

Housing Affordability and Homelessness Task Force



Meeting #1 Minutes

May 23, 2018 | 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Development Services Building, Auditorium
150 Beaver Creek Road, Oregon City.

Attendees:

Name

Shelly Mead
Ken Fisher
Cole Merkel
Nate Ember
Alma Flores
Graham Phelan
Katrina Holland
Anna Geller
Dave Carboneau
Jerry Johnson
Councilor Wilda Parks
Yelena Voznyuk
Nina Carlson
Commissioner Nancy Ide
Larry Didway
Rob Hawthorne
Bart Berquist
Jane Leo
Shelley Yoder
Kari Lyons

Affiliation

Bridges to Change
CBRE/HEERY
Citizen
Citizen
City of Milwaukie
Clackamas County Sheriff's Office
Community Alliance of Tenants
Geller Silvis Associates
Home First Development
Johnson Economics
Milwaukie City Council
NW Housing Alternatives
NW Natural
Oregon City Commissioner
Oregon City School District
PDX Living
PDX Living
Portland Metro Association of Realtors
Providence Health and Services
Welcome Home Coalition

County staff

Dan Chandler
Jill Smith
Vahid Brown
Abby Ahern
Jennifer Hughes
Julie Larson

County Commissioners

Commissioner Paul Savas

Facilitator

Alice Sherring, EnviroIssues
Emma Sagor, EnviroIssues
Kirstin Greene, EnviroIssues

Apologies – Chris Scherer, Pastor Jesse Christopherson, Tracy Dannen Grace, Paul Grove

Welcome and opening remarks

Dan Chandler, Assistant County Administrator, welcomed task force members and guests. He thanked task force members for devoting their time and talents to this important work.

Mr. Chandler said the County does not want this to be a staff-driven, rubber stamp process. The County is looking for bold ideas, thoughts and proposals from the task force. This is a housing endeavor as well as an anti-poverty, human capital investment, and public health initiative.

County Commissioner Paul Savas provided opening remarks. The County Commission is grateful for members' participation in the task force. Housing affordability is a top priority for the Commission, and commissioners are passionate about helping our most vulnerable community members. Commissioner Savas said he is personally passionate about finding solutions to the gentrification and displacement. He acknowledged Commissioner Martha Schraeder for her efforts to bring this task force together. Commissioner Savas noted this topic is complex and said County staff are here to help provide direction, while reiterating this is not intended to be a staff-driven process. Commissioner Savas thanked task force members before taking leave from the task force discussion.

Alice Sherring, facilitator, introduced the facilitation team from EnviroIssues, including Kirstin Greene and Emma Sagor.

Ms. Sherring reviewed the meeting agreement and ground rules. Task force members agreed to do the following:

- Listen and listen again.
- Be respectful and courteous to diversity of opinions in the room.
- Direct passionate opinions toward sharing information, not at each other.
- Allow the facilitator to keep the discussion moving and on task.
- Start and end meetings on time.
- Stand name cards up when wanting to ask a question or make a comment.

Ms. Sherring explained there will be a “parking lot” posted on the wall during each meeting for topics of conversation that should be revisited at a later date. All items in the parking lot will be assigned a follow up action where appropriate.

Ms. Sherring reviewed the agenda.

Introductions

Task force members introduced themselves and explained what success in this process would look like to them.

- **Rob Hawthorne, Co-owner of PDX Living.** Mr. Hawthorne has a background in architecture and co-owns design-build firm PDX Living. PDX Living specializes in passive house and net zero energy building, and through their work consider the entire lifecycle of housing costs. Mr. Hawthorne said success would involve not just making progress at slowing the crisis, but fully reversing trends.

