

**Citizens Advisory Commission on Housing  
Hybrid Meeting Notes**

The Housing Commission convened its meeting at **7:08pm** on **March 9, 2023**.

**PRESENT (IN-PERSON)**            Chair Kellen MacBeth  
   Commissioner Anika Montgomery  
   Commissioner Haley Norris  
   Commissioner Karen Serfis  
   Commissioner Nikki Blake  
   Commissioner Eric Berkey  
   Commissioner Margaret McGilvray  
   Disability Advisory Commission Liaison Doris Ray

**PRESENT (VIRTUALLY)**        Commissioner Michael Hemminger  
   Commissioner Eric Lee

**ABSENT**                            Commissioner Laura Saul Edwards  
   Commissioner Sara Rubalcava  
   Commissioner Paul Browne

**STAFF**                             Alex McMillen, Anne Venezia, Richard Tucker, Marie Randall, Russell Danao-Schroeder, Nicole Dula

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[View Part 1 of the Meeting Recording Here](#)

[View Part 2 of the Meeting Recording Here](#)

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

Alice Hogan introduced herself and her organization, Alliance for Housing Solutions (AHS), to the Commission. She told the Commission what types of projects and policy the AHS works on. She said they are a free resource for those in the community, they have a monthly newsletter and hold events for the community to participate in to better inform the community on housing issues.

**Approval of Notes – Action**

Kellen MacBeth made one amendment to the notes, correcting a sentence concerning option 5A in the February 16<sup>th</sup> notes to accurately describe the option. Staff also informed the Commission that page numbers would be added, and Karen Serfis' name was misspelled once and that would be fixed.

- [View the February 9th, 2022, Housing Commission notes here](#)
- [View the February 16, 2022, Housing Commission notes here](#)

Eric Berkey made a motion to approve both sets of notes. Margaret McGilvray seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**The Serrano – Information**

AHC led off the item with a presentation covering the progress made to date at The Serrano as well as their plans regarding redevelopment at the site.

- [View the presentation here](#)

Advocates and tenants were also invited to speak at the meeting. The first speaker was Bryan Coleman from the NAACP Arlington Branch. He visited the property recently. He was most concerned about the communication between AHC and tenants. He also noted that the County needs to hold their non-profit affordable housing partners accountable in providing safe and quality housing.

Saul Reyes, with BU-GATA, was the second speaker. He offered that a group should be put together that can offer input to AHC and other housing providers in the county to make sure that tenants are being heard and responded to.

Marjorie Green was the third speaker. She has been working with tenants and advocates at the Serrano since 2019. She said tenants have not been treated respectfully, there have threats of retaliation and the communication with tenants has not been good enough. She said the problems at the Serrano should not be discredited just because they are not immediate health and safety concerns like there were a few years ago. She wants the County to keep their foot on the pedal to continue the improvements at the property. She offered specific suggestions which included: working with the Tenant Landlord Commission to hold regular meetings, asking the County to find a different way to work with tenants, and increasing County staffing.

Janeth Valenzuela was the next speaker. She said tenants are scared that the building wide fire alarm system has not been working for two weeks. She said the elevators are not working well enough and that many people can not walk the many flights of stairs. She said there are security problems around the building, including packages being stolen. She said the water coming out of the tap is yellow sometimes. She said resident services isn't up the standard it should be. She said residents should be treated with more respect and dignity. She refuted the survey from the AHC presentation that most people at the property were happy. She said the tenant meetings need to be more representative of the tenants.

An unnamed Serrano resident spoke next. She stated there have been a lot of problems with the property. She stated the elevators have not been working well and that many people are unable to use the stairs. There was supposed to be a person helping tenants get things up the stairs, but they didn't help. She said there are mice in the building. She also said the lack of building wide fire alarms is a scary issue. She feels there are not enough fire extinguishers in the building. She said she is concerned about the redevelopment of the property and if they will be fully informed about the plans.

Another unnamed Serrano resident provided comment. She said she has had a problem for two years with the convector in her unit. The convector makes a lot of noise and produces water, which ruins the floor. They have replaced the floor once, but it continues to happen and be an issue. She said the new manager is unprofessional and has poor communication with the tenants. The new manager organizes meeting times that are inconvenient for the tenants. She said that she just found out there will be a rent increase of 5%, and with the cost of living increases these rent increases will create hardship. The office is only open Monday-Friday and there is no way to reach management on the weekends.

Another unnamed Serrano resident provided comment. She said she doesn't like to go to the office, so she tries to solve issues by herself. She had trouble paying her utility bills during COVID and she was notified she only had three days to make her payments. She went to the manager to set up some sort of payment plan. The manager wasn't there, and she wasn't able to meet for a week, which was outside the three-day window she was given. When she did finally get an appointment, the manager showed up an hour late to the meeting. She said the manager said they would contact lawyers to get the money from her, even though she was going through medical issues that cost money. Eventually they allowed

her four months to make the payments. She also said the apartments have too many requirements such as renters' insurance.

