

Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) Meeting Minutes

City Council Chambers at City Hall 110 SE Watula Avenue, 2nd Floor, Ocala, FL 34471

Wednesday, May 28, 2025

1:00 p.m. EST

Attendees/Board Members:

Cory Weaver-Chair

Bridgette Delva

Kristen Dreyer

Jeff Hill

Rhanda Mckown

Rob Peters

Davida Randolph

Henry Samuels

Absent/Excused Members:

Tasha Osbourne-Vice Chair

Gwendolyn Dawson

Staff:

James Haynes, Jr., Community Development Services Director

Jeff Shrum, Growth Management Director

Matt Leibfried, Building Services Director

Mary Vazquez, Manager, ONE-Stop Permit

Barney Tanczos, PC Network Specialist

Rachel Herman, IT Support Specialist I

Natalia Cox, Community Development Services Administrative Coordinator

Christopher Lewis, Community Development Services Rehabilitation Inspection Specialist

Ailin Abboud, Community Development Services Intake Specialist

Bessie Morley, Community Development Services Intake Specialist

Minutes:

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Cory Weaver started the meeting at 1:02 p.m. Ms. Natalia Cox did the roll call.

2. Proof of Public Notice

Ms. Cox stated, "Public notice was posted for the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee Meeting on the City of Ocala CDS website on Wednesday, May 14th, 2025."

3. Approval of March 26, 2025, Minutes

Chairman Weaver asked if the members had the opportunity to review the minutes and asked for a motion to approve. Proposed for approval by Rob Peters, seconded for approval by Kristen Dreyer. Approved by all committee members.

4. Recognition of New Members

James Haynes, Jr., Director of the City of Ocala Community Development Services, welcomed all Board Members and recognized the two (2) new members, namely Rhanda Mckown and Bridgette Delva, and had them introduce themselves. Mr. Haynes expressed his excitement to have the new members (additional talent) join the Committee. He indicated that the AHAC is one of the best and most engaging Boards as it pertains to current issues and affordable housing.

5. Permitting Update – Matt Leibfried

Mr. Haynes introduced Mr. Leibfried, City of Ocala Building Services Director, for a permitting update. Mr. Leibfried introduced himself and mentioned his responsibilities to include building inspections, building permitting, project management and impact fee calculation and collection. He mentioned that his team has worked on reducing the permitting process and inspection timeframes. He indicated his office is moving a lot quicker than other jurisdictions, and that the affordable housing incentives have aligned with the expectations of staff and timelines.

Mr. Leibfried introduced Mary Vazquez, the One -Stop Permit Manager, who has directed her Team to make the current software user friendly to all end users. He also introduced Jeff Shrum, Growth Management Director, as the Building Department is one of the Divisions under Growth Management. Mr. Leibfried emphasized the need for improved communication and a process improvement mindset both internally and externally.

Mr. Haynes commended the Growth Management Department's efforts in streamlining and making the building industry processes, both internally and externally, more efficient and expedited.

6. Affordable Housing Projects

Mr. Haynes shared the details on two (2) affordable housing projects completed by CDS.

- **Sims Project:** Elderly household rehabilitation project. He presented "Before" and "After" pictures of the home. It was a challenging project but turned out well. This was a CDBG project.
- **Insco Project:** Elderly rebuild project (2 bedrooms, 1 bathroom). The project had major setbacks, but it was completed. Rebuilds time frame: 3-5 years based on funding, wait list length, etc. Currently, there are about 20 people on the City's Rebuild List. Mr. Haynes showed "Before" and "After" pictures. The HOME grant was used for this project. The City has a Consortium (agreement) with the County for the HOME grant.

7. CDBG Annual Report

Mr. Haynes shared a spreadsheet with the Committee for FY 2025 - 2026 (October to September). All of the City CDBG projects are for housing (no Public Facilities/Services). Twenty percent of the allotment is set aside for Administration to help pay staff salaries. For the last 3 years, we have been setting monies aside for acquisitions to purchase available lots and/or homes. None have been purchased thus far. Twenty-five thousand (\$25K) is set aside for demolitions (with SHIP funds).

Mr. Haynes mentioned that approximately \$256,000 is expected for the HOME grant for FY 2025-2026; 15% is set aside for administration costs; \$25,000 is set aside for downpayment and purchase

assistance, and the rest will go towards rehab and reconstruction activities. We are watching the federal budget under the new Administration with the expectation of possible cuts and possible elimination of certain grants.