- **Bart Berquist, Co-owner of PDX Living.** Mr. Berquist said he would like to determine ways the County government can help offset the burden of housing costs and how public and private partners can work together to develop more affordable housing.
- **Ken Fisher, Project Manager with CBRE/HEERY.** Mr. Fisher works primarily on public sector and school bond projects. He lives in Happy Valley and is involved with the Clackamas County Business Association. His goal is for the process to reach “phase two,” identifying ways the County can fund and support housing affordability to reduce homelessness.
- **Dave Carboneau, Partner with Home First Development.** Home First Development builds affordable housing (generally less than \$100,000 per unit), primarily in East Portland. Most of their work focuses on seniors and veterans, who are some of the most vulnerable citizens. Mr. Carboneau said he would like to find reasonable solutions for addressing these challenges.
- **Kari Lyons, Welcome Home Coalition.** The Welcome Home Coalition is comprised of 65 metro area organizations working to bring in new revenue for affordable housing and homeless services. The Coalition brought forward and passed the Portland Affordable Housing Bond last year. Ms. Lyons said success would involve developing a long-term strategy that encourages collective responsibility to bring in more funding. She said it will take multiple solutions to solve the problem, and partners need to commit to longer-term partnerships. Ms. Lyons said the strategy needs to address capital costs, rent assistance and supportive services. She said it is also critical to engage those affected by these policies in the planning process.
- **Graham Phelan, Clackamas County Sheriff’s Office.** Mr. Phelan said success would involve human services and outreach organizations having more of a first responder capability, enabling them to meet people where they are, work better across jurisdictional boundaries and address displacement.
- **Larry Didway, Oregon City School District.** Mr. Didway said the school district is focused on children. Success to him would involve eliminating housing instability for families and young people.
- **Shelly Mead, Operations Director at Bridges to Change.** Ms. Mead said success would include developing a solid strategy and set of recommendations that is community-based and involves more groups than are represented on the task force.
- **Shelley Yoder, Providence Health and Services.** Ms. Yoder works in Providence’s Community Health Division and is a social worker by training. She said she is focused on basics of how we use our resources. She believes some resources need to be dedicated to relieving human suffering. Ms. Yoder said cross-sector collaboration is key.
- **Jerry Johnson, Johnson Economics** Mr. Johnson said policy recommendations need to be grounded reality. He said it is important not just to have good intentions, but also to execute policy well.
- **Anna Geller, Owner of Geller Silvis Associates.** Geller Silvis is a real estate developer that specializes in affordable housing. Ms. Geller said the County has made a dent over the last few years, but the affordability problem is growing. She said she was part of a community redevelopment effort in 2005 in the North Clackamas area. Ms. Geller said it is important to learn from what has not work in the past, and said she believes low-income individuals should be integrated throughout all communities.

