

A regular meeting of the Leelanau County Housing Action Committee (HAC) was held on Monday, November 13, 2023 at the Leelanau County Government Center.

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 3:01 pm by Chair Lois Bahle.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: G. Allgaier, L. Bahle, S. Oriel, T. Wessell, F. Clements, R. Foster
J. O'Neill

Members Absent: C. Noonan, S. Yoder, C. Wood, P. Hallstedt

Members Absent: M. Lautner
(prior notice)

Staff Present: T. Galla, Director, G. Myer, Senior Planer

Public Present: R. Laporte, Y. Brown

CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

Wessell moved Discussion/Action Item #1 to Item #3.

Consensus to approve agenda as amended.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

R. Laporte spoke regarding affordable housing saying that if you work in the county, you should be able to live in the county. As members of the community, everyone shares in the responsibility to make sure that everyone has a roof over their head. Homes in neighborhoods that are constantly filled with transient visitors can erode the bonds that tie people together, and make it challenging to build strong supportive communities. Short-term rentals are a popular option, but there are significant social and economic implication that everyone must consider. Laporte concluded by mentioning a few things that have been proven to be successful: support zoning reform for increased density, create a county housing trust fund or economic development corporation, advocate for community land trusts and non-profit developers.

STAFF COMMENTS- None.

CONSIDERATION OF SEPTEMBER 25, 2023 MINUTES

Motion by Foster, supported by Clements, to accept the minutes as presented. Motion carried 7-0.

OLD BUSINESS – None.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

Update/comments on 9th annual Housing Summit

Yarrow said there were more people from different communities that attended this year. Wessell commented that Kristi Miller, who is a Leelanau Township Planning Commission member, attended the summit and wrote a summary report saying that next year they have to have all of the planning commission members of the township and the village attend. She was very impressed.

Brown said they were maxed out at 230 persons this year, next year the goal will be 280, but it is hard to find a place that big that is affordable for a non-profit. Galla said she saw a lot of different people there this year. She suggests the two-hour sessions on the last day be morning sessions or shorter sessions in the afternoon and adding some mobile tours. Brown said they are looking into adding mobile tours next year. Bahle commented that people don't understand the benefits of heat pumps, they think it's electric base board heat and way too expensive. They don't understand the energy efficiency or the technology, so possibly some sessions on climate science or building science. The sledgehammer system was exciting to her. The Edge 72 project uses it and Evergreen in Traverse City will also be using it. Bahle continued, saying that they need to find a way to get around the health department 18-month process to get approval.

O'Neill said this group has helped people become aware that housing is a critical issue for the entire community. Brown mentioned adding American Planning Association (APA) certification or class credits to their summit. Galla said she is a member of Michigan Association of Planners (MAPS) and will bring it up at the next meeting. Also, assessors need a lot of hours, and she was told that it has to be at least a four-hour session. Clements said he has been going to the summit for the past five years and they have been defining the problem, this time he thought they had a lot of solutions.

Update on projects: Marek Rd, Habitat for Humanity, Peninsula Housing

Brown said they are a couple months out at Marek Rd. O'Neill said he asked that Habitat for Humanity make their applications available in Spanish and didn't hear anything back. This should be made a priority. Brown said the New Waves project already has three units being built using concrete, and they will be painting them on Monday. Maple City Crossings has one vacancy left.

Bahle spoke on Peninsula Housing, saying that they have a qualified buyer for the house on Herman Rd. She mentioned the improvements made, and said that at some point you have to stop making improvements. There is still room for the homeowner to polish things up themselves. The holding costs were \$80,000.00 which included improvements. Peninsula Housing paid \$255,000.00 for the property and will hold the land on a ground lease and sell the house for \$220,000.00.

O'Neill explained Home Sweet Home and said the homeowners must sign a deed restriction committing themselves to sell to another income eligible buyer. This is a different way of accomplishing what a land trust does. Right now, they continue with preparation work. O'Neill continued, saying he attended an assembly on human dignity at the St. Francis Church, which focused on people in the Hispanic community.

