

MIH Howard County Housing Committee Notes
July 8, 2021: 3 – 4:30 PM

Committee Members present: Guest Peter Engle, Grace Morris, Cindy Parr, Judi Olinger, Theresa Ballinger, Dorothy Plantz, Matthew Plantz, Diane Dressler

Staff present: Tim Wiens, Lauren Silverstone

1. Introduction of Housing Committee Members
 - a. Tim introduced new members:
 - i. Matthew Plantz, self-advocate
 - ii. Nannette Livadas, who is Deputy Director of the Howard County Housing Commission.
2. Review of May 13, 2021 Notes
 - a. Hartford County is spelled incorrectly in last meeting's notes.
 - b. The mention of Parent Transit within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile needs to be fixed.
3. Collaboration with Howard County Housing Commission – Peter Engel and Nanette Livadas
 - a. Peter Engel expressed his thanks for being at the Housing Committee meeting. He spoke about MIH's collaboration with the Howard County Housing Commission, saying it is their hope to ensure that people with IDD have access to affordable housing that is being developed. Housing authorities were set up in the depression era, originally to be in charge of public housing and housing built and funded by the federal government but were run through local jurisdictions. Now housing authorities have taken over the Section 8 housing voucher program. They still serve a similar population as public housing, and the tenant pays 30% of their income for this housing.
 - b. Much of public housing has become privatized and more political, with a lot of public housing being lost over time. The Howard County Housing Commission was founded in 1990 and owned 50 public housing units, which are privatized and are in the housing choice voucher program.
 - c. The Howard County Housing Commission has funding for 850 vouchers, and of those, administers 500-550 for people who received their vouchers in other jurisdictions, such as Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Anne Arundel County, because Howard County is a desirable place to live. Overall, the Commission works with 1350+ households.
 - d. Rent from these programs help pay for the operation of projects, because no money is received from the county. The Housing Commission will occasionally receive capital grants on an individual basis.
 - e. The Housing Commission applied for every mainstream voucher they can get. They hope to transition people out of institutional settings as much as possible. In new developments, units are set aside for people with disabilities – a new development will close in a few months. They were also recently working with the state for 811 and Weinberg funds, and are working with Artis Flats. They hope to partner with developers and projects that have units for people with

IDD, like Patuxent Commons and Mission First. Under the Fair Housing Act rules, it's not possible to set aside units for people with a particular disability, but the Housing Commission will partner with companies and help with zoning for disabilities in general. They hope to have housing with mixed income as much as possible, recognizing that people with IDD are the lowest income households in the county, state and country.

- f. Peter noted that SSI income isn't enough to afford typical rent, and even with units set aside as 504 or ADA units in affordable projects might be too high without a voucher or other rent subsidy. State programs suggest limits to 25% of integrative housing for units for people with disabilities.
 - g. Nanette spoke about having a waiting list for vouchers versus a coordinated entry waiting list. Tim asked about it and Diane explained that the coordinated entry waiting system is for people experiencing homelessness and the database can also tell if they have a disability. It has been difficult to see how the waiting lists are prioritized. The process of using vouchers to get people into housing has been frustrating.
 - h. Peter and the Housing Commission continues to be happy to speak about any particular developments or initiatives, or affordable housing.
4. CHHI Properties
- a. Tim mentioned that Beverly White-Seals had talked about CHHI Properties before, and that Ned Howell was potentially going to speak today, but was not available. Ned will hopefully speak at a future Housing Committee meeting.
5. Report on Howard County Housing Opportunities Master Plan – Grace Morris
- a. Grace Morris reported on the Howard County Trust Fund and the Housing Opportunities Master Plan. The Trust Fund was an initiative that came out of the Master Plan, originally with a budget of \$5 million, but half of that went to a school funding, and the other half into a contingency housing trust fund. While this was not the outcome they were hoping for, they are hoping that providing the Council with more details about the Trust Fund could lead to funding structural changes. There has not been a housing trust fund since Grace began working in housing advocacy in 1989.
 - b. Nannette asked if there is a funding source for the Trust Fund because in her previous work, there was a real estate tax to fund their trust fund. Grace clarified that CARES Act money was the initial source for the Howard County Trust Fund, but no other source has been identified. She thinks the Council may want policies and procedures outlined before they approve this project.
 - c. The Master Plan has three strategies, which are then broken down in 14 groups with 80 recommendations. The three strategies are "land use, planning and zoning," "programs and policies" and "housing and infrastructure." The specialized needs for the Housing Commission fall under "programs and policies" to support low-income household and vulnerable populations and households with special needs. The plan recommends incentive for more units that are accessible and visitable, which is a growing trend that refers to single family or owner-occupied housing that is designed with zero step entrance, doors with 32