- **Councilor Wilda Parks, Milwaukie City Council.** Councilor Parks just completed 30 years as CEO of the North Clackamas Chamber of Commerce and is also the Chair of the County's Economic Development Commission. She said workforce housing has been a need for a long time. Success would involve increased development in housing of all levels, public-private partnerships, encouraging cities and counties to look at code and determine what improvements can be made, minimizing displacement of current residents, and seeing a marked decrease in homeless students in our schools.
- **Commissioner Nancy Ide, Oregon City Commissioner.** Commissioner Ide is the co-founder of the Homeless Solutions Coalition of Clackamas County, a group of 140+ people and groups working together to achieve compassionate and respectful solutions to homelessness through community partnerships. She said Clackamas County is strategically situated in the metro region. Commissioner Ide said she has observed a change in the community from wanting to push homeless individuals out to instead asking how the community can help. She said success would include finding solutions to create independence and sustainable living for those who are homeless and utilizing community partnerships that already exist.
- **Cole Merkel, Citizen and Vendor Program Director for Street Roots.** Mr. Merkel oversees 175 people a week at Street Roots and is also an Oak Grove resident. He said it is very important to find ways to create inclusionary zoning for those experiencing homelessness and to curb gentrification. He said success would involve finding funding and zoning solutions, particularly for unincorporated Clackamas County.
- **Jane Leo, Government Affairs Director for Portland Metro Association of Realtors.** Ms. Leo said the Association of Realtors works with people to become and stay homeowners, which has many benefits. She said she would like the task force to focus on the full spectrum of housing, considering how we move somebody from the streets toward homeownership regardless of their definition of affordable.
- **Nate Ember, Citizen.** Mr. Ember is a resident of Oak Grove with a background in architecture and planning. He said houselessness is the breakdown of our social system, and noted current policy is not holistic. He said success would involve taking a holistic look at what we can do collaboratively to empower citizens and identify solutions, prevent cycles of gentrification, and set metrics for any policy or idea. He said he wants Clackamas County to be a regional and national leader.
- **Yelena Voznyuk, NW Housing Alternatives.** NW Housing Alternatives is an affordable housing developer, and Ms. Voznyuk works with residents on housing stability. She said she does not believe that building more affordable housing is the solution as she works with people who have money but still struggle to afford and stay housed. She said success will involve identifying why people are still struggling to afford housing, even when they have resources available, and eliminating those barriers.
- **Alma Flores, Community Development Director and Housing Policy Director for City of Milwaukie.** Ms. Flores said Milwaukie leadership wants to solve this problem. The City of Milwaukie is the first Oregon city outside of Portland to pass a construction excise tax to create a fund to offset housing costs. Milwaukie is also looking at its permitting and planning processes to fix what is stalling. The Milwaukie City Council set housing affordability as their number one priority, and the City's Housing Affordability Strategic Plan is going in front of the Council for approval in June. Ms. Flores said she would like to see alignment between the

City strategy and County strategy. Success would include considering financing and ensuring this is an inclusive process through which the voices of the disenfranchised populations are heard. Ms. Flores said she would like to see a five-year action plan with meaningful actions that moves the County toward achieving a 20-year vision. She also said there is critical alignment between houselessness and economic development. Finally, she said it is crucial to evaluate and measure outcomes and revise as needed.

- **Katrina Holland, Executive Director of the Community Alliance of Tenants.** The Community Alliance of Tenants is a renters' rights advocacy group, whose goal is to educate and empower renters to demand safe, stable and affordable housing. Ms. Holland said there are 1.5 million renters in Oregon: 597,000 are families with children 6-17, and 85,000 are families with children under 6. She said success involves making sure the renter voice is at the table. Renters play a critical role in the economy. She said she is also interested in displacement mitigation and wants to address landlord-tenant relationships. She hopes this process will include balanced perspectives, the development of long-term solutions and bold policies, and a commitment to research and evaluate tools put in place.
- **Nina Carlson, Government and Community Affairs Consultant with NW Natural.** Ms. Carlson is also representing the Clackamas County Business Alliance. She said success will involve breaking down barriers to allow public and private actors to work together and do things differently. She would like to see housing possibilities for all, including renters and people in transitioning phases. She hopes this will result in concrete solutions and strategies and that Clackamas County will serve as a model for other communities.

County staff provided the following introductions:

- **Vahid Brown, Housing Policy Coordinator.** Mr. Brown said success from his perspective would involve an inclusive and informed process that leads to new tools, revenue streams and long-term strategies.
- **Jill Smith, Deputy Director for the Department of Health, Housing and Human Services.** Ms. Smith has been working in housing for 30 years. She said she wants to identify a tool box of solutions for how to help the County's most vulnerable citizens.
- **Dan Chandler, Assistant County Administrator.** Mr. Chandler said success will involve all task members feeling that their time and talents were honored and that this leads to real, realistic, data-driven change that makes Clackamas County a model for other communities.

Ms. Sherring noted the following themes from the task force introductions.

