

Countywide Housing Affordability Taskforce (CHAT)

February 22, 2008

Meeting Notes

Members Names: Seth Fleetwood, Co-Chair; Terry Bornemann, Co-Chair; Mayor Bromley; Charlotte Eastman-Pros; Derek Long; John Shorthill; Hart Hodges; Larry West; Nancy Larsen; Gary Reid; Ted Mischaikov; Jon Soine; Paul Schissler; Ralph Black; Gail de Hoog; John Harmon; Barbara Brenner; and Stan Snapp

Members Absent: Mayor Bromley and Barbara Brenner

Staff Present: David Cahill and Heather Aven

Guests: Tom Beckwith and Steve Price represented the consulting team

Seth Fleetwood called meeting to order at 9:00 am

1. **Approval of Notes**

Motion to approve the 1-18-08, 1-25-08, and 2-08-08 notes. Seconded. **VOTE: ALL AYES.**

2. **Discussion** – How should the report be put together for the City and County Councils to consider.

Hart shared his thoughts in a memo distributed to CHAT members. He stated that a prioritized set of recommendations is what was believed to be part of the original charge. He suggested prior to picking the tools that the Taskforce considers the most applicable, criteria should be set as to how those tools should be chosen. He also indicated that the goals and objectives should be considered with some way of measuring the progress.

Dave Cahill was asked to review which elements of the Governor's Affordable Housing Taskforce Report would be relevant to the report this Taskforce is working on. He stated that the product that this Taskforce sends to the City and County Councils will not immediately solve the housing need. He pointed out that the tools that are included in the report should be considered over a long period of time, and not just what is acceptable presently. He clarified that the charge from the Mayor and County Executives specified both rental and home ownership.

There was discussion about target populations and which segments the Taskforce would like to identify. John H. stated that he had a waiting list of over 3,000, varied income (with many below 50% of AMI and some below 30% AMI) Paul stated the need is great for those at 30% and below AMI.

Ralph suggested that the group also discuss the possibility that the tools that are recommended for ownership versus rental housing would be different from one another. He recommended that those tools that effect shelter, rental, and ownership, and are already included in a program already in existence, they

should be automatically part of the recommendations. There was general agreement with his comments.

Jon S. distributed an article that talks about regulation costs. He also mentioned 3 of the 10 events that do not cost anything, and are just waiting for legislation to enact them. 1 – No net loss. 2 – SEPA review for projects under 20 lots. 3 – Lot averaging.

There was discussion about impact fees and what changes could be implemented that would help reduce the cost of development for affordable housing. The question was asked if the fees are actually used for the same thing they are being charged for instead of something else. It was suggested that the impact fees not be paid until there is something to impact it.

Hart suggested some of the Taskforce members talk about the different groups of citizens their agencies serve so there is more awareness of the gap that exists.

John S. commented that land affordability / availability and proximity to work are the two obstacles facing his agency. He stated that he typically produces 3 to 4 homes annually, and a million dollars would help him to produce 200 homes. He works with those that are 25% – 50% AMI, most are around 30%.

Paul stated that his agency works with 50% - 80% AMI. He commented that gap funding is his agency's biggest obstacle. He stated that for every \$1.00 of local resources, he can leverage \$9.00 of outside dollars; helping to close the gap of about \$50,000.00 on each home. Paul said that he builds about 12 homes per year; however, there are opportunities to purchase homes off the open market as well.

John H. stated most of his market is 60% AMI and below. He commented that in addition to the local and state funds that his agency already receives, a million dollars would produce about 50 units, bringing his total units to about 100 per year.

Gail stated that of the 3000 people that are on the waiting list for a unit that John H. produces, most of them were asked to sign up on that list (which is a 2-5 year waiting period) and there are still about 1000 that should be on the list and are not.

Nancy stated that her agency is required to build outside of the urban fringe of Bellingham. She commented that she builds about 23 homes per year, and serves 80% AMI and below – with about 40% of the total families at 50% or below AMI. She pointed out that the largest obstacle her agency faces is land availability.

There was discussion about the format of the final report. Seth commented that he would like to see the format resemble an action plan. Gary suggested reviewing the tools that the group has deciding on and choosing which ones would work for all groups, and which would work for just some groups. Terry

encouraged the Taskforce to set some criteria that will be followed when prioritizing the tools to be included in the report. Gary suggested some of the tools could be grouped together during the prioritizing exercise because they work in conjunction with one another.

Ted stated that the tools be run through a matrix that includes the following 5 suggested criteria: new revenue sources, cost savings, price impacts, politically palitabile (both to the voters and to the Councils), and are there resources to implement it.

3. Next Meeting's Agenda (3/08/08)

- Review and Discuss the Draft Recommendations that Tom Beckwith will be sending to Committee members next week.

4. Public Comment

- Encouraged the group to look into the development that is happening for seniors.
- Reminded the Taskforce that an education levy is being passed, which could hinder the amount of voters that might pass a housing levy.

Adjourned: 11:14 am