

MIH Montgomery County Housing Committee Meeting Notes
May 21, 2021, 3- 4:30 PM

Committee Members Present: Jillian Copeland, Tigest Alemu, Conor O’Shaughnessy, Rick Callahan, Trevor Golden, John Bogasky, Fred Swan, Diane Dressler, Regina Morales. Steve Keener, Larry Bram, Sabria Still, Rosemary DiPietro, Sarah Basehart

MIH Employees Present: Tim Wiens, Lauren Silverstone, Terri Bradford, Andrea Mast

1. Introduction of New Committee Members
 - a. Regina Morales – Deputy at Behavioral Health, Department of Health and Human Services. She is interested in promoting housing for people with behavioral health issues and increase services. Regina noted that Rolando Santiago from Department of Health and Human Services wanted to be here today, but he was at a conference today.
 - b. Lauren Silverstone – new MIH employee serving as Community Living Coordinator. She previously worked as a CCS worker for MMARS and has worked with affordable housing in Montgomery County’s Affordable Housing Initiative.
 - i. Tim remarked that MIH is available for housing support services with Lauren and clarified that they are currently grant-funded.
 - c. Fred Swan – Resident Services director at HOC, which does program and general services.
 - d. Rick Callahan (could not make last meeting) – ED of Compass. He has known Tim for 30 years and previously worked at Arc of Central Chesapeake as COO. Rick worked in purchasing and developing of housing and he is excited to be part of the Committee and address issues of housing affordability.
 - e. Terri Bradford – new Administrative Assistant.
2. Review of Committee Goals from March Meeting
 - a. Tim spoke about the goals of the Montgomery County Housing Committee that were generated at the last meeting:
 - i. Orchestrating timing of individuals’ access to affordable housing
 - ii. Working with developers to accommodate people with IDD and have supports for people moving in
 - iii. Collaboration with City of Takoma Park on new projects
 - b. Other Committee goal ideas:
 - i. Larry: Affordability of physically accessible housing. He mentioned getting developers to agree to accept what HOC will pay in their new luxury apartment buildings.
 - ii. John: He affirmed the starting list of goals, saying that we can add goals, but that a focused list is a good start for achievable progress. He suggested marketing MIH services as a goal, specifically advertising on the MCTransitions.org listserv. He will connect MIH if we are not able to find it.
 - iii. Steve: Add to the first goal – tie in with housing support services as one of the vehicles for making accessible housing happen.

- iv. Tim: He stressed that MIH is doing transformational work and wants to help services grow. He agreed with Steve that housing support services is an area to help the first goal grow.
- 3. City of Takoma Park Collaboration – Grayce Wiggins
 - a. Grace expressed excitement to be joining the Committee today. She has done housing work with the Northeast corridor line. She does work in Takoma Park, a suburb/bedroom community of DC. From the 1980s, Takoma Park has established an intentional affordable housing market with 3 main programs – a comprehensive rent stabilization program, low-income tax credit building, project based Section 8 housing. The goal is to ensure that families can live in their city and not spend most their income on housing. In the last 2 years, the focus has been on making the city a more inclusive city. Rent is \$800-10000 for a 1-3 bedroom apartment in Takoma Park, which is very affordable for this area. This allows people to invest in other parts of their lives.
 - b. Another thing Grayce spoke about was answering the question of converting people who are renters into homeowners. Currently, the conversion rate in the city is almost zero. In 2020, Grayce sought to figure out how to convert rental properties into starter homes for people. She is not looking to have people profit off home sales. She is working with Habitat for Humanity and Housing Initiative Partnership to create an ongoing subsidy. They will go to low to moderate income families – a home that is fully rehabilitated – lead/asbestos removal, updated appliances. This project is in Phase 1 right now. The houses will be in the \$300-400,000 price range for single family detached homes.
 - c. Phase 2 of the initiative asks how they can create housing in Takoma Park for adults with IDD who are capable of independent living? It is not currently happening in zip codes 20910 or 20912 – it is only happening at distances further out. Grayce spoke about Right of First Refusal, where a tenant has the first opportunity to purchase the property over third party contract, but the city of Takoma Park also has the right to purchase the property. Grayce met 1.5 years ago with parents with adult children with IDD to speak about how they remove the shame of parents and fear of parents passing without their children being cared for. She was impressed with the Main Street model. Grayce invited a small group of parents to tour a property for adult children to live together. She asked what the supportive services would look like and workforce development opportunities. Anything they do must have a workforce component. Grayce would like to collaborate with MIH to create an inclusive environment to support people with IDD and creates a narrative for families that their children are living independently and thriving.
 - d. John: He commented that Takoma Park’s initiative reminds him of a community in Boston with communal living spaces for people with IDD, and the residents are very happy there. There are 8-10 people with IDD and someone who provides support in a space nearby. Maryland’s previously stipulated that you could not build a house with more than 25% capacity for people with IDD, which is why that model was not here.
 - e. Grace said she wants to be conscious that the houses are anonymous, that the houses do not get labeled as “a house where people with disabilities live.”

