



Housing Opportunities Commission Minutes  
December 14, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.

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Members Present: Betzig-Lundberg, Rogers, Chaput, Werthmann, Peterson, Theisen, Poser

Members Absent: Moseley, Ross, Filipczak

Staff Present: Allen, Hufford, Baumgartner

1. Call to Order by Chairperson Chaput at 5:00 p.m.
2. Roll Call – Members and staff were present in Council Chambers.
3. Meeting minutes of November 9, 2022 were approved.  
Motion by Betzig-Lundberg, Seconded by Rogers
4. Open Public Comment Period – Deferred to the end of the meeting
5. Public Discussions
  - A. 2022 Work Plan

i. **Regional Housing Study**

- a. Mr. Allen shared the identity of the selected consultant, CZB LLC, out of Maine and Colorado, and that staff would be working primarily with their Colorado office, which had recently completed the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Ashland. He concluded by stating that the contract was signed and approved on December 13<sup>th</sup>.
- b. Allen stated that kick-off for the study will tentatively be the week of January 23<sup>rd</sup>, but CZB will be conducting their data gathering, research and review in the meantime. He also explained that the City of Eau Claire, City of Altoona, and Eau Claire County will be meeting next week to discuss the scope of work, timeline and the steering committee, and that the project is still on track for a May-June completion date.

Questions/Comments - none

ii. **Funding Affordable Housing**

- a. Ms. Hufford shared that the ARPA funding was approved as part of the CIP.

Questions/Comments

- When would the money be available for use? The \$275,000 would be available in late 2023 to align with the LIHTC process.
  - Why is it not available until late 2023? Staff needs to ask the Finance Department to confirm when it will actually be available, but it aligned with the WHEDA-LIHTC process.
  - Would it be available for the full year? Staff will look into it to confirm whether it will be available on January 1<sup>st</sup> or July 1<sup>st</sup>.
- b. Ms. Hufford explained that the scoring criteria should be updated before another project gets proposed and that updating them will be part of the 2023 Work Plan. She further explained that it will be sent out to the Commission for review in time for the next meeting to allow for them to have the updated criteria by the time that funding is available.

Questions/Comments

- There was a desire to streamline and simplify the scoring criteria, especially in situations where the applicant was applying for LIHTC.
- The Commission was interested in forming a subgroup to evaluate the scoring criteria.
- It was noted that up to now they had the process to help projects get over their gaps with LIHTC and that one group in Altoona didn't do this.
- Was there any feedback on the scoring criteria from the applicants? Staff will investigate.
- The conversion of the Eau Claire School District Office Building (old high school) was an example of a failed project due to insufficient funding. Staff commented on the matter, stating that it wasn't doable and that there were still conversations going on.
- The scoring criteria will be brought back before the Commission next month and it will be included in the 2023 Work Plan.

- iii. **Regional Housing Conference** – Ms. Hufford gave an update on the Regional Housing conference, covering how it went and stated that there haven't been many survey responses yet. She then went over the various responses that were in.

Questions/Comments

- The conference was referenced by several Councilmembers at the most recent City Council meeting and was mentioned in light of policy discussions.
- Multiple commissioner's liked Kurt Paulsen's presentation.
- The recording of the conference will be available on the City of Eau Claire's website.
- How many people attended virtually? Approximately 20 people attended virtually and 40-50 in person.
- Staff suggested that the date of the next conference should be set in advance.
- It was suggested that the conference should be coordinated with a variety of groups to better ensure their attendance.
- Many of the local homebuilders were unable to attend due to them having their own conference that day.
- There was interest in holding a digital/in-person conference again next year.
- There was positive feedback on demonstrations and that multiple people approached staff to demonstrate next year.

- B. **2023 Work Plan** - Ms. Hufford noted that the 2023 Work Plan wasn't ready yet and went through the various items from the 2022 Work Plan as an example. She noted that updating the scoring criteria would be added to the items included in from the 2022 Work Plan, that the EDI Coordinator has been hired, and that they will be spearheading the ARPA funding efforts. Add AARP Housing For All Ages designation as a project.

Questions and Comments

- How did the Commission do their ordinance and policy review last year? The results may not have been seen at City Council last year; however, the HOC did review the process that a developer needs to go through for approval of their project and that some changes were made at the Plan Commission level, including the creation of their consent agenda.
- A lot of ordinance and policy changes would happen as part of the zoning code rewrite and asked if the Commission's plan would be part of it. The Commission's involvement in the zoning code rewrite should be part of the 2023 Work Plan.
- What was the timetable for the zoning code rewrite? It may not be finished by the end of 2023, but instead be finished in 2024.

- The Commission should think of three policies outside of the zoning code rewrite that they could advance, such as the community land trust.
- The Momentum West Housing Solutions Forum will be held at UW-Stout on January 25<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 to 12:00, and it might be a good place to go for ideas. It might be a good idea for someone to attend the forum and report back.
- The land trust is an idea that the Commission should explore further so that the City has a lot more say on its own land.
- Will data on whether housing vouchers go unused will be looked at as part of the housing study? Ms. Hufford mentioned an article that she and Allen looked at earlier that day.
- The Commission should consider working with the Redevelopment Authority (RDA).
- There was interest in the positions being formed through various funding areas, such as the ARPA funded position. Ms. Hufford noted through the consolidation of various points of funding, her team, under the supervision of the City Manager, was created to handle the tasks of that position the Housing Manger position was rolled into the team and Ms. Hufford would be leading the housing work.
- There was a grant through DHS that 11 agencies applied for, but none were from this area. This is something that staff would work on and it would fall under public/private work plans.

6. Other Business Agenda Items

A. Staff Updates

- a. Affordable Housing projects update – Ms. Hufford shared the below updates
  - i. Station 955 was passed at City Council on December 13<sup>th</sup>, and it will be primarily student housing.
  - ii. Mt. Washington – There is a contract to buy Mount Washington, and the buyer is working on a preliminary site plan.
  - iii. SCS Eau Claire – Four (4) site plans were passed at Plan Commission for this multi-family development the week prior.
  - iv. Eau Claire Academy – The City is having internal conversations on what’s going to happen with it and if the City wants to look at ARPA funding for it.

Questions/Comments

- Can the Commission get an update on the LIHTC projects, The Current and Prairie Heights projects? Staff didn’t have an update for any of the other projects.
- Can the Commission get an update on how many people are looking for housing? Staff could make this a running update for future meetings.
- Will the meetings be going virtual? Virtual meetings are being discussed and it would take an ordinance update through City Council to make it happen.

7. Discussion and Direction

A. Future Agenda Items

- a. Commissioner Poser may give a presentation on homelessness services and existing solutions at a future meeting. Hufford noted that data can be included in each packet.
- b. Look into policies surrounding living wages.
- c. Finalize 2023 work plan.

B. Announcements

- a. Commissioner Poser announced that on the night of January 25<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> there will be people out to talk to the homeless, and noted that there will be a survey that can be done in the office place. The lead at Western Dairyland will have more information.
  - b. Ms. Hufford noted that she will be the primary staff support for the Commission and that Planning staff will attend as needed.
8. On a motion by Commissioner Poser and seconded by Council Member Werthmann the meeting adjourned at 6:39 p.m.