

**HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
January 10, 2017
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Rockville City Hall
Black-Eyed Susan Conference Room**

Members Present:

Shelagh Van Saanen, At-large Member, Chair	Ciriaco Gonzales, At-large Member
Joyce Lipman, Consumer Member	Debbie Moore, Consumer Member
Ruth O’Sullivan, At-large Member	Rici Rutkoff, At-large Member
Agnes Saenz, Caregiver Member	Nancy Sushinsky, Caregiver Member
Eric Wang, At-large Member	

Members Absent:

Julie Pelletier, At-large Member	Denise Thomas, Caregiver Member
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Staff Present:

Councilmember Beryl Feinberg, HSAC Council Liaison
Rob DiSpirito, City Manager
Carlos Aparicio, Community Services Manager, HSAC Staff Liaison
Sarah Dickinson, Community Services Program Analyst

Re: Call Meeting to Order

Shelagh Van Saanen, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

Re: Community Forum

No discussion.

Re: Introduction of Robert DiSpirito, City Manager

Rob DiSpirito, Rockville’s new City Manager as of January 3, introduced himself and expressed the importance he places on listening to and understanding City employees and residents. He thanked the commission members for the time they have invested in giving back to the community. In response to a question from Eric Wang, At-large Member, Rob informed the commission that he had been successful in housing development in his most recent position through a combination of community involvement, working with businesses, leveraging grants, and working on design and programming. For redevelopment here, Rob expressed that he would engage stakeholders to incorporate their feedback and ideas using funding that fits within the budget and is viable. Funding avenues include public-private partnerships and grant money. Rob added that he loves that Rockville is a multicultural community and recognizes the need for individuals at all ranges of the economic strata. He expressed the need for housing for households of all incomes, especially in proximity to the many jobs in the Rockville area. Joyce Lipman, Consumer Member, stated that housing is needed at an even lower cost than what is generally considered “affordable,” for individuals with disabilities receiving SSI benefits. Rob agreed that there is a need to educate the public to remove the stigma of affordable housing.

Rob informed the commission that his top priority is to help the Mayor and Council continue to deliver quality services to residents at a price they can afford. He added that Rockville has a great reputation as a livable, family-friendly city. Agnes Saenz, Caregiver Member and Executive Director of Community Ministries of Rockville, inquired what Rob sees as the City's role in human services. He answered that he wants to help educate residents in the ways that the City can be involved, including in the fields, of affordability, safety, police, water, infrastructure, and overall quality of life. He intends to learn through his interaction with commissions to level of service that the community desires and needs and to direct staff to put together a plan to offer services and affordability.

Re: Approve December 13, 2016 Meeting Minutes

Ruth O'Sullivan, At-large Member, requested that her comments in the Affordable Housing item be changed to read "Legacy at Lincoln Park" rather than "Lincoln Park." Ruth moved that the minutes be approved as amended, and Ciriaco Gonzales, At-large Member, seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Re: Guest Speaker: Asmara Habte, Chief of Housing Programs,
Community Planning and Development Services (CPDS)
Department**

Presentation: Affordable Housing

Carlos Aparicio, Community Services Manager, reminded commission members that he had emailed them a link to the housing presentation and report to the Planning Commission. Asmara Habte, Chief of Housing Programs, introduced herself. Asmara started working for the City last February and appreciated the opportunity to share with the HSAC the affordable housing services offered by Community Planning and Development Services. The planning staff met with community members, including the HSAC and Human Rights Commission, in Rockville 2040 listening sessions. A study was recently completed that analyzed the current and future housing market in Rockville. Following a recommendation from the HSAC for increased education about affordable housing, CPDS presented "Affordable Housing 101" information to the Mayor and Council. Following Rockville 2040 meetings regarding housing, CPDS staff are in the process of compiling policy statements which will be made available to the community for review and comment.

Policy changes under consideration include expanding the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program. MPDUs are currently affordable only for households earning 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Asmara brought up the idea to negotiate with developers to make some units available at 30% or 40% of AMI, for example. For housing complexes of 50 units or more, developers are required to set aside between 12.5% and 15% of units as MPDUs. Rockville's MPDU currently includes 661 rental units as well as about 420 homeowner units. There is a minimum household income eligibility requirement of \$22,000, which represents about 30% of AMI. CPDS issued about 1,000 MPDU certificates last year, and they are good for two years. However, they are not aware of certificate holders' success in finding units. The department will expand tracking and analytics regarding turnover and demographics.

Rockville receives about \$230,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding annually through an allocation from Montgomery County. Those funds go to assist low-income

homeowners with home safety repairs: approximately five families per year. CDBG funds are also made available through a grant process to local housing non-profits. Funded organizations have included Community Ministries of Rockville and Rockville Housing Enterprises (RHE), for repairs and upkeep of low-income housing and permanent supportive housing.