Ana Ordonez, another Serrano resident provided comment. She said there are security issues at the property. She said there are always people at the back of the building doing bad things. She mentioned one example of a guy drinking alcohol in his care who got out and started peeing on the ground in front of her and her six-year-old daughter. She also said she just recently found out that fire alarms weren't working in the building. She invited AHC leadership to come look at the property themselves. She is worried about rent increases, as many tenants are not getting pay increases.

Nikki Blake attended the Serrano resident meeting the prior month. She said she heard similar issues about security. She said animal feces in the hall was also mentioned. She also said the attendance wasn't super great.

Kellen MacBeth asked for clarification on the fire alarm issue. AHC staff answered that the building wide alarms were not working and that the Fire Marshall put the property on fire watch. AHC did say that elevator alarms were working, and that each unit has a fire alarm inside it as well. They confirmed this is up to code.

Janeth Valenzuela said that she witnessed one of the people on fire watch playing loud music with their feet up on a table. She felt they weren't doing their important job properly. AHC staff confirmed said they would check in with the fire watch company on this.

Janeth Valenzuela raised issues with one specific employee of the property management company. AHC confirmed that individual is no longer employed by them.

Anika Montgomery asked what the timeline was for fixing the building wide fire alarm. AHC answered the building is so old that very few of the panels needed to make the repair are made anymore. There is no timetable set at this time.

Saul Reyes asked how often the fire watch employees are supposed to check the building. AHC answered that they are supposed to walk all eight floors of the building every hour.

Janeth Valenzuela asked AHC to communicate with the residents exactly what was going on with the fire watch. AHC said they posted the required fire watch notification given to them by the Fire Marshall. Kellen MacBeth asked if each resident was notified individually. AHC confirmed they will give notice to all residents.

Eric Berkey asked how often in unit fire alarms were checked. AHC answered they are checked quarterly.

Anika Montgomery asked what the timeframe would be for redevelopment at the property and if residents would be involved in that process. AHC answered that they would like to get residents involved up front and bring them into the process. AHC did acknowledge that at the end of the day it will come down to what they can afford and that there will be a gap in financing that needs to be filled.

Doris Ray asked how residents are notified that fire alarms and air filters will be checked. AHC answered they post notices on the residents' doors, as well as common spaces. They provide a range of days they will be there as they don't know how long each check will take.

Eric Berkey thanked residents and AHC for being at the meeting. He acknowledged this is an old building with many issues. He said that there are issues of trust at the property which need to be rebuilt. He asked that the property management company put their best employees at this property. He asked Anne Venezia what the County is doing on their end to address issues.

Anne Venezia spoke to the CAF Strategies document that was published in 2022. It provides seventeen recommendations the County is working towards at these properties. Although County staff will be presenting on this at the May meeting, she shared a few things the County has done, they include increasing CAF inspection capacity to about 20% of the overall CAF portfolio, hiring an additional compliance officer, and issuing 400-500 surveys to hear directly from residents to find out how else they can help. Anne Venezia also said that Serrano will be on the inspections schedule for around April. Additionally, staff attended the Serrano resident meeting and will continue to do so.

Eric Berkey also asked AHC to talk to the security concerns. AHC said they are going through their portfolio to increase security and add higher quality cameras. He said they have been in contact with the Chief of Police about having courtesy officers at the building to help with these issues. Kellen MacBeth said he is a bit worried about having police officers at properties that are majority minority properties. He asked if there were other ways to increase the security. AHC mentioned that the residents did seem supportive of having a courtesy police officer. Kellen MacBeth said he is worried about this potentially leading to over policing and would like them to explore other methods of improving security.

Kellen MacBeth summarized what was discussed and asked for follow ups on the issues mentioned at the meeting. The Commission agreed to write a letter memorializing the conversation that took place.

#### **Affordable Housing Ordinance Overview – Information**

Staff gave a presentation on the Affordable Housing Ordinance (AHO) to Commissioners. The overview only covered the base contribution, with an overview of bonus contributions to follow at the April meeting.

- [View the presentation here](#)

Kellen MacBeth asked why reviewing the AHO was in the Regional Fair Housing Plan. Staff answered that it was also in the Affordable Housing Master Plan (AHMP) Implementation Framework as well, but that it was mainly meaning to do the analysis around why developers typically contribute cash instead of units. Staff also noted that the political environment likely doesn't favor making changes to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO) to pursue contributions that would be more advantageous to the County, as the code would have to be amended at the state level.

Kellen MacBeth said it would be helpful to share the analysis with the public so that advocates are ready when it is a more politically feasible climate. Staff said the report with the analysis will be made public soon.

