

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

10400 Detrick Avenue
Kensington, Maryland 20895
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Special Session Minutes

October 26, 2023

A Special Session of the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County was conducted via virtual platform on Thursday, October 26, 2023, with moderator functions occurring at 10400 Detrick Avenue, Kensington, Maryland beginning at 4:07pm. Those in attendance were:

Present via Zoom

Roy Priest, Chair
Fran Kelleher, Vice Chair
Jeffery Merkowitz – Chair Pro Tem
Pamela Byrd
Robin Salomon
Linda Croom

Absent

Richard Y. Nelson

Also Attending via Zoom

Chelsea Andrews, Executive Director
Aisha Memon, General Counsel
Eric Schruner, Public Works LLC, Consultant

Kayrine Brown, Deputy Executive Director
Ken Silverman
Tia Blount

IT Support

Aries Cruz, IT Support

Commission Support

Alicia Black, Temp Assistant
Morgan Tucker, Temp Assistant

Chair Priest opened the meeting with welcome remarks and an introduction to the Strategic Plan Special Session of the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County. Chair Priest introduced Commissioner Merkowitz, Kelleher, Salomon, and Byrd and Eric Schruner of Public Works. Commissioner Nelson was necessarily absent. Chair Priest moderated the meeting and acknowledged each Commissioner’s recommendation referenced in the Strategic Plan Memorandum provided by Public Works.

A. Vision Statement

The current Vision Statement of HOC is “It is our vision that Everyone should live in quality housing that is affordable, with dignity and respect. At HOC we believe this vision can be achieved by ensuring amenity rich, community-connected housing for all of Montgomery County’s residents where all people can reach their fullest potential. We believe in supportive programs, delivered through mission-aligned partnerships, help our customers improve their economic status, remain stably housed and reach the goals they hold for themselves and their families.”

Public Works proposed that the Vision statement is updated to “Futures start and grow in a place called home; it’s why we’re making it affordable, while empowering individuals, families, and neighborhoods to prosper”. Chair Priest preferred the current vision statement of HOC and asked for the Commission’s feedback on ways to adjust the language. Commissioner Merkowitz mentioned a vision statement should be a statement of what the end goal would be if HOC were able to achieve everything wanted. Commissioner Byrd commented on removing the wording “all residents” and make a reference to HOC clients alternatively. Commissioner Kelleher highlighted the current language “need to thrive” and “reach full potential” should be removed from the Vision statement. Commissioner Byrd and Commissioner Merkowitz would like to keep the language. After deliberation, the Commission collectively agreed to adjust HOC’s Vision Statement and decided to revisit the structure of the Vision statement with Public Works at a later date.

B. Mission Statement

The Mission of the Housing Opportunities Commission is to provide affordable housing and supportive housing services that enhance the lives of low- and moderate-income families and individuals throughout Montgomery County, Maryland so that:

- No one in Montgomery County lives in substandard housing;
- We strengthen families and communities as good neighbors;

- We establish an efficient and productive environment that fosters trust, open communication and mutual respect; and
- We work with advocates, providers and community members to maintain support for all of the work of the Commission.

Public Works proposed that the Mission statement is updated to “Our mission is to deliver innovative, socially and economically inclusive housing where families of all incomes can live, work, and thrive together. We strengthen low- and moderate-income families by offering opportunities for personal and economic growth through partnerships and our supportive services.” Commissioner Kelleher proposed “HOC exists to provide low- and moderate-income persons the opportunity to live in quality, safe and affordable housing in Montgomery County.” Commissioner Kelleher emphasized updating the Mission statement to “providing low and moderate income housing.” Commissioner Kelleher did not agree with Public Work’s proposed Mission statement. Commissioner Salomon mentioned “supportive services” should be included in the Mission statement. After deliberation, Chair Priest asked Eric Schruner from Public Works to adjust the Mission statement based on the Commission’s feedback.

A. Core Values

Public Works proposed the following seven core values based on feedback from Commissioners, customers, applicants, staff, and the public.

