



**HOUSING AUTHORITY
Minutes – July 12, 2023
In person at Planning Office
and via Zoom**

Call to Order: Chair Schulz called the meeting of the Housing Authority of Rock County to order at 10:04 AM on Wednesday, July 12, 2023.

Member present in person: Chair Supervisor Kathy Schulz, Billy Bob Grahm and Katie Udell.

Members present via ZOOM: Michelle Ponkauskas

Members Excused: Bill Wilson.

Rock County Staff present: Ilana Eisenberg (Office Coordinator) and Andrew Baker (Planning Director)

Others Present via ZOOM: David Salmon (City of Janesville – Associate Planner), Claire Gray (Forward Janesville), and Angela Pakes (Forward Janesville).

Adopt Agenda: Mr. Grahm made a motion to approve. Ms. Udell seconded the motion. ADOPTED

Approval of Minutes from Meeting Held June 7, 2023: Mr. Grahm made a motion to approve. Ms. Ponkauskas seconded the motion. ADOPTED

Citizen Participation, Communications and Announcements:

Director Baker discussed the housing related items that were part of the Wisconsin State Budget Bill. This is part of WHEDA (Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority), and was signed last Wednesday, July 5, 2023. The new rehabilitation loan fund was requested by the Governor in the amount of \$100 million but was approved for \$50 million. These funds would be available to primary residents and could either be repaid or forgiven. There was a partial veto on this by the governor, to delete the term “loan fund”. The state funding is readily available to be administered and offered by some financial institutions, none of which are local at this time. Many of the funds have been approved and disbursed in the urban areas. Director Baker would check with James Otterstein (Economic Development Manager) to see if Rock County could benefit from this fund. Ms. Ponkauskas explained

that there is an abundant amount of paperwork to file to apply for these funds. There was an increase in the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, upping the amount to \$100 million. These funds are for larger developments and were not included initially in the budget proposal. Subsequently, they have been approved. An additional amount of \$275 million was added for Housing Infrastructure and \$100 million added for rehabilitation of Main Street Housing, like the Edgerton Community outreach project. \$100 million have been designated to the community commercial to housing conversion revolving loan fund. In total, the Joint Finance Board was able to approve \$525 million for housing needs. It was recommended to reach out to Credit Unions in the area to question if they can offer WHEDA services.

The challenges that Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development (WPHD) has faced recently in terms of housing conditions were discussed. This came as a result of the Committee asking how the react to poor living conditions. There are times when house may be unsuitable to contractors to work on and must find solutions on how to deal with these residents. Normally when children are not present in the household, the adults are left with their own choices unless there are extreme conditions. There are resources that can be provided and methods to make the landowner aware of such concerns. There are ways to help people overcome the challenges although it is often difficult to convince people to utilize services. Chair Supervisor Schulz questioned how people with mental health issues are being helped.

Introduction of New Housing Authority Member:

The Housing Authority Committee was introduced to the newest member, Katie Udell. Ms. Udell works for the company Angus Young and is a landscaping architect for the architectural and engineering group. She has assisted in facilitating programs throughout the community, including being part of the Diversity Action Team. Ms. Udell briefly discussed the works by Matthew Desmond, “Evicted” and “Poverty: By America”. There are various suggestions that she felt correlated with what the Housing Authority is attempting to achieve. Director Baker explained how he met Ms. Udell through a work related project and thought she would be a wonderful addition to the Housing Authority Committee.

Director Baker went through a brief introduction into what drives the Housing Authority. About 20 years ago the Authority was created to administer the HOME program as outlined in state statutes. It was created as a separate legal entity from the County Board, but the Planning Department provides staff support. Any additional projects do require County Board approval and there is no specific budget designated. The County Board also approves any policy decisions, appeals, changes, projects that may exceed the maximum loan amount available, and facilitates in streamlining the approval process.

The cities of Janesville and Beloit administer voucher programs that further guide residents to their housing goals. There are limitations to the voucher programs that qualify as Section 8. Goals and strategies are set to be reestablished and run until 2024.

Follow Up Discussion on Developing a County-Wide Housing Strategy:

Focus has been on working on developing a work group for housing. Director Baker has reached out and had more contact with Professor Steven Deller with the University of Wisconsin Extension. He has communicated that he is willing and able to assist with building an effective work group. There was a comment made to see as to why Rock County does not have a representative at present time for the UW Extension. The Community Economic Agency (CEA) would help to dictate how the group

could be made up and what are the primary objectives. This could be done by creating a checklist to get the conversation initiated and further organize discussion points. Director Baker has confirmed that Professor Deller will not charge a cost to aid, because it is to be rolled into the purpose of the program. It may need to be approved with Chair Bostwick to see who would personally be appointed to make up this work group. There are still areas that need to be discussed, such as how to organize the group and make sure that it includes the community (cities included).

Status of Outreach Efforts:

Director Baker mentioned the challenges that the WPHD faces with information from Todd Mandel. There are new, higher, income thresholds which allows for a larger net to be cast in terms of assistance.

Suggestions for Future Meeting Topics:

Ms. Udell brought up requesting short presentations from Legal Action and other community entities with updated information and data. She also recommended the possibility of getting monthly metrics or the latest statistics and trends with housing within the county. Even possibly gathering more recent eviction statistics considering the most recent compiled data is from 2019. Director Baker explained how that it may be difficult to get new numbers from the court records statewide. It was explained to him in the past it is not a simple search, i.e. almost equivalent to paging through hard copy records. Chair Supervisor Schulz requested that Mr. Otterstein provide an update on what has been working within the county for multi-family housing.

The next meeting will be August 9th at 10 am, rather than August 2nd.

Adjournment:

Mr. Grahm made the motion to adjourn at 11:31am. Ms. Udell seconded the motion. ADOPTED

Next meeting: 08/09/2023 at 10:00AM

Respectfully submitted,
Ilana Eisenberg, Office Coordinator