



Howard County Housing Committee
Minutes

March 16, 2023

3:30 PM - 5:00 PM via Zoom

Present: Dr. Vernon Gray, Bita Dayhoff, Dorothy Plantz, Matthew Plantz, Katie Collins-Ihrke, Erin Ashinghurst, Christopher Kelter, Diane Dressler, Melissa Gibson, Patrick Lloyd, Sharonda Huffman, Mark Dunham, Terri Bradford, Terri Bradford, Sarah Hochbaum, Lauren Silverstone, Marge Gold, Mark Dunham, Tim Wiens

- 1) Welcome
 - a) Sharonda welcomed the committee members.
- 2) Review of Minutes and Updates
 - a) Added a missing name from the attendance section to the minutes from January.
- 3) Dr. Vernon Gray – Retired Professor, Councilman, and Administrator of the Office of Human Rights (Howard County) and Equity Advocate – Discussion on Advocacy for Disabilities and Equity (Member of the Howard County Housing Affordability Coalition)
 - a) Served 20 years on the Howard County council.
 - b) He shared “Navigating the Legislative Maze” presentation with the committee. The PowerPoint was shared in its’ entirety with the committee. Highlights of his talk:
 - i) Fiscal implications are easier to get through if it’s phased in over multiple years.
 - ii) It’s helpful to get the local delegation on board with your ideas before the bill goes to the entire legislature.
 - iii) “Fee in lieu of” - have these fees paid to the housing trust fund which will be attractive to all jurisdictions in the state and generate more support in the legislature.
 - iv) Resources needed: people, money, meeting location.



- v) Know the process – in Howard County they meet the first Monday for introduction of legislation and passing legislation from previous month. Third Monday is a public hearing on legislation and then the fourth Monday there is a work session where they work on amendments.
- vi) Know allies, partners, VIPS and their staff people. Staff people are vital as they are often the ones who are gatekeepers of information.
- vii) Educate legislators with information as they may not know the backstory.
- viii) Know and follow lobby laws.
- ix) Develop a communication plan.
- x) Effective Lobbying of Legislators
 - (1) plan your visit carefully. If you only have 10 minutes, plan your pitch in advance. Decide who's going to answer any questions. Don't have everyone speak. Be early. Be prepared! Be concise, accurate, honest, friendly, polite.
 - (2) Let them know you're supportive of them. Don't be shy.
 - (3) Make a call, visit the office, testify before committee, hold press conference, write a letter
 - (4) Committee votes on bills are the most important. If it doesn't pass the committee, 9 times out of 10 it won't get through the legislature.
 - (5) Know what some of the external influences are. Relate it to what's happening at the federal level and in other states with what you want to accomplish.
 - (6) Don't bring reporters to your meetings with lobbyists.
 - (7) Follow up after meetings with a card or letter of thanks.
- xi) Questions from committee members
 - (1) "Legislators don't read so if I'm meeting with someone is it better to have visuals so they can look at them or lots of details?" Dr. Gray said give an executive summary.



He doesn't want to hear about the organization's background in the first paragraph. Put your "ask" in the first paragraph. Organization background can go in the last paragraph.

(2) Diversity is about more than just race – it includes gender, disability, education, etc.

(3) Equity and inequity need to be looked at equally.

(4) You can't understand inclusion until you've been excluded.

4) Howard County Housing Affordability Coalition <https://www.hocohac.org>

- a) Testimony was given by HoCo by design.
- b) They are looking for more people to join the coalition.
- c) They are looking for people to give testimony.
- d) Sign up for their newsletter.

5) Updates on DDA Rent Subsidy – Stephanie Jones, DDA

- a) Tech Tuesdays are starting. Information will be given out on Tuesdays throughout the month. Their purpose is to help Maryland as it becomes a technology first state.
- b) No date for when the DDA rent subsidy comes out. It is going to happen but it has been delayed. People will be notified when it is ready.
- c) MIH goal was to fund an additional 100 people for FY24. It did not get in the governor's budget. They have funding for the program that they are finalizing the MOU for the program. Since the first year hasn't gotten off the ground, they are hesitant to invest more in round 2. DDA is committed to the program, and they hope to help at least 35 people in the first go round. Once this is established and we have data, then we can help push for more funding in subsequent rounds.
- d) Diane is going to talk to Stephanie about giving staff a refresher course.



6) State Legislative Updates

- a) Thank you to Dorothy and Matthew Plants for joining MIH at DD day at the legislature.
- b) MIH submitted a proposal to partner with developers and the state to create affordable housing for people with disabilities in Maryland. Reports come out from the Wes Moore transition committees soon and we hope to move forward at that time.
- c) MIH is in the State budget, and we are fully funded. There is good support for our mission.

7) Housing Opportunity Trust Updates (Notice of Funding Opportunity and Trust Fund Advisory Board Applications)

- a) NOFO became available seeking proposals for initiatives that are bold and impactful to help address the county's affordable housing needs and gaps.
- b) Trust funds submission for various programs will be reviewed by the Advisory committee and make recommendations to the DHCD Board. Those preapproved will notified by May 15.
- c) Marge Gold is waiting to hear if her application to the trust fund advisory board has been approved. The board should be announced this month.

8) MIH Staffing Updates

- a) Lauren Silverstone has been promoted to Director of Housing Support Services. She will be supervising our CLCs and working part-time in Montgomery County.
- b) Tierra Medley is our new CLC who will be focusing on Prince Georges County and Southern Maryland.
- c) We hope to hire an additional CLC soon.

9) Connect with MIH by our website www.mih-inc.org Follow us on social media, share our posts, join our mailing list, etc.

10) Open Forum

- a) Update on Patuxent Commons (PC):



- i) The state is going to cap the amount of subsidy given for any state projects at \$3.5 million dollars. PC may come in about \$2.5 million on top of that so they are scurrying to understand the consequences of that. There is a funding gap as the result of cost and material increases.
 - ii) PC is working with the Kelsey architect to review architectural plans for some of the PC designs to maximize the living experience for those with disabilities.
- 11) Next Meetings (possibly in person)
- a) Tentatively May 18, 2023 from 3:30 pm - 5:00 pm. Depends on room availability at HoCo housing building.
 - b) There will be a hybrid option available for those unable to attend.