- **People-First with Dignity & Respect | Our Customers:** We believe our customers are front and center in everything we do as we create and foster opportunities for them to secure affordable, safe and high quality housing. We aspire to provide outstanding customer service through caring, listening, communicating, partnering, and timely responding to our customers' needs, concerns, and insights.
- **People-First with Dignity & Respect | Our Staff:** We believe our staff is our most valuable asset in fulfilling our vision and mission. We provide our teams with the resources and support needed to excel in their performance and roles while making HOC a competitive, great place to work and thrive.
- **Innovative and Entrepreneurial:** We believe that addressing the severe shortage of affordable housing will require agility, innovative partnerships, adoption of state-of-the-art technologies, and nationally acclaimed financial tools that create a robust portfolio of housing opportunities that incentivize resident economic mobility.
- **Equity in Everything We Do:** We believe that equitable access to quality, safe, and affordable housing enables people to live with the security and comforts of home, experience community, and generate intergenerational wealth. We recognize that

systemic and institutional inequities pose substantial barriers and hardships for communities of color. We commit to addressing these barriers as they impact our customers while embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion in our organization’s culture.

- **Power of Partnerships:** We believe in collaborating with community-based, public and private sector organizations to provide resources and services that empower our residents to reach their full potential, secure and maintain housing, and achieve economic independence.
- **Community-Enhanced Housing:** We believe that when we develop, construct, and renovate properties, we are also building community and supporting sustainable neighborhoods. We cultivate social interaction among neighbors rather than isolate vulnerable households within pockets of concentrated poverty through mixed-income development. This philosophy runs deep in everything that we do.
- **Stewardship:** We believe we have been entrusted to wisely manage and deploy valuable resources to create and maintain environmentally sustainable affordable housing throughout Montgomery County. We respect the public’s trust by being results-driven, accountable, and transparent in our efforts and operations while employing strategies to assure the financial solvency of HOC.

Chair Priest asked if the Commission had feedback on the core values provided by Public Works. Commissioner Kelleher mentioned the core values are not needed and are not necessary for the Strategic Plan. President, Chelsea Andrews, mentioned the core values were proposed in order for staff to understand how HOC operates as an organization and strongly encouraged keeping the Core Values apart of the Strategic Plan. Commissioner Merkowitz, Salomon, and Byrd agreed and supported keeping the core values based on President, Chelsea Andrews’ feedback.

D. Strategic Goals

Chair Priest moved forward to discuss the Strategic Goals presented by Public Works. Public Works proposed the following three Strategic Goals as well as provided the main objectives for each goal: 1) Expand Affordable Housing in Montgomery County, 2) Enhance the Lives We Touch, and 3) Excel as a World- Class Organization.

Chair Priest asked the Commission if there was feedback on the three proposed Strategic Goals. The Commission began their feedback with the second strategic goal: “Enhance the Lives We Touch”. Commissioner Kelleher noted “Enhancing The Lives We Touch” is out of the HOC scope as well as beyond what HOC is funded to do as an organization. Chair Priest mentioned the funding provided by HUD is not only for the production of affordable housing, but for the enhancement of the lives of the people of HOC. Commissioner Salomon suggested adjusting the goal to “Enhancing the Lives We Touch through the Provision of Social Services”. After further

deliberation, Chair Priest suggested changing the second strategic goal to “Providing Resident Focused Services and Partnering with other Agencies and Partners to Enhance the Lives We Touch.”

Chair Priest returned to the first strategic goal: “Expand Affordable Housing in Montgomery County.” Chair Priest asked mentioned keeping the objectives but changing the ordering. The Commission further deliberated about altering the eight objectives needed to achieve the goal of Expanding Affordable Housing in Montgomery County. After further deliberation, the Commission agreed to work on the wordsmithing separately and removing and/or rearrange the order of the objectives based on the level of importance. After further deliberation, the Commission discussed making adjustments to the objective language based on the provided feedback.

Chair Priest moved on to discuss the final strategic goal: “Excel as a World-Class Organization.” Commissioner Byrd mentioned including “strengthening information technology” to the objectives. Chair Priest suggested changing the objective to Produce and use innovative and state of the art solutions for addressing affordable housing and residential services. Commissioner Byrd highlighted adding in an objective to include “fiscal resources” in the objectives. After further deliberation, Chair Priest asked Public Works to incorporate all feedback and updates within the Strategic Plan.

President, Chelsea Andrews, highlighted that the Strategic Plan meeting scheduled on November 1st will discuss legislative priorities, which will be incorporated in the Strategic Plan initiatives for 2024.

Chair Priest thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 5:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chelsea Andrews
Secretary-Treasurer

/jlk