Kellen MacBeth asked for the difference between the Use Permit process and the Site Plan process. Staff answered that both involve a Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) process, but that Use Permits generally involve much less density, much lower county fees, are typically more prescribed in things like build form and architecture and have fewer conditions.

Eric Berkey asked what impacts the AHO has on the market value of a site. Staff said that the contribution is usually about 1 percent of the total development cost of a building, a fairly negligible impact.

Eric Berkey asked how this would impact Missing Middle Housing (MMH). Staff answered that most MMH wouldn't have to go through the site plan process. Additionally, most MMH wouldn't be above 1.0 FAR, which a building must be for the AHO to apply.

Haley Norris asked for clarification if affordable was up to 60% AMI or 80% AMI. Staff answered that for the base contribution units must be up to 60% AMI.

Haley Norris also asked how the Neighborhoods Form Based Code (N-FBC) interplays with this. Staff answered that the N-FBC is its own thing and is not part of the site plan process. It also has affordability requirements associated with it though and those projects would also have to go to SPRC.

Margaret McGilvray said Alexandria asks for more affordable housing using inclusionary zoning. Staff said the AHO for Arlington applies exclusively to Arlington and was passed at the state level. Staff noted that the AHO is a type of exclusionary zoning.

Doris Ray asked if the AHO applies to both residential and commercial buildings. Staff answered it applies to both. Doris Ray asked if it applies to single family residences. Staff answered it does not apply to single family residences as they would likely not go through a site plan process and would not exceed the 1.0 FAR threshold.

#### **FY2024 Budget Recommendations – Information**

Staff from Housing and the Department of Human Services (DHS) gave an overview of the FY2024 proposed budget.

- [View the presentation here](#)

There was one public speaker on the item. Alice Hogan said that AHS is most concerned about the decrease in funding for the Affordable Housing Investment Fund (AHIF). She said to meet our housing goals we need about \$50M annually and AHIF is only getting a fraction of that amount. She also said it makes it harder for our non-profit partners, particularly when there is no Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). She said the inspections budget needs to be annual and not a one-year line item. She also noted that the Planning Division is losing a position.

Eric Berkey asked how many NOFA projects applied in the last round that was held. Staff said they could not speak to if those projects are currently being pursued. Eric Berkey said it makes it harder for our development partners when there are not predictable sources of AHIF each year.

Eric Berkey also asked if there is enough staff support for the Barcroft Apartments project. Staff answered there is an interdepartmental teams and multiple working groups set up for that project. There are many people involved and although more staffing would always be nice there are a lot of staff already working on this big project.

Haley Norris asked how the amount of money through developer contributions compares to past years. Staff answered that it can be all over the map each year but what the County anticipates receiving in FY24 is very close to the annual average.

Margaret McGilvray asked if there are vouchers the County has that aren't being used due to staffing. Staff clarified that that is not the case.

Alice Hogan asked about the wait list for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). Staff answered that there has always been a waitlist for PSH. Demand is higher than the PSH stock. The County is hiring a housing locator to further assist with this issue.

Kellen MacBeth said he is very concerned with the slashing of AHIF and that the county will never meet their housing goals if they don't better fund AHIF. He also said the County should expand the Fair Housing Testing to more than the two categories they currently test for. He said he is concerned about cutting a planning position. He was also concerned about the inspections budget and how inspections would continue at the same level in the future.

Kellen MacBeth offered a handful of recommendations the Commission could offer to the County Board. They are:

1. Increase AHIF funding to FY23 levels (\$18.7M) to ensure that the county has additional funds in upcoming fiscal years to contribute to increases in CAF supply. There are several upcoming (re)development projects for CAFs that are at risk of not having AHIF funding at a time when construction costs and interest rates are making affordable housing development more expensive.
2. Provide adequate funding for the implementation of the Long-term Strategies for Improved Oversight and Tenant Support at Aging CAF Properties issued in April 2022 and the recommendations from the Joint Subcommittee on the Status of Aging Properties Serrano Report issued in October 2022.
  - Increase staffing for CPHD Housing Division including a Deputy Director position.
  - Include additional funding for CAF inspections for FY2024.
3. Provide adequate funding for the implementation of Regional Fair Housing Plan (County Board will consider for approval in Summer 2023) goals and strategies.
  - Provide additional funding for the Office of Human Rights to do expanded Fair Housing Testing in FY2024.
4. Provide adequate funding for the implementation of the county's strategic plan to functionally end homelessness in the next four years.
5. Provide adequate funding for regular equity analyses for all housing and planning projects and include those analyses in all development projects

Margaret McGilvray made a motion to approve the recommendations and send a letter to the County Board. Anika Montgomery seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously, 9-0.

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

This item was deferred.

#### **Subcommittee Reports – Information**

This item was deferred.

Meeting adjourned at **10:50pm**.