



**COLUMBIA AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2021**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 11:03 a.m. by Chair Tameika Isaac Devine.

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Tameika Isaac Devine	Chair, Columbia City Council	Present
Jeff Armstrong	Family Promise	Present
Julie Ann Avin	MIRCI	Present
Reggie Barner	The Barner Group	Absent
Sue Berkowitz	SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center	Present
Brenna Bernadin	Fast Forward	Present
Bryan Grady	State Housing Finance & Development Authority	Present
Dylan Gunnels	Mutual Aid of the Midlands	Present
Tonya Isaac	Resident	Absent
Jeff Larimore	Midlands Housing Trust Fund	Absent
Ivory Matthews	Columbia Housing Authority	Present
Jennifer Moore	United Way	Absent
Mary Louise Resch	Habitat for Humanity	Present
Shayla Riley	Coldwell Banker	Present
Lila Anna Sauls	Homeless No More	Present
Gregory Sprouse	Central Midlands Council of Governments	Present
Allison Terracio	Richland County Council	Present
Regina Williams	Board Member	Absent
Lester Young	Just Leadership	Absent
Jim Zieche	More Justice	Present
Chris Zimmer	Truist Bank	Present
Pamela Bynoe-Reed	Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority	Present

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

1. Revision to the Definition of Affordable Housing - The Honorable Tameika Isaac-Devine

Councilwoman Tameika Isaac Devine said I made a presentation to City Council regarding the work of the Affordable Housing Task Force. The Mayor is concerned that our definition includes "homeownership opportunities for people at every income level". He understood our rationale but thought that we should include an income level range that we are targeting.



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Lila Anna Sauls, EdD, HDFP, President and CEO of Homeless No More said 50% of AMI in Richland County is about \$25,000 for one person and \$29,000 for a two-person household and 80% of AMI is \$40,000 for one person and \$46,000 for a two-person household. Federal funding takes your income into account when deciding rent. At 50%, zero to four bedrooms are capped at \$636 to \$1,000. At 80%, zero to four bedrooms are capped at \$1,000 to \$1,600. AMI impacts the rent. Most people like mixed-use developments. Let's look for a maximum percentage.

Sue Berkowitz, Director of the SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center said more than a majority of folks are living paycheck to paycheck. It would be helpful to have that data. She asked for more time to consider this.

Councilwoman Allison Terracio, Richland County Council said most people may not know what terms like 80% of AMI mean.

Teresa Wilson, City Manager said it almost sounds like you are talking about attainable housing but we are still referring to it as affordable housing which brings on these connotations that people have associated with affordable housing for years. I didn't know if that is worth putting back on the table if we are going to continue to discuss the definition. It seems like some cities are moving more towards attainable housing.

Brenna Bernadin, MPH, Program Director at Fast Forward suggested focusing on the rent level instead of the income level. For example, people spending over 30% of their gross income. Let's look at it as a rent or housing payment problem.

Councilwoman Tameika Isaac Devine asked Brenna, Lila Anna, Sue, and Bryan to pull the bullet points out prior to the next meeting.

2. City of Charleston Housing Court Program - Mr. Jeff Yungman, Director of One80 Place Legal Services

Jeff Yungman, Legal Services Director at One80 Place in Charleston, SC provided an overview of Charleston's Housing Court, which came about as a result of the 2017 Eviction Lab Report (<https://evictionlab.org>) by Princeton University. North Charleston was ranked number one in the country for the highest rate of evictions and Columbia came in eighth. A lot happens to a person when they are evicted. A study estimated that 70% of households facing eviction receive no legal representation. Tenants with an attorney were less likely to be evicted. I reviewed a dozen housing court programs and the program in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania fit what I hoped to do in Charleston. We started out with a pro-bono attorney, legal services attorney, and two law



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students at the court. We thought this should be a holistic approach. We cannot deal with legal issues without dealing with other issues. The Trident Urban League received a grant from the S. C. Bar Foundation to provide funding for tenants and they provide financial counseling. We also used 2-1-1 to provide other financial and housing referrals. The first housing court was held on October 2, 2019. We now have four magistrate court locations that hold one housing court docket one day per week. We don't do a lot of litigation; we negotiate to keep that person housed. Sometimes that includes a payment plan or an agreement to have the tenant move without having an eviction on their record. We educate tenants and landlords on their rights. In 2020, we held 282 eviction hearings in the four housing courts. Of those cases, 208 were dismissed or settled resulting in 74% of tenants who appeared in housing court not being evicted. Our major problem is getting pro-bono attorneys to assist us. If you can get buy-in from the magistrate court judges, the rest should be smooth sailing.

