

HOUSING COMMISSION

APPROVED MEETING NOTES – May 10, 2018

Attendance			
	Present		Present
Berkey, Eric	-	Lederer, John	Y
Brescia, Eric	Y	Withers, Larry	Y
Borthwick, Russell	Y		
Blank, Rolf	Y	Staff:	
Bray, Holly	Y	Franklin, Joel	Y
Browne, Paul	-	Planning Comm. Liaison:	
Certosimo, Jeff	Y	Weir, Daniel	-
de Ferranti, Matt	Y		
Gee, Evelyn	Y	Disability Advisory Comm Liason	
Hogan, Alice	Y	Ray, Doris	Y
Langenbeck, Kay	Y		

Held in: Courthouse Plaza, 2100 Clarendon Blvd, Room 311

Other Staff Present: David Cristeal of the Housing Division, Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development (CPHD).

The Chair, Holly Bray, called the meeting to order.

Public Comment

Jim Hurysz said that Alexandria is going to propose a tax increase on food to help fund affordable housing. He said he is here to talk about a lack of diversity, back in the 80's the Democratic Party was very progressive and now the commissions are not diverse, economically or racially. He said that developers and staff are making decisions and live out of the County. Affordable housing is not affordable to those making lower incomes and many amenities are also getting pushed out of the County. Anyone who expresses disappointment in density is called a NIMBY.

Aleksandr Belinskiy said that a new draft of the Relocation Guidelines was released early this month and changed the definitions of "by-right" and affordability, the Housing Commission should look at the new guidelines. Adherence to the Guidelines is mandatory for owners proposing projects which require Arlington County Board approval. Owners proposing by-right developments, which do not require County Board approval, are strongly encouraged (although not required) to follow the Guidelines.

Approval of Notes

Holly Bray moved approval of the April 12, 2018 notes, Russell Borthwick seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Real Estate Tax Relief Program

Staff Presentation

Virginia localities are authorized to provide Real Estate Tax Relief to homeowners aged 65 or over, as well as to permanently disabled homeowners. Arlington's program is overseen by the Department of

Human Services. In 2015, 940 Arlington households were approved for tax relief under the program, resulting in \$4.2 million in uncollected revenue. The proposed changes stem from the work of the Real Estate Tax Relief Working Group, appointed by the County Manager in 2016, at the direction of the Board. The working group was charged with studying the tax relief program and developing recommendations for the Fiscal Year 2018 budget process. Members included representatives from the County's commissions on aging, disability, fiscal affairs and housing, as well as a member-at-large, and tax relief program participants.

The proposed changes include extending the application deadline from August 15 to November 15; allowing for the provision of retroactive real estate tax relief of up to two years under extreme circumstances; increasing the program's exemption asset limit from \$340,000 to \$400,000; adjusting the asset limits annually, based on changes in the Consumer Price Index; revising the method for calculating applicants' assets, and more.

Public Comment

Aleksandr Belinskiy said that it was the opinion of one of the citizens that the County discriminants between a 401k and a pension plan, need to look into that since it doesn't seem fair because you don't always have a choice on what your employer provides. He also stated that it doesn't seem fair that the Housing Grant program hasn't been increased, if you are doing something for homeowners than you need to do it for renters as well.

Commission Questions and Discussion

Kay Langenbeck asked if your house has appreciated and the children get a huge windfall then would taxes get collected. Caitlin Hutchison said that if it was an exemption than they would not have to pay, but what happens when they are living there then they are able to age in place. She added that many of the households that receive this benefit are low income and this is a tool to help them age in the community. If it was not for this they wouldn't be able to afford groceries, utilities, or even live here. Paul Holland added that he has heard that question a number of times, but has never heard of that happening, many people use this equity for end of life events. Alice Hogan asked if you are doing the RTA this month and then vote by the Board in July and Caitlin Hutchison said that is correct. Alice Hogan asked how you gauge need, my mom is in this program and don't know why we would not have to pay back that money. When you are a renter you are walking away with nothing and need to still fund retirement, she said that she is totally opposed to not having to pay it back after they sell. Caitlin Hutchison said that it gets complicated if they still have a mortgage or a reverse mortgage, the bank will not recognize the deferral and they look at it as being delinquent on the mortgage. She added that reverse mortgages don't allow you to have a deferral if you have a first lien and if we pushed more people towards deferrals then we would probably see more issues come up. Some other jurisdictions have switched to deferrals and had to quickly backpedal because of foreclosures. Alice Hogan said that if we are going to write a letter to the Board we can recommend that this be looked at regularly. Paul Holland said that is already in there as a recommendation.

Alice Hogan asked what has been going on for the past year, what has been the delay with recommendations being ready. Caitlin Hutchison noted that they have been working on the recommendations for the past year. Alice Hogan said that she feels this is a very generous program and not sure why these upper income limits exist. Jeff Certosimo asked if there were any issues of fraud such as putting funds in someone else's name like a trust. Caitlin Hutchison said that she doesn't know of any and anything that comes forward with a trust is reviewed by the attorney's office. Eric Brescia asked if you could do a deferral up to a percentage of the equity of the house and then you would be deferred, would that solve that issue. Caitlin Hutchison said that more discussion

could be had around that idea. Eric Brescia said that he agrees that the County is giving a pretty good windfall. Holly Bray noted that we don't have many tools for low-income homeownership and this is one of them and Eric Brescia said that he doesn't think that these incomes are all low income. Doris Ray asking what kinds of disability income is exempted, such as personal aides and disability modifications. Caitlin Hutchison said that home health aides would be included and modifications would be too as long as they are reimbursed. Caitlin Hutchison said that the current recommendation is to include all disability income regardless of source.

Ready for 100% Renewable Electricity Initiative

Presentation

Dean Amel said that the Arlington and Alexandria Ready for 100 Campaigns are part of the Sierra Club's national Ready for 100 Campaign. Launched in January of 2016, the national Ready for 100 Campaign seeks to empower localities around the country to build on the momentum of the national and global movement for localities leading the charge on clean, renewable energy. Arlington has been a longtime leader on energy and environmental policy in Virginia, and now the Ready for 100 Campaign is asking them to take the lead again by committing to transition to 100% clean, renewable electricity, community-wide by 2035. By making this commitment, Arlington will not only show that they are committed to building a better, safer future for members of their local community, but will also clearly demonstrate that Virginians are demanding the health, economic and environmental benefits that renewable energy has to offer.

Commission Questions and Discussion

Holly Bray asked when this is going before the Board. Dean Amel said that they are working on an update of the Energy Plan and are working towards getting this incorporated in there. John Lederer said that on all of our projects we make sure the building is solar ready and that the biggest hurdle is the energy company charging large fees. Doris Ray asked how this would work if the individual is paying their own electricity. Dean Amel said that the only benefit there would be a tax benefit to the landlord. Matt de Ferranti suggested adding in the economic benefit to the slideshow and include that as a goal. Eric Brescia asked if any states would benefit from this without the tax subsidies and Dean Amel said that he didn't have an answer to that. He did recommend to possibly have a liaison to the Energy Committee and the Commission can always send a letter sooner as well.