

**Arlington County Housing Commission  
Meeting Notes**

The Housing Commission convened its meeting at **7:04pm** on **March 7, 2024**.

**PRESENT (IN-PERSON)**            Chair Kellen MacBeth  
   Commissioner Anika Montgomery  
   Commissioner Karen Serfis  
   Commissioner Katie Wenger  
   Commissioner Zack Linick  
   Commissioner Jason Schwartz  
   Commissioner Danny Ross

**PRESENT (VIRTUALLY)**        Commissioner Sara Rubalcava  
   Commissioner Michael Hemminger  
   DAC Liaison Doris Ray

**ABSENT**                            Commissioner Nikki Blake  
   Commissioner Elizabeth Escovar  
   Commissioner Margaret McGilvray

**STAFF**                             Alex McMillen, Sarah Pizzo, Richard Tucker, Anne Venezia, Chris Dimotsis, Olivia Sontag, Russell Danao-Schroeder

---

[View the Meeting Recording Here](#)

**Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda**

Alice Hogan provided public comment. She asked if the Commission will be participating in the Arlington 2050 Visioning exercise. She noted that there is a special meeting on March 12<sup>th</sup> for Crystal Houses for the Commission to be aware of. She also asked staff why there was such a large number of vacancies on the available CAFs list this month at the Barcroft Apartments.

**Approval of Notes – Action**

There were two small edits to the notes. Karen Serfis made a motion to approve the notes and Anika Montgomery seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

- [View the February 15, 2024, Housing Commission notes here.](#)

**FY 2025 Budget – Action**

Staff from both housing and the Department of Human services presented the item.

- View the handout here.

Alice Hogan provided public comment on behalf of the Alliance for Housing Solutions and NVAHA. She said it was a good budget overall for housing. She said the Commission could consider a recommendation around the tax rate. She said the County needs to invest around \$50 million a year in affordable housing to meet the counties goals. She also noted that planning staff is proposed to be reduced.

Kellen MacBeth asked for clarification on the eviction prevention funding. Kellen MacBeth introduced the budget document that was sent to the Commission in advance.

Jason Schwartz asked how maximum allowable rents were calculated. Nicole Dula said they are indexed to 60% AMI levels. It is also scaled by household size and unit size.

Karen Serfis asked how many households were expected to be served for eviction prevention in FY25. Nicole Dula said that she didn't have that number off hand but that it will be presented at the County Board budget work session.

Kellen MacBeth said one question where he was not able to get clarification from the Office of Human Rights was if their funding will be used for fair housing testing or not.

Kellen MacBeth said it is nice to see there is an increase in AHIF funding. He did say it appears all that funding is already spoken for with existing projects. He said this means no new projects which is very unfortunate.

Kellen MacBeth said he is happy to see the Housing Grants funding increasing and that two new positions will be added.

Kellen MacBeth asked if the Homelessness Services funding was increasing. Nicole Dula said there is a larger number expected than what was advertised and that it will be an increase.

Jason Schwartz asked how much Arlington receives for Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV). Nicole Dula said there is an algorithm but that it is most important to not lose vouchers. If vouchers are maintained, then the funding will continue to come with those vouchers.

Kellen MacBeth asked why the demand for Housing Grants has been increasing. Nicole Dula answered one reason is that the MARs are keeping pace with the AMI.

Doris Ray said she supports the budget recommendations. She asked if the vouchers amount reflects all types of vouchers. Nicole Dula confirmed all types of vouchers were included in the amount. Doris Ray asked if the state funded vouchers program is also reflected in the amount. Nicole Dula confirmed it did.

Jason Schwartz said the commission should recommend keeping the two staff planner positions that are suggested to be cut. Kellen MacBeth agreed. He said the positions could help with adopting area plans and to get the Affordable Housing Ordinance subcommittee going.

Karen Serfis asked what the strategy for recommendations should be. Kellen MacBeth said he thinks it is a good idea to keep recommendations that don't get adopted as recommendations the next year because eventually they might get adopted if the County Board sees they are multi year priorities. He also said more staff is needed. He did note that it could be a strategy by the County Manager to not fill positions where someone leaves because it is identified as a position to possibly be cut the next year without having to lay people off.

Kellen MacBeth said asking for \$30M for AHIF is more reasonable than asking for \$50M for AHIF and might be more attainable this year.

Kellen MacBeth said the commission has asked for a housing deputy director position for several years and that it would be a valuable addition.

Kellen MacBeth said he's heard from staff that there isn't funding to help support resident councils at all properties. He said the solution may not be more staff but using partner organizations like BUGATA.

