



MEETING MINUTES

HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF WASHINGTON COUNTY

August 24, 2023- 9:00 a.m.

Hybrid Meeting In-Person & Via Zoom

<u>COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT</u>	<u>STAFF PRESENT</u>
Dave Bachman	Jacob Boyett
Melinda Bell	Michael Buonocore
Gena Briggs	Andrew Crampton
Renee Brouse	Laura Jackson
Ryan Cain	Liz Morris
Deena Castrejon	Will Seals
Bruce Dickinson	Melissa Sonsalla
John Epstein	
Fernando Lira	
Narendar Sahgal	
Eric Schmidt	
Nina Sparr	<u>GUESTS</u>
Nina Stafford	
<u>ABSENT</u>	<u>HABOD MEMBERS PRESENT</u>
Carine Arendes	
Hayley Purdy	

I. **MEETING CALLED TO ORDER** – 9:00 a.m. A quorum was present.

II. **PUBLIC COMMENTS – ATTENDEES (INCLUDING ONLINE GUESTS)**

III. **DISCUSSION – ORAL COMMUNICATIONS and MEMBER UPDATES**

No member updates.

IV. **ACTION – APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The committee voted to approve the May 25, 2023 meeting minutes.

Motion: John Epstein

Second: Rene Brouse

Vote: All in favor



The committee voted to approve the June 22, 2023 meeting minutes with the alteration to fix the incorrect date on page 1 (in the meeting it was stated as page 2).

Motion: Rene Brouse

Second: Bruce Dickinson

Vote: All in favor with one abstention (Eric Schmidt)

V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Presented by Michael Buonocore, Interim Executive Director.

Michael announced Molly Rogers has been selected as the new Director for the Department of Housing Services. He shared that both Plambeck Gardens in Tualatin and Terrace Glen in Tigard held groundbreaking events this summer. These projects were funded through the Metro Affordable Housing Bond. Also, two shelter pod communities will open in September in Cornelius (36 units) and Aloha (30 units). They will both be managed by Open Door HousingWorks.

VII. RESOLUTIONS / ACTION ITEMS

None

VII. ONGOING BUSINESS

None

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Housing Executive Director Recruitment Update

Previously discussed in the Executive Director Report.

B. HAC Forum Planning Update

This year the HAC Forum will take place on November 3, 2023 that will include a more interactive approach with participants taking part in a round table after each of two presentations. The two keynote speakers will be confirmed soon.

Jacob noted at the end of the HAC Forum, there will be a one-hour HAC meeting.

Is there collaboration between jurisdictions and counties on the Emergency Order funding from the State?

Michael noted collaboration is taking place especially with community partners who work in several jurisdictions. Also, the Communications staff are producing short videos to be utilized by staff on the ground outlining Supportive Housing Services (SHS) and the different funding mechanisms available. He noted funds are steadily being distributed in a way to ensure sustainability of the projects going forward.



Discussion on Homelessness and Mental and Behavioral Health

Melinda Bell explained many homeless individuals need a mental health assessment prior to placing them in permanent housing.

Michael will ensure to schedule a presentation at a future HAC meeting to focus on the partnership between Health and Human Services and Housing Services to address this issue.

Eric Schmidt stated as a member of the Behavior Health Council, there have been discussions around the issue of where to provide the services that need to be addressed. He added, Permanent Supportive Housing works well for most people, but some may need in-patient care.

Ryan Cain noted on the development side there is a trend showing the need for staffing providers regarding behavioral health issues. He shared permanent supportive housing units will increase in the next few years. The demographic of those that served in an area needs to be taken into consideration as sometimes too much assistance at a location can be a deterrent for some individuals.

Bruce Dickinson inquired if there is discord on where resources should be allocated. Michael stated they have learned to intentionally design a living environment where services are available in specific locations which work better than bringing services to people.

Gena Briggs indicated some people who receive assistance do not have the life skills to maintain the assistance they are receiving without support and training.

Dena said they are providing transitional housing for people with severe and persistent mental health issues who don't have a medical guardian or advocate. She noted the challenges with Oregon law that makes it difficult to receive services. Currently Oregon law does not allow for interventions for those with behavioral health issues without a medical guardian or advocate.

Melinda stated it is important to work with people being housed who have been homeless for a longer period to help them adjust to their new environment, so they won't return to the comfort of the streets.

Narendar feels Washington County needs to paint a bigger picture about the problem and how the budget is being allocated to communicate to the workers in the field that work is being done but in a diligent way to ensure sustainability.