- f. Jillian: She spoke about rehabbing houses and providing affordable housing for people with mental health, and components of support through Whitman Walker, a project around Strathmore. She would be happy to connect Grayce with Ron.
 - g. Steve: He talked about a study by CQL and the Arc several years ago and what people with IDD consider to be their dream home. Around 80% said their dream home was where they owned the home or held the lease, and only 5% was a group home idea. The study revealed that a much higher number of family members said group homes were the ideal home.
 - h. Jillian: Through her research prior to Main Street, living in a 1 or 2 bedroom is ideal. Her 3-bedroom spaces have shown to be more challenging (Main Street rooms are smaller). She stressed community space and programmatic opportunity as being key to successful housing, paired with choice from each individual. She is trying to speak with local developers to make the Main Street model with the things that are the best and more important for living a quality life, affordable, community-based a replicable model.
 - i. Grayce: Takoma Park is having conversations about what community space should look like, but noted that the IDD voice has not been included. Right now, she looks at 20 properties per year. There are still places to grow in Takoma Park, even though the city is quite developed. She has a portfolio of 48 1-bedroom properties, and she is trying to build excitement in the nonprofit housing community around these properties. She is sharing ideas about inclusive housing with the old Adventist hospital grounds. Grayce is also working on a minor master plan that will be rezoned. She is looking at properties that will have higher zoning. She emphasized that these properties should be affordable.
 - j. Diane: She echoed Steve's words about people with IDD having their own choice in housing. She mentioned the HUD 811 program, saying there are increasing problems with keeping group homes occupied. She gave an example of a group home in Howard County, and how they are struggling to fill it. She recommended Grayce taking a look there. Diane also did work in Massachusetts on affordable housing. Another project has been families purchasing affordable townhouses with funding from the state, and the families operate the group homes. They recently contacted her because they do not have a sustainability plan and their children are looking for another place. Diane highlighted the questions: Does the model fit the needs of people and is it sustainable? What size units do people need? The vast majority of people need a 1-bedroom apartment.
 - k. Grayce: She has been using a forever home. Anything that Takoma Park does going forward, will have a focus and direction. She wants her community to be very diverse. One bedrooms are \$500/month rent controlled. There should be a pipeline with organizations where they can suggest someone when there is a property vacancy.
 - l. Sarah: As we think about different housing actions, the physical accessibility is important – "affordable accessible" is how she refers to housing.
 - m. Grayce: Covid has hit the disability community very hard.
 - n. Tim spoke about his excitement for a partnership with Grayce and Takoma Park.
4. Collaboration with Independence Now – Sarah Basehart

- a. Sarah talked Centers for Independent Living about starting a committee like this one in Western Maryland, noting that rural areas may have different preferences for affordable housing than metro areas.
 - b. Tim spoke about the three MIH housing committees and that CILs have representation on each committee so far. CIL and MIH would have staff representation on these committees, but they would still be lay led.
5. Next Steps
- a. Next Committee meeting: Wednesday, July 14, 2021, 3 – 4:30 PM
 - b. Ideas for the next meeting: Jillian suggested having Jerry speak with the Committee.
 - c. To note: Chuck Short's wife had an emergency medical procedure and to keep them in their thoughts.