Presentation Leelanau Township Community Foundation Housing Study

Wessell presented members with a summary of his PowerPoint and briefly reviewed it, saying that in June and July 2023, the Leelanau Township Community Foundation conducted a Housing Priorities Survey in partnership with Avenue ISR, an independent market research and polling company based in Traverse City. The purpose of the survey was to better understand stakeholder attitudes toward housing options as well as willingness to support potential housing changes and investments.

Some of the key findings and results from the survey are:

- Of the 15% of current township residents who tried to find housing in the last two years, more than two-thirds (68%) were not able to find a home that met their needs.
- Of the 31% of employees of Leelanau Township businesses who tried to find housing in the last two years, 91% were not able to find a home that met their needs.
- The most widespread reason for not being able to find a home are overall cost (90%), a lack of year-round rental options (49%) and a lack of any kind of rental housing (26%).

Most Leelanau Township residents and stakeholders understand the challenges and would like to work toward solutions. The majority are open to a number of approaches to create more housing options in Leelanau Township, even in their own backyards. Many survey respondents were willing to be actively involved in developing housing solutions within Leelanau Township.

Wessell said the foundation focuses on housing, early childhood development and environmental. The challenge is that they don't get enough grant applications, surrounding those three priorities. Clements questioned how the foundation was going to implement these. Wessell said they convene people and get them to work together. This will be handed off to the village and township now, asking how the foundation can help. They will pay to send members from the village and township to the Housing Summit. Wessell concluded by saying that the joint meeting of the two planning commissions was a good first step.

(A complete copy of the PowerPoint is available in the Planning & Community Development Office)

Discussion on a county housing plan in collaboration with Housing North and Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation

Clements reviewed the PowerPoint, and said they were asking the HAC to create a housing action plan for Leelanau County in collaboration with the Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation and Housing North. Bahle questioned if he was proposing a new committee to replace the HAC? Clements said no, a steering group and/or working committee, coordinate with regional housing plan/partnership goals and begin public engagement in early 2024. Clements said they see the problems, now they need strategies and plans. Brown spoke on the region wide plan that is part of the statewide housing plan. They created work groups and steering committees to determine what priorities our region wanted to focus on. Those were housing stock, housing ecosystem, equity and racial justice, and preventing and ending homelessness. This was submitted to the state and she will share more information later. Ultimately, there will be no "approval" of the plan, and MSDHA will be tracking the numbers.

Brown said they want to engage the broader community and start the process. Clements said they want to be inclusive, cooperation between citizens and government institutions. Brown said she will be in front of the County Board on the 21st to let them know about this collaboration.

Allgaier asked for clarification, were they asking for a housing commission? Brown said similar to what Traverse City has, a county housing commission. Wessell mentioned an EDC. Allgaier mentioned a tax that is self-funding.

Brown said taxes on STR or assessments, recording fees. If done at the state level, you will then need to make sure that money comes back here.

Discussion ensued on taxing STR. Assessment districts and different ways to achieve this goal.

Oriel commented that all of the different ideas tie back into the survey results Wessell presented. They need to educate the County Board, and get community engagement in the plan.

Motion by Allgaier, supported by Foster, to create a Leelanau County Housing Plan through collaboration with Housing North and Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation.

AYES – 7 (Bahle, O’Neil, Allgaier, Clements, Foster, Oriel, Wessel) NO – 0. Motion carried.

(A complete copy of the PowerPoint is available in the Planning & Community Development Office)

Discussion on future goals/plans for HAC – No discussion held.

Other Business – None.

COMMUNICATION ITEMS- None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Laporte said he wished he would have asked to become a part of the counties organizational committee right out of the gate. Workshops are safe, but not for what he was planning on doing. He wouldn’t put too many people on the committee who are already busy, he would put experts on the committee because individuals can’t do this. He applauds the committee.

STAFF COMMENTS – None.

MEMBER/CHAIR COMMENTS

Members presented Galla with retirement gift.

Clements said having done community planning, bringing people together, if done right, it is magic how it all turns out. You must include everyone in the beginning.

O’Neill said Habitat for Humanity originally focused on not using any government funds and that is what Home Sweet Home focuses on. They are working on changing the headset of people so that they understand, homes are dwellings for human beings. We must care for our neighbors.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned by consensus at 4:33 p.m.