The Real Estate Effort for Affordable Community Housing (R.E.A.C.H.) program was established as a partnership between the City and Housing & Community Initiatives, Inc. (HCI) in the 1990s. Through the program, low-income homebuyers receive up to \$12,000 in an interest-free loan repaid over seven years to be used towards a down payment or closing costs. In response to questions from Ruth O'Sullivan, At-large Member, and Agnes Saenz, Caregiver Member and Executive Director of Community Ministries of Rockville, Asmara clarified that buyers using FHA loans, with a down payment lower than 20%, are not eligible, which disqualifies most of the households who could otherwise benefit from the program. Ruth stated that FHA did not allow use of the program because R.E.A.C.H. funds were not managed by a governmental entity. To address this issue, HCI sought collaboration with Rockville Housing Enterprises (RHE), a governmental entity. RHE agreed to manage the funds with HCI continuing to administer the program. Ruth stated that the HCI/RHE proposal was submitted to City of Rockville for approval around 2012 with no response to date. Therefore, maximum use of R.E.A.C.H. funds is not possible at this time.

CPDS intends to propose changes to the MPDU program and make recommendations to the Mayor and Council in support of RHE acquiring more properties like Fireside Park. Joyce Lipman, Consumer Representative, informed Asmara of the disability organization she is involved with which is working with developers to buy down units and keep them affordable for those with very low incomes. Ruth stated that RHE has the right of first refusal of MPDUs that come available and acquired 59 over a period of about two years approximately ten years ago. Asmara will be presenting the report and recommendations to the Mayor and Council on February 6.

Agnes brought up the issue that most MPDUs made available are one bedroom, which does not accommodate families. Asmara replied that the current ordinance requires a proportionate share of MPDUs based on the breakdown of unit sizes in the development overall, but because most developers are not building three-bedroom units, those are rarely available. Agnes asked for an update on the status of R.E.A.C.H. and requested that it be publicized if it is active.

Eric Wang, At-large Member, expressed his opinion that the City needs to change its zoning to allow for high rises. Councilmember Feinberg replied that the Rockville Pike Plan has been passed and includes consideration for higher density around Metro stations. Asmara added that Maryland law requires that zoning be included in comprehensive master plans. Ciriaco Gonzales, At-large Member, noted that higher density results in higher tax revenue, but Councilmember Feinberg pointed out that it also leads to higher demand for services.

Shelagh Van Saanen, Chairperson and At-large Member, asked about accessibility for disabled and elderly residents. Asmara replied that the City and Montgomery County do not provide funding for accessibility specifically, but that the master plan does include topics of design and accessibility. Councilmember Feinberg responded that residents can apply to the City for a credit

for projects such as building accessible bathrooms, and Asmara added that CDBG funding is available for adaptability. For moderate-income seniors, the Ingleside and Brightview communities offer units with a lower entry payment. Shelagh suggested that consideration be given to prioritizing housing availability for those already living in the area, and that the City use local construction companies that can provide job training programs for youth.

Re: Old Business

- **Rockville Holiday Drive:** The Mayor and Council will recognize major donors and partners of the 2016 Holiday Drive at their meeting on January 23. Sarah Dickinson, Community Services Program Analyst, is working with Montgomery County's Holiday Giving Coalition on future plans, including creating a policies and procedures document and designing the new referral database.
- **Caregiver Site Visits:** Sarah will email an updated list of the upcoming site visits.
- **Caregiver Task Force:** The task force has been advertised in Rockville Reports to recruit applicants. One edit to the charter is pending and will soon be finalized. Rici Rutkoff, At-large Member, moved to nominate Ruth O'Sullivan, At-large Member, and Joyce Lipman, Consumer Member, to serve on the task force. Debbie Moore, Consumer Member, seconded the nomination. The motion was approved unanimously. Ruth and Joyce will complete an expression of interest form which will be forwarded to the Mayor and Council for their approval.
- **Caregiver Grant Review Panel:** The application binders and scoring sheets have been provided to the four members of the review panel, and they are scheduled to convene on January 31.
- **Community Services Monthly Report:** Carlos provided the following information:
 - Kate Bouwkamp, Community Services Program Coordinator, is beginning another session of the ACT parenting program at the Montgomery County Pre-Release Center.
 - Jim Miller, Youth and Family Counselor, is continuing to run student groups at Twinbrook Elementary School in addition to individual counseling.
 - Mariella Correal, Community Services Outreach Worker, is running the winter portion of the Latino Youth Development Program, including ongoing student meetings and drug and alcohol resistance education.
 - Toni Alexander, Community Services Referral Coordinator, is facilitating the City's partnership with CareerCatchers, Inc. to offer a job club at Twinbrook Community Recreation Center. Toni will also assess participants' additional information and referral needs.
 - Linkages to Learning is increasing their afterschool recreational programming.

Rici Rutkoff, At-large Member, brought up the letter the commission had sent to the Mayor and Council regarding advocacy for supervised transfer and visitation centers. She pointed out that she has not seen any reply or action from the City. Carlos replied that the HSAC can follow up formally to ask the Mayor and Council about the status of the proposed advocacy. Ciriaco Gonzales, At-large Member, moved that the letter be resent to the Mayor and Council, and Nancy Sushinsky, Caregiver Member, seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Re: Plan Agenda for February 14, 2017 Meeting

No discussion.

Re: Adjourn

Agnes Saenz, Caregiver Representative, moved to adjourn, and Debbie Moore, Consumer Member, seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.