Kellen MacBeth said the County hasn't done Fair Housing testing since 2019. He said the county needs to start testing and that HCV recipients are being denied housing causing them to lose their vouchers.

Kellen MacBeth asked how old the Housing Grants technological system is. Nicole Dule said it is new. Kellen MacBeth asked what is wrong with the client management system. Nicole Dula said there are staffing, outreach and education improvements that have associated costs.

Doris Ray asked if Arlington participates in the ADU program that is authorized statewide. Staff said that the county is not participating in that due to their form of government.

Kellen MacBeth said he would like a full equity analysis for every project that comes to the commission.

Katie Wenger asked if the commission should take a stance on the tax rate. Kellen MacBeth said the commission can, but he personally wouldn't want to. He said that is a little bit out of scope.

Zack Linick said he supports AHIF being the first recommendation. He asked if the phrase adequate funding should have specific numbers to them. He also asked if it is better to have fewer recommendations for the County Board. Kellen MacBeth said he doesn't like to take previous recommendations out because it signals it may no longer be a priority to the commission. He also said the ranking is not intentional and that he is opened to changing the order. He also said he would not specify a specific amount for a few reasons.

Karen Serfis made a motion to approve the staff recommendation. It was seconded by Katie Wenger. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0.

### **Housing Grants Study – Information**

Staff presented the item.

- [View the study here.](#)

Kellen MacBeth asked when the Housing Grants Program first started. Staff did not have the answer on hand. Kellen MacBeth said staff should consider including history of the program in the study, especially considering how unique of a program it is.

Kellen MacBeth asked where the authority to have a Housing Grants Program derives from. Staff said it is found in section 63.2 of the state code.

Kellen MacBeth asked if households with undocumented persons would be allowed to fully participate in the program instead of at a prorated subsidy. Staff said that decision is up to the County Board. Staff also said that this would be only about a \$200,000 cost. However, they are also exploring a potential pilot program that would cost around \$500,000 and support 50 additional households. Kellen MacBeth said having the authority to move forward with that possibility is great.

Kellen MacBeth asked what optional inspections by request means. Staff said there is currently no inspection component with Housing Grant participation. Most recipients are in CAFs, but some are not. In those instances, if a participant did want an inspection, they could lean on the county for that.

Jason Schwartz asked what percentage of applicants are actually eligible to receive a grant. Staff said they do not have that data off hand.

Jason Schwartz asked if eligibility is expanded but funding isn't increased at the same rate, will it become harder for those eligible to be accepted? Staff said that is absolutely a consideration the County Board must make. If funding isn't expanded enough it could end in a closed program and a waitlist.

Jason Schwartz asked how long it usually takes a recipient to find an available unit. He also asked how many available CAFs there are. Staff answered there are about 11,200 CAFs available, with an extremely small CAF vacancy rate. Demand is very high for CAFs especially those in new construction buildings and nearby transit.

Anika Montgomery asked if those who are working homeless are accounted in the Housing Grants program. Staff answered that population is usually served is some of the other rental assistance programs. They are short- and medium-term programs that help those who are homeless make the transition to stable housing.

Doris Ray asked how totally and permanently disabled is defined. Staff answered it is the standard definition and that they don't have it on hand but can provide it.

Doris Ray asked if those receiving disability benefits are eligible for the program. Staff answered you can qualify either under totally or permanently disabled or if you are actively connected to the behavioral health program. Doris Ray said it was of concern that only those with intellectual disabilities, and not physical or sensory disabilities, are eligible. Staff said they could follow up on the specifics around Housing Grants eligibility for those with disabilities.

Doris Ray asked if increasing the amount of time for people to get all their paperwork together to be accepted into the program was a recommendation. Staff answered it is not.

Doris Ray asked if someone was previously residing in Arlington and has been out of county in a hospital or nursing home, would they be eligible for the program. Staff answered they would be considered an Arlington resident.

Kellen MacBeth asked if staff would be back in front of the commission with the final report. Staff answered they likely would not be going back to all commissions. Kellen MacBeth said at some point he would like the commission to weigh in with a letter to the County Board at some point.

#### **New Commissioners Presentation – Information**

The item was deferred.

- [View the slides here.](#)

#### **Development Updates – Information**

Staff had two development updates. One was a CAF agreement extension for The Haven. The second was an update that the Barcroft first renovation phase is requesting approval and reservation of Industrial Development Authority (IDA) bonds.

- [View the Development Updates here.](#)

Katie Wenger shared she was in touch with the C2E2 Commission on how to best collaborate.

**Subcommittee Reports – Information**

There were no updates.

Meeting adjourned at 9:48pm.