

Walton County  
Affordable Housing Advisory Committee  
**Meeting Minutes**

March 14, 2019

11:00 a.m.

Walton County Building Department, Freeport FL

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Latilda Hughes-Neel.

Members attended

Latilda Hughes-Neel  
Teresa Indieke  
Carolynn Zonia  
Joel Paul, Jr.  
Mac Work  
Bryan Osborne  
Skip Harrison – via phone

Staff attended

Romina “Mina” Valerio  
Jo Anne Donatella

Other attendees

Tom Baker  
Jan Trinka  
Mac Carpenter  
Dede Hinote  
Reynolds Henderson  
Leigh Moore  
Heather Christman

Ms. Hughes-Neel introduced county attorney Heather Christman who will be scheduling Sunshine Law training for the board on April 3, 2019 at 9:00 a.m., in the Walton County Planning Department meeting room. Ms. Indieke moved to accept the scheduled meeting as presented; Ms. Zonia seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

**II. Discussion of Previous Minutes**

a. Enclosure A - January 10, 2019 Minutes

Mr. Osborn moved to approve the January 2019 minutes; Ms. Imdieke seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

b. Enclosure B - February 14, 2019 Minutes

Ms. Zonia moved to approve the February 2019 minutes; Mr. Paul seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

**III. Financials**

a. Financial report included, Enclosure C

Ms. Valerio reported that four projects were finished in the past month. Construction of two Habitat homes are underway. Two other properties are waiting on inspection, and \$70,000 is encumbered for those two projects. An additional 8 homeowners are in the application process, which would encumber an additional \$245,000. Within the next two months another bid meeting will take place. In addition, there are now more contractors interested in bidding for work. The SHIP balance is at about \$555,000 and half of it will be expended by June.

Mr. Carpenter commented that some itemized details do not appear on the financial report. He said checks had been issued for about \$245,000 since January that are not showing up on the report. Ms. Valerio will have a clearly defined financial update (listing expenses and monies that are encumbered) by the April meeting.

Approval of the Financial Report will be deferred until April's meeting.

**IV. Old Business**

**V. Housing Updates:**

a. West Florida Regional Planning Council

Mr. Baker asked about the availability of opportunities for having homes repaired or reconstructed and how to apply. He explained that he was unable to find information on the current West Florida Regional Planning Council website. Ms. Valerio said the website (wfrpc.org) is in the process of being updated. WFRPC just changed its name and that is the reason for the delay. The new name will be Emerald Coast Regional Council. Ms. Valerio said new web content will include information about income limits and application requirements for SHIP.

b. Walton County Growth Management

Mr. Carpenter said the county commission adopted Chapter 5, the development standards of the land development code, subject to resolution of a challenge to future land use element. There are several incentives that are provided in the land development code which now include zoning for unincorporated Walton County. Mr. Carpenter said the county is working with St. Joe Company who are required by their DRI to produce a minimum 150 units of Chapter 420 qualified affordable housing. St. Joe Company are looking for an affordable housing development partner for that project.

Mr. Carpenter said there is a large tract of land (300 acres) moving through the land use change process in So. Walton. The tract is between Veterans Rd and US 98 and Chat Holley Rd. Mr. Carpenter said that in order to commit for workforce housing (and to increase density) some wetland enhancement would be proposed.

Mr. Carpenter said the county was still working with utility companies to produce GIS layer of available water and sewer. This would identify sites that are entitled and have utilities available and which sites can come to market the quickest.

Ms. Imdieke asked about income level for workforce housing. Mr. Carpenter said income level must be less than 120% of median income limits for the area.

c. HUD Housing

Tom Baker said that there are 50 housing units on West Orange in DeFuniak Springs that will be open to applicants in October. At this time the units will be fair market rents that HUD will be able to pay.

Mr. Baker reported that there are 18 families waiting for housing; last year there were 150 on the waiting list. 18 local families and 63 families out of county are waiting to get a voucher. Mr. Baker said there is not available housing and some families have made the decision to find another form of housing or leave the area.

Ms. Hinote asked where HUD recipients can go to get additional assistance if they have a voucher for housing and have found a place to live but cannot afford utility deposits. Ms. Imdieke said there are non-profits (i.e., Catholic Charities) that will provide one-time assistance to cover the cost of utility deposits. Mr. Baker said there is a daily need for these types of funds and if an applicant cannot get the lights turned on, there is no need to get a voucher for housing. Mr. Baker said this complicates the whole housing process.

