly \$128,000 in CDBG-CV funds for diapers and formula to youth services and victims of domestic violence.

Questions/Comments

CM Coombs asked if staff knew whether legislation passed by the state to fund similar programs would help provide services in the City in the future. Rodney did not know, but will follow up with WeeCycle. CM Coombs responded that maybe WeeCycle could get additional funds to continue their impact through that legislation.

Outcome

Councilmembers Coombs and Berzins supported the item and approved to forward the item to study session.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS 2021

Summary of Issue and Discussion

This item was inadvertently skipped and was discussed as the last item on the agenda.

Staff presented the second round of community investment funding recommendations. Eight projects were submitted. The total created or newly constructed affordable housing opportunities totaled 555, and the preserved totaled 152. Received a request for about \$84 million in private activity bonds and presented the application summaries. Five projects for multi-family new construction, two projects for multi-family presentation, and a commercial acquisition project outside of the housing component. The group recommends the following:

- Peoria Crossing II (Aurora Housing Authority): \$13 million in private activity bonds; \$650,000 in HOME funds; Ward I
- Greenleaf – Village Verde (Archway Investment Corp): \$4 million in private activity bonds; Ward I
- 15 South Sable (Zocalo Community Development): \$4 million in private activity bonds; \$1.5 million in HOME funds; Ward III
- Citywide (Urban Land Conservancy): \$250,000 in CDBG funds; Ward I

Questions/Comments

CM Coombs asked how the need compares to the need in the AMI ranges in terms of what is being created in the 0-30% AMI range versus the unit shortage in that range. Rodney said the housing strategy identified almost 1,000 units of gap.

CM Berzins acknowledged that while these units serve a purpose, Council has received emails from residents that are unhappy with the multi-story residential units that have low income residences. She said they would prefer a mixture and more of a say in what the City is doing in their neighborhoods. CM Coombs responded to this by noting that the emails Council received that morning related to the East Bank development in her ward. She noted that it is not a low-income project and that the main issue is the displacement of small businesses in the area. CM Berzins responded that she has heard from many people about more than just the East Bank development.

Outcome

Councilmembers Coombs and Berzins supported the item and approved to forward the item to study session.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

Updates from Community Members

CM Coombs invited community members to give updates. Chance Horiuchi with On Havana Street extended an invite to the upcoming public meeting on July 15 from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. regarding the year-long, multi-modal study along Havana Street.

Next meeting: Thursday, August 5, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.

Meeting adjourned: 9:52 a.m.

APPROVED: *Alison J. Coombs* Committee Vice Chair, Alison Coombs