MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL HOUSING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 14, 2025 – 3:45 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Pamela Holder, Chair, City Council Member Aaron Baker, Vice Chair, City Council Member Victor Foster, Citizen Member Mayor Maureen Copelof, Ex-Officio
Members Absent:	None
Staff Present:	Wilson Hooper, City Manager Dean Luebbe, Finance Director Paul Ray, Planning Director Emily Brewer, Planner Becky McCann, Communications Coordinator
Guests:	Monica Driscoll, Travis Fowler, Sara VanLear (via Zoom), Sarah Odio (via Zoom), Catherine Sexton, Terin Marlow, Harvey Sankey, David Bradley (representing *Transylvania Times*)

A. Welcome and Call to Order

Chairwoman Pamela Holder welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:45pm.

B. Certification of Quorum

Quorum was certified.

C. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Baker made the motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Foster. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Foster made the motion to approve the December 10, 2024 meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Baker. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Update on Fairhaven Meadows Funding Request

Mr. Hooper introduced this agenda item, giving background on Fairhaven Meadows, a 42-unit LIHTC (Low-income Housing Tax Credit) funded, multi-family housing development on Asheville Highway. The development is being constructed by Commonwealth Company, a firm from Wisconsin. He stated that, due to flux in the economy, the LIHTC award has proven to be insufficient to fund the project as originally planned and there remains a $1.7 million gap in funding. The City has been assisting Commonwealth to try to find additional funding. Commonwealth received some funding by Self-Help Credit Union through a loan, which will close the gap by $900,000. They have also returned to the Asheville Housing Consortium asking for more funding and although it has not yet been approved, an additional $400,000 is likely to be approved. This brings the gap to a $500,000-$600,000 range. Mr. Hooper noted that he had spoken with Transylvania County, who is considering a contribution as well.

Mr. Hooper noted that Summit Engineering has been working on detailed assessments of the City's water and sewer infrastructure and those assessments will include recommendations for capital improvements to the utility system. The County is interested in ensuring that the necessary water and sewer improvements are achieved, and they want to make sure that funding this request will not exhaust their ability to do the utility work that is described in these plans to be provided by Summit Engineering. The County wants to see these plans before they commit to participating in funding the Fairhaven Meadows project.

Mr. Hooper noted that he has not yet made a recommendation on funding the project because he feels that the City should fill the final gap and that amount is still yet to be seen. Mayor Copelof raised the question of when the County might consider providing funding. Mr. Hooper agreed to continue pressing the County for a decision asking that a decision be made by March 2025. Mr. Baker noted that he hopes the County will be able to use some of their housing funds in a spirit of collaboration to complete this project. The Committee continued their discussions and Mr. Hooper noted that he will continue to update the Committee as he learns more.

F. DFI – Draft Public Interest Statements for Azalea Avenue Project

Sara VanLear and Sarah Odio, both with Development Finance Initiative (DFI), were in attendance via Zoom to present information regarding public interest in the Azalea Avenue site. Project Manager Ms. VanLear noted that the public interests are used to set the goals for the project and final recommendations.

Ms. VanLear summarized the following excerpt of the report, which focused on public interests and feedback:

Proposed Guiding Public Interests *(Excerpted from report)*
Based on the community input received, the following are refined guiding public interests for the Azalea Avenue site.

Affordable housing development on the Azalea Avenue site should:

1. optimize the number of new, quality rental units affordable to Brevard's low-to moderate income households and the local workforce.
2. include access to green space and community amenities for residents.
3. attract as much private investment as possible to maximize the impact of public investment in affordable housing.
4. accommodate the City's sewer infrastructure extension into in the Azalea/Rhododendron neighborhood.

Ms. VanLear then further expanded on each of the guiding public interests as extracted from the report and included below:

Excerpt:	*Draft public interest statement presented to engagement session participants and via the online survey.*	*Refined public interest statement based on engagement session and survey feedback.*
Public Interest #1	Affordable housing development on the Azalea Avenue site should maximize the number of new affordable rental units for Brevard's low-to-moderate income households and support the local workforce.	Affordable housing on the Azalea Avenue site should optimize the number of new, quality rental units affordable to Brevard's low-to-moderate income households and the local workforce.

Feedback:
The majority of participants agreed regarding the need for additional affordable housing and were in favor of new affordable housing units on the Azalea Avenue site. Many participants noted increases in housing cost and housing shortages, and shared a desire for the local workforce and LMI households to access quality, affordable places to live in Brevard.

Most participants, however, did not agree with the word "maximize" in the public interest statement. Many participants worried that "maximizing" the site could detract from building quality homes for low-to-moderate income households. A few participants asked questions about the density of the future development, and one participant summarized this discussion point by saying that the site should prioritize "quality built homes with elbow room." Another participant added that the site should be used to "increase the number of units, but increase with a goal."

As a result, strong participant support existed for replacing "maximize" with a word that better communicates the need for quality units and a site plan that avoids overcrowding. As noted above, public interest #1 was refined by replacing the word "maximize" with "optimize," and adding the word "quality" to describe the new rental units.

Lastly, a few participants also noted a desire for the future development to serve a mix of residents including the local workforce, and people who are not in the workforce such as disabled individuals and senior residents. There were several questions about who would be eligible to live in the future development, and how tenants would be chosen.