Regarding the FY 2025-2026 SHIP Program (starts July 1st), \$533,000 is expected. Of that, \$25,000 is set aside for purchase assistance; \$508,000 for housing rehabilitation that has already been encumbered. The City of Ocala Community Development Services sent out a Notice announcing the closure of their Waiting List in May 2025 for two (2) reasons: 1) to get a better idea of what the federal budget will look like and not add persons we cannot serve to the list; 2) to get a better grasp of our new intake software ZoomGrants.

Other local funding sources are: 1) the **Community Redevelopment Areas (CRAs)** as part of our partnership with the Economic Development arm of the Growth Management Department (housing rehabilitation allotment: \$250,000 which helped offset last year's SHIP monies reduction of about 30%); next year allotments are approximately \$200,000 in the West Ocala CRA, and \$100,000 in the East Ocala CRA; 2) the **City of Ocala Electric Utility Department (OEU)** has a weatherization program with a budget of about \$50,000/year for our department to assist with things such as HVAC systems, windows, etc. We also refer some weatherization applicants to **Community Action Agency** as needed.

Mr. Haynes also mentioned that we are applying for grants as part of our partnership with the **Marion County Community Foundation** later this year.

8. Rental Assistance

Mr. Haynes shared that Marion County Community Services received an influx of money known as the Emergency Rental Assistance, Part 2 (approximately \$1-\$1.5 million) to assist the community with rental funds. The three (3) agencies that were awarded these funds; **Brother's Keeper, Interfaith and Neighborhood Housing & Development Corporation (NHDC)**. These monies have to be spent by September 30th. Mr. Haynes encouraged the Board members to share the information with community agencies. Discussion ensued with questions from the Board. City Councilwoman Dreyer requested information with the details of the funding and agencies be sent to all Board members for review and dissemination.

9. Point-in-Time (PIT) Count

Mr. Haynes explained that the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) has all Continuum of Care organizations count the homeless (sheltered and unsheltered) in the month of February. Marion County and City staff physically go out to camps and perform the count. The count is done on a specific day, but the City of Ocala's Outreach staff goes back out the rest of the week to engage (interview) people and capture as many homeless persons. This year, the count was affected by the cold weather, however, the total homeless count was 391 persons, a 3% increase from last year. Unsheltered was down about 20% mostly because of the frigid temperatures. Consequently, total sheltered increased 29%. Emergency shelters and transitional housing increased about 23%. Marion County does a phenomenal job at providing services to Veterans and we seek available/sustainable housing for them. Thirty-three percent (33%) decrease for chronically homeless. Survivors of domestic violence increased 9%. Community agencies collaborate and report numbers through our HMIS system. Discussion ensued regarding the PIT count results.

10. Salvation Army Update

Mr. Haynes mentioned the Salvation Army is facing severe financial challenges, and are considering closing their shelter operations in two weeks. Currently, there's 21 males, 8 females and 2 families sheltered at the Salvation Army. These people may have no place to go. Members at the CoC Meeting earlier that week were shocked at the news. We have no answers currently as to what the

outcome will be, but we hope to assist and collaborate with community agencies. The County had offered some funding, but the Salvation Army declined. Discussion ensued regarding Salvation Army outreach funds, tiered-level organizations, and possible outcome scenarios for persons in the shelter. The Salvation Army will hold a meeting next week and will provide an update of the situation.

11. Other

- Affordable Housing Community Event - Held on May 15th; 8 speakers, lots of information on community programs; well attended.
- Senate Bill 1730 – Bill was unanimously approved by the House and the Senate, and it amends various provisions of the Live Local Act and zoning & land use regulations to authorize affordable housing development. A handout was provided for the Board to review.
- Regional AHAC Meeting – Councilwoman Dreyer mentioned that she shared the accomplishments of this AHAC with the regional body to include reallocation of \$200K of COVID relief funds for rental assistance; Six to seven surplus lots (OHA, builders and others); rehabilitation efforts to preserve our housing stock; demolitions and rebuilds; ribbon cutting events; Affordable Housing Incentive Fund (AHF), CRA \$50K allocation, among other accomplishments. Councilwoman Dreyer thanked Mr. Haynes for all the activities the City of Ocala oversees and is engaged in.

Discussion ensued about surplus lots, community land trusts (CLTs), mortgage terms, and reinvestment housing programs.

Chair Cory Weaver shared the upcoming Summer Job Fair on July 24th from 5 pm -7 pm at Howard Academy Community Center.

Next AHAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 30th.

12. Adjournment

AHAC meeting adjourned at 2:25 pm EST.

/nc