Ms. Valerio said that rental assistance under SHIP is not currently funded.

Mr. Baker reported that more than \$155,000 had been paid in March to 120 landlords in Walton County and HUD assisted 320 families. Mr. Baker said HUD pays \$1.8 million/year on rents in Walton County. This is all HUD funding, not county funding. Mr. Baker said the county does offer HUD a place from which to operate. Mr. Baker reported a current HAP reserve of \$101,000, which is very close to the monthly rents. Mr. Baker also reported a \$130,000 administrative reserve. He said that HUD is currently running at a deficit of about \$4,500 each month. The new federal budget could cut out HUD funding in the future.

Mac Carpenter asked if there was a system in place for potential landlords to participate in the HUD program. Mr. Baker said HUD will inspect potential rentals and inform landlords if there is anything that needs to be repaired to meet minimum standards. Mr. Baker said there is an availability list and will send to anyone that requests it. Homes that are eligible are posted on a HUD list for voucher holders. Mr. Baker said he conducts inspections regularly on homes and the condition of many are substandard. Mr. Baker said the fact is that there is just not enough affordable housing in Walton County.

Mr. Carpenter asked if applicants can supplement the rent on property if it exceeds the HUD payment. Mr. Baker said yes, but they are not allowed to go over fair market rent. HUD determines the rates each year and those rates are based on the median income of the county.

Mr. Paul asked if the HUD vouchers are portable vouchers. Mr. Baker said they are portable, and the rule is that after 12 months in Walton

County, HUD recipients may move the vouchers out of the area. Mr. Baker said this could mean eventually these small programs will no longer be sustainable.

Mr. Reynolds Henderson (a member of the public) spoke about his experience as a developer. Mr. Henderson said the public/developers need a way to readily obtain information about where development is viable. Mr. Carpenter said this is what the GIS layer will provide to the public/developers.

Ms. Zonia said because of ecological concerns, there are some people that try to slow down the development process. Ms. Hughes-Neel agreed and said that while housing and development is needed, it is not an easy process. There are wetland and tree protections regardless of whether the project is affordable housing or not.

Mr. Carpenter asked that potential developers be sent to him/the county planning department to help guide them through the development course.

d. City of DeFuniak Springs  
No report

e. City of Freeport  
No report

f. City of Paxton  
No report

g. Habitat for Humanity  
Ms. Imdieke said Habitat has been very busy; there were three large events last week in addition to college students in town volunteering.

h. Discussion Items

## VI. **Action Items:**

a. Review of LHAP/Recommendations to the BCC

The document shows which strategies are being funded and which are not being funded. Home ownership strategies are being funded. Rental strategies currently are not being funded. Based on lack of time, this

item will be first on the agenda at the next meeting. Ms. Hughes-Neel asked the committee to review the LHAP and be prepared to defend their recommendations at the next meeting.

Ms. Valerio explained that this is due May 2 and needs to go before the board in April. Recommendations must be made at the April meeting.

Ms. Indieke said there may be substantial rehab funding grants available from Federal Home Loan Bank. Ms. Indieke will forward information to Ms. Valerio as a supplemental funding source.

Ms. Indieke explained her opinion regarding supplementing rental fees or deposits on rentals. Ms. Indieke said, since sometimes recipients accept the deposits and never make another rent or utility payment, those monies could be better spent in different ways. Ms. Indieke said it takes a lot to manage and handle this money and is an inefficient use of funds. Ms. Indieke would rather see funds given to developers that can create units for people that can readily move into these places.

Mr. Carpenter asked how much the LHAP budget could be expected to be. Ms. Hughes-Neel said that previously the budget was \$350,000 and it looks like it may be closer to \$800,000. Ms. Hughes-Neel said that for working purposes, the committee members should produce two separate budget recommendations for their strategies, one based on minimum allocations and one based on the potentially higher figure. The final budget numbers will be known by June 30<sup>th</sup> and the LHAP can be amended.

VII. **New Business**

The next meeting will be **April 3, 2019, beginning with the Sunshine Training Session at 9:00 and regular meeting directly following the training, Walton County Building Department, Freeport, FL.**

VIII. **Public Comments**

IX. **Adjourn 12:15 p.m.**