Excerpt:	*Draft public interest statement presented to engagement session participants and via the online survey.*	*Refined public interest statement based on engagement session and survey feedback.*
Public Interest #2	No public interest related to green space or amenities was presented to participants.	Affordable housing on the Azalea Avenue site should include access to green space and community amenities for residents.

Feedback:
Many participants and survey respondents highlighted the desire for site design elements that would support future residents' quality of life such as green space and shared community amenities. Several questions were asked about a gathering space for residents and outdoor recreation areas, including a playground for families to use. One participant noted that the site should "include quality green space and preserve as many trees on the property as possible." As a result of this input, a public interest was added to ensure that green space and community amenities are an explicit goal for a future development on this site.

Excerpt:	*Draft public interest statement presented to engagement session participants and via the online survey.*	*Refined public interest statement based on engagement session and survey feedback.*
Public Interest #3	Affordable housing development on the Azalea Avenue site should attract as much private investment as possible to effectively leverage the City's support of affordable housing development.	Affordable housing on the Azalea Avenue site should attract as much private investment as possible to maximize the impact of public investment in affordable housing.

Feedback:
Most participants agreed that private investment should align with the City's affordable housing goals. Additionally, several participants noted the appropriateness of the City leveraging private investment to reach those goals.

Several participants also expressed distrust in private developers' commitment to quality affordable housing and stated a desire to ensure that private investment would not compromise the development of quality places to live and the long-term affordability for Brevard residents. Many participants questioned how a private investor would be held accountable and expressed concern about both the construction and the property management and ongoing operations: "too many

private companies cut corners." A few participants also discussed their confusion about the type of private investment and noted that public and charitable resources may be better suited to pursue affordable housing goals. Another participant reiterated an overall agreement with utilizing private investment "as long as it doesn't compromise the ultimate goal of quality new homes" for low-to-moderate income households.

As a result of this input, the DFI team clarified the definition of "private investment" as all funds not provided by a public entity such as a local or state government. The next phase of this process will detail tools to hold private development partner(s) accountable.

Excerpt:	*Draft public interest statement presented to engagement session participants and via the online survey.*	*Refined public interest statement based on engagement session and survey feedback.*
Public Interest #4	Affordable housing development on the Azalea Avenue site should catalyze additional infrastructure investment to support housing quality and affordability in the Azalea/Rhododendron neighborhood.	Affordable housing on the Azalea Avenue site should accommodate the City's sewer infrastructure extension into the Azalea/Rhododendron neighborhood.

Feedback:
Most participants agreed that private investment should align with the City's affordable housing goals. Additionally, several participants noted the appropriateness of the City leveraging private investment to reach those goals.

Several participants also expressed distrust in private developers' commitment to quality affordable housing and stated a desire to ensure that private investment would not compromise the development of quality places to live and the long-term affordability for Brevard residents. Many participants questioned how a private investor would be held accountable and expressed concern about both the construction and the property management and ongoing operations: "too many private companies cut corners." A few participants also discussed their confusion about the type of private investment and noted that public and charitable resources may be better suited to pursue affordable housing goals. Another participant reiterated an overall agreement with utilizing private investment "as long as it doesn't compromise the ultimate goal of quality new homes" for low-to-moderate income households.

As a result of this input, the DFI team clarified the definition of "private investment" as all funds not provided by a public entity such as a local or state government. The next phase of this process will detail tools to hold private development partner(s) accountable.

Committee members shared their questions and points of discussion throughout the presentation by Ms. VanLear. Some of the conversation centered around how the subject property will need to be zoned upon its development, noting the potential need for conditional zoning.

Ms. VanLear concluded that the public engagement revealed that the potential traffic for the development and the limited transportation options in this neighborhood caused concerns. Mr. Baker commented that it is worth tracking the traffic issues and transportation needs given that the public had shared their concerns in this regard.

Ms. VanLear requested that the Committee endorse the report and ask that City Council move forward with project by having the priorities incorporated into the designs developed by the architects. Mr. Foster made the motion that the Committee move forward by sending the project to City Council recommending the project. This motion was seconded by Mr. Baker. All voted in favor.

G. Public Comment

Harvey Sankey asked for clarification on the makeup of the local housing coalition and where the money would come from for the Fairhaven Meadows project. He also asked if the City has a fair housing plan. Mr. Hooper responded that the City does not have a plan per se, but does have a housing playbook for helping to determine funding options for housing. Mr. Sankey referenced the City of Asheville's Fair Housing Plan.

Monica Driscoll noted her appreciation for the DFI presentation and overview of the public engagement process. She encouraged the Committee and City to develop housing that has ample space for getting acquainted with their neighbors. She also encouraged the City and the County to work together collaboratively on various projects, including housing.

Travis Fowler commended the Committee and City for making positive steps towards providing affordable housing in the area.

H. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for February 11, 2025 at 3:45pm.

I. Adjourn

Ms. Holder asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Foster moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Baker. Meeting adjourned at 4:58pm.

Minutes Approved: April 8, 2025

Pamela Holder
Chair, Council Member

Selena D. Coffey
Assistant to the City Manager