John Epstein suggested highlighting success stories in areas like the upcoming pod villages and translate them into public service videos that can be shared with the community to grow support for the ongoing work in housing in Washington County. Michael will add this as an agenda item at a future meeting.



Dave Bachman stated he has seen a tremendous amount of success with the permanent supportive housing portfolio in Washington County which has not been communicated to the public. An example is the Aloha Inn where there hasn't been one residential eviction since its inception.

C. Inflation Reduction Act

Ryan Cain shared a client of his inquired about the possibility of gap funding with the Inflation Reduction Act for permanent supportive housing and affordable housing projects. He explained this is a relatively new resource and more research needs to be done to find what avenues could be utilized toward funding housing projects in the future.

Andrew Crampton noted federal funds in development and affordable housing are complicated and the logistics in navigating the usage of those funds can be difficult. In one instance energy efficiency grants were used and then an audit resulted in the project losing money due to the cost of the audit. A variety of grant programs are included in this Act that are implemented through four federal agencies (HUD, DOE, EPA, and Department of Treasury). There is also a Green and Resilient Retrofit Program which focuses on multi-family residential with increased incentives for affordable housing projects. Another aspect to this Act is the HOME program which provides high efficiency electrical features for smaller scale units. There are tax deductions for upgrades, and it includes an expanded scope on tax credits for energy efficiency for prevailing wage projects. Locally these resources could be used toward rehab projects, targeted toward small properties, new construction opportunities, or for public housing single family portfolio. This presentation can be found [here](#).

Narendar asked if this reduces the gap with new construction on reaching Net Zero for all new buildings in Washington County.

Andrew stated there is a program that provides funding to create energy efficiencies for new construction at different levels of what type of energy efficiency would be included.

IX. DEPARTMENT UPDATES

A. Development Updates

Laura Jackson has been hired to work with affordable housing development. She graduated from Portland State University earlier this year with her second master's degree focusing on developing affordable housing. Her first master's degree is in architecture. She is the co-founder of the non-profit, Renovate PDX.



B. Rental Assistance Updates

Liz Morris stated the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program began in 2008 which combined supportive housing and HUD’s Housing Choice Voucher program. HUD has partnered with the Department of Veteran Affairs to provide clinical services and case management. The Housing Authority of Washington County (HAWC) coordinates with the local VA Portland Health Care system. VASH funding is based on geographical needs from local data provided to HUD and are allocated to individuals as well as projects. Due to this program, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness has decreased dramatically since 2009. Currently Washington County has been awarded 247 VASH vouchers and of those the utilization rate is 83.8% which is above the nationwide average. There are 22 households currently shopping for housing and when leased up the utilization will increase to 90%. The amount spent monthly on this program is \$197,407 and the per unit cost is \$972.45. One of the biggest challenges with this program is that HUD and the VA have different metrics for success. Not all veterans qualify for certain services based on how they were discharged. In June 2022 the success of the VASH program in Washington County led to an award of increased staffing at the local VA but with delayed implementation. This led to a drop in the utilization rate leading the county to request no new vouchers be awarded. However, within a year utilization increased 25%. This past April the HAWC submitted documentation for interest in additional vouchers and are in discussions with the VA to determine if additional vouchers should be sought. The county has also applied for approval to allow 15% of VASH vouchers to be utilized by other agency partners who serve veterans. This presentation can be found [here](#).

Can someone receiving Rapid Rehousing services be able to obtain a VASH voucher?

They could meet the definition of homelessness because of receiving those funds but would need to meet with the VA to get on their interest list.

How do you address the imbalance of demographics of those receiving VA vouchers versus the current demographics of those in the military?

Nina Stafford explained the demographics of those using VASH match up well to the demographics of the veterans that are currently being served at the VA. However, there needs to be increased outreach to expand the outreach to veterans in the region to expand the current demographics. To connect a veteran with VASH, they can go in person to the walk-in clinic at the VA Community Resource and Referral Center at 308 SW 1st Ave, Suite 155, Portland, Oregon 97204 or call 503-808-1256.

C. Written Department Updates

Additional department updates can be found in the August 2023 HAC packet.



X. MEMBER COMMUNITY UPDATE

Mental Health partnership between Health and Human Services and the Housing Authority.
Communications with veterans with homelessness services.

The Public Housing division is preparing to open the waitlist for 2, 3, and 4-bedroom units on September 20, 2023.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Melinda Bell
Second: Eric Schmidt
Vote: All in favor

Meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.

Michael Buonocore
Secretary/Interim Executive Director