

Affordable Housing Committee Meeting

February 1, 2024, Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Fred Hamilton called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Town Councilman/Chairman Fred Hamilton

Town Councilman/Commissioner Dan Wood

Commissioner Grace Staples

Commissioner Doug Magill

Commissioner Gwen Chambers

Commissioner Denolis Polite, entered at 10:01

Commissioner Meg James

Victoria Smalls, Workforce and Affordable Housing Manager

Charlotte Moore, Principal Planner

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Motion for adoption made by Commissioner Chambers, Seconded by Commissioner Staples.

Voting Yea: Chairman Hamilton, Commissioners Wood, Magill, James and Polite.

IV. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Adoption of January 4, 2024, minutes.

Motion for adoption made by Commissioner Magill, Seconded by Commissioner Wood.

Voting Yea: Chairman Hamilton, Commissioners Staples, Chambers, Polite and James.

V. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Neighborhood Assistance Program Budget Update

To date, 18 homes have been serviced for minor repairs such as roofing and interior repairs totaling \$246,220. Eight homes have been serviced for septic pump out, totaling \$4,866, and two homes for tree service totaling \$6,180.

As of January 25, 2024, a total of 28 homes have been serviced through the Neighborhood Assistance Program. Our program has a balance of \$32,733.

Chairman Hamilton asked if there were any applications in the queue. Staff answered that there were six applications, but none need emergency repair at this time. The Town will continue taking applications and serve families on an emergency need basis, because of the fund balance.

Committee member Chambers asked if there was an estimation of the total cost of the six applications. Staff answered there is no collective total, but an answer will be provided later. Committee member Chambers suggested that we look into increasing the next years' budget.

2. FY2025 Proposed Budget

For FY24, the total program budget was \$290,000. To date, 28 households have been assisted and a total of \$257,266 has been spent. Because of increased requests for assistance as well as increased costs, Town Staff proposes a total budget of \$400,000 for FY25 to be allocated as follows:

\$350,000 for home repairs

\$10,000 for abatement/demolition of unsafe structures

\$10,000 for property clean-up

\$10,000 for septic pump-out

\$3,000 for private road repair

\$2,000 for E-911 addressing.

\$15,000 for tree mitigation

Chairman Hamilton asked how much money was spent this current fiscal year on unsafe structures. Staff answered nothing was spent. Chairman also asked how much was spent on property clean up, staff answered nothing due to trying to find trash disposal companies with competitive prices.

Staff let the committee know that the most called for repairs are home repairs (reroof and interior repairs) and septic pumpout.

Committee member Wood asked how much \$10,000 would cover for septic pump out. Staff answered 40 homes, pumpouts are \$400 for each call.

A motion to make a recommendation to Town Council to approve the FY2025 Neighborhood Assistance Budget of \$400,000 was made by Committee member Polite and seconded by Committee member Magill.

Voting Yea: Chairman Hamilton, Commissioners Staples, Chambers, Wood, and James.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Shannon Greene, Town Staff, shared her home buying experience over the past year and the ups and downs of the search for finding affordable housing for rent and purchase. With the help of Committee member Grace Staples, Green has processed a home loan through USDA. Ms. Greene is currently in contract to purchase a home locally.

VIII. DISCUSSION

1. Affordable Housing Developer, Brandon Chrostowski, founder of Edwin's Leadership based out of Cleveland Ohio, presented his program to the committee via zoom.

Brandon's program is called Edwin's Leadership and Restaurant Institute. The goal of the program is to help individuals coming out of the prison system receive fair and equal opportunities. The foundation helps individuals find job placement and receive business skills. The idea of the program is to get individuals acclimated back into the working world. The foundation also houses those in the program and provides child care. The program is nonprofit based therefore, the restaurant, butcher shop and bakery offset the cost of the housing side. The program also has an educational side for those still incarcerated. This is not a federally or state funded housing program, the housing aspect is built and maintained through the six and half million-dollar budget and fundraising.

Committee member James asked about the Beaufort Memorial Housing Project and where that process is. Staff answered that the partners in that project are working through the State Tax Incentive Program for low income. So, they are still working in the beginning stages of the project.

Staff let the committee know that 1095 May River Road is still under review with the state and that staff is checking monthly on the status.

Chairman Hamilton asked staff to explain what incentives are available for individuals that are willing to build an affordable housing project in Bluffton.

Staff mentioned the point system and rebates offered to individuals interested in development. The BJHTF board has an RFP open to developers that are looking to build affordable rental units.

Committee member Chambers asked staff to provide a list of affordable apartment rental in the area and if the Town had land prospects for future purchase.

Staff let the committee know about 140 Buckl Island Road that is under contract for purchase but not for housing.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Hamilton adjourned the meeting at 10:43 am.