- There is a strong, shared interest in identifying near-term tools and actions that help realize a shared, longer-term vision.
- The task force shared interest in commitment to inclusive engagement with community to earn community buy-in, as well as supporting public/private partnerships.
- Key topics of concern and interest include addressing affordability and instability seen in past development and redevelopment and the displacement from the gentrification cycle and a desire to stabilize and curb gentrification.
- There is a recognition that this is a growing problem, and there is a need for intervention actions, policy and the longer-term strategy

- Task force members want to identify practical tools and solutions— I heard that a “tool box” of strategies is needed.
- The task force recognizes the need to look at the policy, the partnerships and planning tools as part of the solution, including zoning codes, inclusionary zoning and the permitting process.
- There is a need to develop metrics for measuring, evaluating and adjusting strategies to ensure success.

Charter review and meeting plan

Mr. Chandler reviewed the overall meeting plan for the task force. The plan is organized in three phases in acknowledgement of the need for near-term actions as well as a long-term strategy.

- **Phase 1: Identify and recommend a range of near term actions the County could and should do now.** Mr. Chandler noted the County is about to conduct a County-wide needs assessment, which will inform this work. Metro is also likely to put a housing bond on the ballot in November, which will impact what is feasible in the near-term.
- **Phase 2: Identify and recommend best ways the County could fund and financially support housing affordability and reduce homelessness.** This discussion will be informed by the results of the Metro bond and needs assessment. The County may put more money into the general fund to support housing affordability, and the task force may provide recommendations on how to spend these funds.
- **Phase 3: Recommend ways the County, its cooperating cities, community service providers and business partners could better coordinate efforts in the long run.**

Mr. Chandler noted staff will add more detail to the workplan following task force input, including what data and information may be shared at which meetings. The meeting plan can also be refined as the work progresses.

The task force Charter was distributed to members when they agreed to participate in the process. Task force members provided the following suggested revisions to the Charter:

- The work plan and focus on both near-term actions and long-term strategy will help the task force achieve its charge.
- The Charter should include information about how the process will engage the community and bring in the perspective of those outside the task force. Public feedback procedures are missing. Ms. Sherring noted this will be a topic of discussion at the next meeting, and more detail can be added to the Charter about public engagement and the role of task force members in communicating with their networks.
- The Charter should reflect the need to learn from the Portland housing bond and Metro bond processes.
- Task force members felt there is a need for a stated goal in the charter to provide a shared understanding of what the group is trying to accomplish. This should include specifics, e.g. number of people housed or percentage reduction in homelessness. There was a recommendation to expand the first paragraph in the Background section to further define the purpose of the group. The current statement is too broad.

- Task force members want to understand if the County Commission has a specific goal in mind that this task force should work toward.
- The Charter should explain how this process will utilize data and inputs from County staff and other sources, and how data needs will be addressed between meetings.
- The Charter should reflect the need to develop metrics for evaluating any policies that come out of this process.
- The Charter should emphasize inclusivity and the importance of applying an equity lens. All decisions and recommendations made by the task force should be filtered through this lens. Ms. Holland offered to share templates from other processes.
- The Charter should emphasize the importance of developing practical, helpful suggestions that recognize how housing is interrelated to public health, poverty, economic development and other issues. Language used should be accessible.
 - Ms. Sherring explained that with permission of the group, the task force may break up into smaller groups or sub-committees to discuss specific topics in more depth at certain stages.
- The Charter should clarify if the group is a “policy body” or an “operations body,” tasked with implementing actions. Mr. Chandler clarified that the intent was for the task force to be a policy group, with the recognition that its members represent communities that should be involved in the conversation and in implementation.

Task force members were asked to email any additional changes and suggestions to Mr. Chandler and Ms. Smith.

What we know now

Mr. Brown provided a presentation on existing data the County has collected on homelessness and housing affordability. The data presented came from the County’s point-in-time (PIT) count mandated by HUD, Clackamas County Coordinated Housing Access, school district Homeless School Liaisons, and the Springwater Corridor Trail Survey conducted in 2016. The full slideshow is appended to these minutes.

