MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL HOUSING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, April 8, 2025 – 3:45 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Pamela Holder, Chair, City Council Member Aaron Baker, Vice Chair, City Council Member Mayor Maureen Copelof, Ex-Officio
Members Absent:	Victor Foster, Citizen Member
Staff Present:	Paul Ray, Planning Director Selena Coffey, Assistant to the City Manager
Guests:	Meg Lebeck (Housing Assistance Corporation), Sean Rose (Housing Assistance Corporation), Crystal Watkins (Housing Assistance Corporation), 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 3:54pm.

B. Certification of Quorum

Assistant to the City Manager Selena Coffey certified that a quorum was present.

C. Approval of Agenda

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

D. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Baker made the motion to approve the January 14, 2025 meeting minutes and the motion was seconded by Ms. Holder. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Housing Assistance Corporation – Cashiers Valley Road Land Disposition

Paul Ray introduced the agenda item and introduced representatives from Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC) to share their proposal for the development of 7 acres of land in the Rosenwald community for affordable housing.

Meg Lebeck, the Executive Director of HAC, joined via Zoom, and provided an overview of HAC's goals for providing affordable housing, home repairs, and housing-related outreach programs in Transylvania, Henderson, and Polk counties. Ms. Lebeck then asked Sean Rose, HAC's Director of New Construction, to present information about projects that the organization has built in Hendersonville and Columbus.

Crystal Watkins, HAC's Housing Counselor, then spoke and stated that HAC met with members of the community on October 17, 2024, and shared a proposed project in the Rosenwald community, off Cashiers Valley Road. This project would include the construction of 14 single family affordable homes for those at 80% AMI and below. The homes are proposed to be constructed on 7 acres of land that are currently owned by the City of Brevard. These homes would offer 3- and 4-bedroom options, would include public utilities, and require sweat equity by home buyers. Ms. Watkins informed the committee of the homeowner requirements and noted that there are currently 9 Transylvania County residents who are interested in the proposed homes. Ms. Lebeck added that HAC has received interest in the homes from city employees and local schoolteachers.

Mr. Rose shared photos of the proposed land off Cashiers Valley Road and noted that 3 home designs are proposed, including 3 bedroom/2 bath and 4 bedroom/2 bath with sizes ranging from 1,176-1,493 sq. ft. These homes will be constructed using USDA funding and purchased through the self-help program. He also noted that those who purchase the homes will be able to keep them throughout their lives and can be passed along to their children.



Mr. Rose shared that HAC is waiting to hear about funding and could potentially break ground in 2025 if they are able to fill the funding gaps. During the discussion, Ms. Watkins shared that she aids new homeowners, helping them with scheduling maintenance and educational guidance on home ownership.

Ms. Holder asked additional questions regarding the home counseling provided and how homeowners might be able to build generational wealth in the purchase of the proposed homes. Ms. Watkins responded to the questions, noting that those who purchase the homes can sell to others, and if they transfer the home to someone in their family, the new owner will need to pay the subsidy back to USDA, but it will stay in the family. The committee continued to discuss the positive impacts and complexities of the homebuyers being able to build generational wealth with the purchase of these homes.

Ms. Holder asked if HAC feels that their funding stream remains strong with current uncertainty at the federal level. Ms. Lebeck responded that HAC maintains a strong line of credit to continue providing affordable housing stock and they are looking into the potential of gaining CDBG-DR funds, which are used for rehabilitation and reconstruction, as well as potential partnerships with credit unions.

Ms. Holder asked who will own the land after a person buys one of the perspective homes. Ms. Watkins confirmed that the homebuyer will also own the land on which the home is constructed.

Mr. Baker spoke about his interest in maximizing the use of the city lot that is being considered for the project because available land is becoming sparse within the city. He noted the importance of maintaining diversity in housing within the city. He questioned whether HAC has constructed projects that offer multi-family housing. Mr. Rose responded that there is precedent in other places for building townhome-style homes using the self-help model with USDA funds. Ms. Lebeck noted that HAC is considering this approach for a development in Henderson County as well. Mr. Ray added that including some duplexes may be helpful in keeping costs down and Mr. Rose suggested that they may explore this idea further for the proposed project.

The committee and HAC representatives talked about the topography of the proposed property, resale values of homes within projects in neighboring counties, the homes' design and construction, and homebuyer incomes and subsidies.

Mr. Ray addressed the previously provided draft development agreement between the city and HAC, asking the committee if they were prepared to recommend that it go forward to city council. Ms. Holder responded that her preference would be to wait until all committee members were present and had the opportunity to review the agreement. She asked that the agreement be included on the next agenda of the committee.

F. Public Comment

Harvey Sankey asked about the cost of this to the city in the future. Mr. Ray responded that there would be no additional cost to the city over the cost for services that the city provides other residents. Mr. Sankey then asked if the city's employees could buy the homes. Ms. Watkins responded that she, in accordance with fair lending regulations, cannot market only to specific groups, but was available to speak to groups as requested. Mr. Sankey asked if the mortgages were fixed rate. Ms. Watkins responded that they are fixed rates. Mr. Sankey asked about HCA's average construction cost per square foot and Mr. Rose estimated that the average is $168 per square foot with sweat equity.

G. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the committee was scheduled for Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 3:45pm.

H. Adjourn

Ms. Holder asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Baker moved to adjourn and the motion was seconded by Ms. Holder. The meeting adjourned at 5:22pm.

Minutes Approved: May 13, 2025

Pamela Holder, Chair, Council Member
Aaron Baker, Vice Chair, Council Member

Selena D. Coffey
Assistant to the City Manager