inches of passage space, and wheelchair accessible bathroom on the first floor. There is a section of topics of interest to residents, including persons with disabilities, new and existing homeownership, older adults, and low-income renters. Other things with the Master Plan include incentivizing income-restricted units, discouraging penalties for people who terminate their lease early to seek out other accessible housing, and conducting a neighborhood mobility assessment. Under the planning framework, there are 9 challenges. There is a lot of demand for accessible units, but often they go vacant because there is not enough information about them. In order to increase access to those units, utilize Maryland housing search and negotiating with landlords.

- d. Cindy Parr mentioned that Pat Sylvester had comments about the Master Plan. She said that trying to find out specific things to be done to connect people with housing is one of the most important but difficult things.
 - e. Grace spoke about the creation of Interagency Task Force to continue to work on the Master Plan living document and hold people accountable for their goals. This group would look at ongoing funding sources.
 - f. Tim inquired about the implementation and roll out of the Master Plan and how MIH and the Howard County Housing Committee could play a role. Cindy answered that making public appearances supporting and asking about the Master Plan's progress would be helpful, or possibly a letter asking about the intention, findings and reporting of the Commission. Grace said she appreciates the letter that MIH has already sent, and that time and money will ultimately factor in how the project is implemented.
 - g. Matthew recommended having a self-advocate on the Interagency Task Force, and Tim agreed that it would be good.
 - h. The Master Plan can be found on the Howard County Housing Department page, but Grace will send the report to Tim as well and Tim Will make sure it is on the MIH web site.
6. MIH Information Clearinghouse – Diane Dressler

- a. Diane shared the revised MIH website. She gave background on the Information Clearinghouse, explaining that the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration created a support living committee a few years ago to discuss housing needs for people with IDD and came up with recommendations. The creation of MIH was one of those recommendations, and as part of MIH, an Information Clearinghouse – a one-stop resource for people to get information about housing, affordable housing and other related topics. It includes multiple places to find information about housing, a way to stay connected to MIH through email, and links to other organizations' websites. The Information Clearinghouse is intended to be accessible for people with IDD or their families.
- b. The Information Clearinghouse main sections include:
 - i. Housing, Medicaid and Social Security
 - ii. Thinking About Renting or Owning a Home
 - iii. Learning About Renting or Owning a Home
 - iv. Renting

- v. Owning
 - vi. Housing Accessibility
 - vii. Services in Your New Home
 - viii. Preparing to Move
 - ix. Utilities
 - x. Moving
 - xi. Laws Providing Housing Protections for People with Disabilities
- c. Besides the Information Clearinghouse and Housing Committees sections, there are sections for finding a housing case manager and housing support services, a news section where Tim will link the Howard County Master Plan, and an event section, where training is listed. To note, Diane with MIH will host an upcoming monthlong training program for people providing housing support services, approved by DDA.
 - d. Committee members commended and thanked MIH for the Information Clearinghouse, having so many pieces of information consolidated in one place. Diane assured the Committee that the Clearinghouse would be updated.
 - e. Tim encouraged the Committee to disseminate the Information Clearinghouse.
 - f. Tim introduced Lauren Silverstone, Community Living Coordinator, who spoke about the barriers to an individual finding affordable, accessible housing in Howard County. She talked about research of subsidized housing units, Section 8 and Weinberg. Sierra Woods Apartments in Columbia has a HUD application day for income-based need and Shalom Square is also open for application until July 26 for elderly people and people with disabilities.
 - g. Diane cautioned the Committee on MD Housing Search and how it is not always updated or necessarily have accessible units.

7. Action Items

- a. Tim will link the Howard County Report in the News section on the MIH website.
- b. MIH will suggest having self-advocates on the Interagency Task Force.
- c. MIH hopes to have Kelly Cimino, the Director of the Howard County Department of Housing and Community Development or Ned Howell from the Rouse Foundation speak at the next meeting, keeping the Master Plan as a guide and using that as a reference for what to accomplish.

8. Next Meeting

- a. Thursday, September 16, 2021 – 2 – 3:30 PM