The following questions and comments were provided by task force members throughout the presentation:

- *The number of children experiencing homelessness in the County is unacceptable. That could be a goal the task force works toward.*
- *What is the margin of error for these data sets?*
 - Mr. Brown noted these data are very likely under-estimations and slightly out of date. He will provide links to the original data sources for more information.
- *Was there any investigation into the causes of homelessness among homeless youth in the school system?*
 - Mr. Brown said he would follow up to provide more information about these data sets.
- *Will the task force receive a copy of this presentation?*
 - Mr. Chandler will distribute with the minutes. Mr. Brown will also provide links to the data sources.

- *What is the difference between houselessness and homelessness?*
 - The terms can be used interchangeably. Some groups prefer to use the term houselessness to focus on housing instability and because the term “homeless” can be associated with stigma and stereotypes.
- *The top contributing factor to homelessness in the County from the PIT count is the inability to afford rent. The City of Milwaukie made the County aware of a prominent resident, Nancy, who was paying 90% of her income on rent, when it increased by \$300. The County was able to assist her in finding affordable housing, but she was displaced from the community she was currently living in.*
- *Is it possible to know how much rents are going up?*
 - Ms. Holland said the Community Alliance of Tenants is working on a way to track the housing market. She noted that while median rent is measured, we do not have a good idea of the rate of increase, and this average is based on a small sample. Mr. Johnson noted the median rent figures captured by the census are often delayed.
- *There were 2,290 people identified as homeless in the PIT count, and 2,369 people on the County’s waiting list for housing placement. There may be some overlap between these groups. Can we estimate the total homeless population from these samples, e.g. around 5,000?*
 - Any count of homelessness is a drastic undercount. Having the waitlist number be similar to the PIT number can be seen as good news as it indicates people are calling for County services.
 - Mr. Brown noted the rate of people calling Coordinated Housing Access is growing at an ever-increasing rate. He also said the percentage of overburdened households is very high, meaning many are at risk of becoming homeless.
- *It is important to have this data drive the conversation rather than census data as this is more realistic.*
- *What other demographic data do we have for these individuals?*
 - The County conducted an equity analysis of the Coordinated Housing Access data and will provide this for the task force.
- *Permanent supportive housing units rarely open up, though these are often the best and only intervention for chronically homeless individuals. A regional permanent supportive housing planning process is currently underway. The County is also in the process of constructing housing units for single adult veterans.*
- *Is it a policy decision to not have shelters in Clackamas County?*
 - No. There is a family shelter run by NW Housing Assistance, but it is currently under construction and not operational. In general, shelters are expensive to operate and non-profits have not advocated strongly for the construction of more shelter space in the County.
- *Task force members requested the County come back with a goal (e.g. reduce number of homeless households by 5,000 in five years) at next meeting based on the available data for members to react to.*
 - County staff noted the second half of the presentation, which was postponed to the next meeting, will help quantify what these needs are and provide more detail on cost burdened households.

Next steps and action items

Ms. Sherring reviewed key action items from the meeting:

- Task force members requested contact information be added to the member list. Ms. Yelena Voznyuk asked that her title be updated to Resident Services Coordinator.
- The County will send out recurring calendar holds for upcoming meetings. Meetings may be extended based on input from task force members.
- The County will distribute the PowerPoint slides with the meeting minutes.
- The County will revise the task force Charter based on member feedback.
- County staff will get Commissioner feedback on community engagement and defining goals for this process.
- County staff will present further data at the next meeting.
- County staff will provide background data from presentation to task force members, including the results of the equity analysis of the Coordinated Housing Access program.
- Katrina Holland, Community Alliance of Tenants, will provide examples of equity lens frameworks for consultation when revising the task force charter.
- Task force members will provide additional comments and suggestions to Mr. Dan Chandler and Ms. Jill Smith by email.

Next steps for Meeting #2 include:

- Continue to explore data in more detail
- Review revised Charter and continue discussion around goal for the task force
- Discuss community engagement strategy
- Start to advance a preliminary list of actions

Closing remarks and adjourn

Mr. Chandler thanked task force members for their time and said he is humbled by their willingness to help. He invited members to provide additional feedback via email on the meeting plan and draft charter.