A housing court manual and other resources can be found online at <https://www.scbars.org/lawyers/bar-programs/pro-bono-program/volunteer-resources/housing-court-pilot-resources/>.

Sue Berkowitz, SC Appleseed Legal Justice asked if the grant Charleston Pro-Bono Legal Services received is sustainable.

Jeff Yungman, Legal Services Director at One80 Place in Charleston, SC said yes, it is sustainable over time. We are looking to start additional housing courts.

Sue Berkowitz, SC Appleseed Legal Justice asked how did the landlords responded.

Jeff Yungman, Legal Services Director at One80 Place in Charleston, SC said in general, the landlords like having someone to negotiate and open up communication between them and the tenant.

Councilwoman Tameika Isaac Devine asked if a few judges conduct homeless court or is it all magistrates. Is there any benefit to having a couple of dedicated judges to help?

Jeff Yungman, Legal Services Director at One80 Place in Charleston, SC said we have four judges and I am sure that Judge Mikell and Judge Steinberg will speak with your judges.

Councilwoman Tameika Isaac Devine asked if tenants have access to a fund and financial counseling to help tenants understand budgeting.



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Jeff Yungman, Legal Services Director at One80 Place in Charleston, SC said if they receive funding through the Trident Urban League, they have to meet with a financial counselor at least once to discuss their budget. We will do anything we can to get people what they need to remain housed.

Sue Berkowitz, Director of the SC Applesed Legal Justice Center said it looks like the housing legal pilot program money may be released soon. This might be the right time for the City of Columbia to start thinking about this.

Jeff Yungman, Legal Services Director at One80 Place in Charleston, SC said the Supreme Court is now deciding to allow six hours of continuing legal education (CLE) credit for attorneys that provide pro-bono work for housing court.

Councilwoman Tameika Isaac Devine said we look forward to watching Charleston's progress. The Legal & Zoning Committee can discuss whether or not this is something we would like to pursue here. You should also speak with Judge Coble because he was instrumental in setting up our homeless court.

3. Public Education & Awareness Committee Report - Ms. Brenna Bernadin, Committee Chair

Brenna Bernadin, MPH, Program Director at Fast Forward / Public Education & Awareness Committee Chair said the finalized draft of the talking points were shared at the last meeting. We will use this when we start talking with community groups, neighborhood associations, and churches. We are determining who we need to target. The Partnerships Committee is looking at the business side of the community. I want to make sure we are talking about the different definitions of housing insecurity. I welcome ideas for additional talking points. I have been asking people questions to get them thinking about affordable housing and how things are changing for them. As soon as we come up with the definition, we have a list of places where we can begin outreach and we will work with the city's Public Relations Department to share additional information.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4. Approval of April 13, 2021 Affordable Housing Task Force Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion made by Jim Zieche and seconded by Ivory Mathews, task force members voted unanimously to approve the April 13, 2021 Affordable Housing Task Force Meeting Minutes.



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ivory Matthews, Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director for Columbia Housing reported that the Housing Authority is at the cusp of completing its redevelopment plan to address its affordable housing portfolio. We will also make a presentation to City Council on June 1st at 2:00 p.m.

Jim Zieche, MORE Justice reported that the Nehemiah Action Assembly was held on April 26, 2021. I want to thank Councilwoman Terracio for supporting our push for an affordable housing trust fund for Richland County.

Councilwoman Devine asked the subcommittee to review the definition of Affordable Housing prior to the next meeting. I am working on a couple of things regarding federal resources and I hope we can have that conversation next month. June is National Homeownership Month and homeownership is an option for affordable housing.

For rental assistance as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, please contact The Cooperative Ministry at cacoopmin.org or (803)799-3853.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was closed at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC
City Clerk