

Summary of the Board of Supervisors' Housing Committee Meeting –
November 22, 2022

On November 22, 2022, the Board of Supervisors' (Board) Housing Committee held a meeting in Conference Room 11 of the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia. Members of the Board present for the meeting were: Supervisor John Foust, Committee Chairman; Board Chairman Jeffrey McKay; Supervisor Walter Alcorn; Supervisor Penny Gross (from a remote site); Supervisor Pat Herrity; Supervisor Rodney Lusk; Supervisor Dalia Palchik; Supervisor Kathy Smith; Supervisor Daniel Storck; and Supervisor James Walkinshaw. Also present was Bryan J. Hill, County Executive.

Homelessness in Fairfax County: Charting a New Course

Thomas Barnett, Deputy Director of the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) gave a presentation to the Board on charting a new course for the community's approach to homelessness. Mr. Barnett's presentation included – 1) a summary of the operational assessments conducted by county staff with the homeless system and service providers; 2) several options that are available to the community that would reduce homelessness; and 3) staff recommendations to establish long-term strategic priorities for the future.

Mr. Barnett identified that over the past 10 years, the Fairfax County community partnership has reduced homelessness and increased housing resources. The County's investment of over \$20 million in FY 2022 was notable as many local governments do not invest nearly as much and rely heavily on state and federal funding for resources to reduce homelessness.

The County's Internal Audit Office used the April 2022 and May 2022 Board matters as guidance for conducting operational assessments of homeless system and providers, as well as a cost-benefit analysis of hotel usage as shelter. A detailed report of those findings was provided to the Board in November 2022. In comparison to neighboring jurisdictions, there are three areas of opportunity for improvement with the overall homeless system – 1) increase the successful placement in or retention of permanent housing; 2) reduce the length of time persons remain homeless; and 3) increase employment and income growth for homeless persons. The county's Internal Audit Office also conducted interviews with local providers to better understand the constraints.

Through benchmarking with similar jurisdictions, several new or underutilized options were identified which could be explored in Fairfax County to improve efforts to prevent and end homelessness. Mr. Barnett gave an overview of the options which included more permanent supportive housing, more non-congregate emergency shelters, shallow rental subsidies, diversion from homelessness, more non-traditional housing types, and a housing stability support program. Mr. Barnett stated that several of the

options can be pursued; however, they are interdependent, and must be coordinated for long-term success.

Mr. Barnett then shared solutions currently in progress in the County to include a pilot project to help increase housing stability; the recent award of 30 additional Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing vouchers; Built for Zero, a privately funded diversion pilot to reduce veteran homelessness; and the Heat Emergency Response stakeholder workgroup.

As directed by the Board in May 2022, Mr. Barnett gave an overview of zoning requirements and proposed considerations that would allow private entities offering shelter and transitional services to operate emergency shelters in vacant and underutilized commercial and industrial buildings. Staff have focused on creating two new uses – 1) emergency shelters; and 2) permanent supportive housing needs. There is also a proposed new use titled “Alternative Use of Commercial Buildings for Emergency Shelter or Supportive Housing.” This special exception use would permit the repurposing of a commercial building in a commercial, industrial or in some planning districts with approval by the Board. If there is general support from the Board of this concept, it could be added to the zoning ordinance work program for FY 2024.

Thomas Fleetwood, Director, HCD, introduced a recommendation to the Board that it move the current Continuum of Care Committee from under the Affordable Housing Advisory Council to be an independent body. Mr. Fleetwood suggested that members be added, including appointees of the Board and people with lived experience of homelessness. A report is expected to be delivered to the Board in time for the development of the FY 2025 budget.

Mr. Barnett concluded the presentation by discussing the need to address staffing issues at homeless shelters, and that a new request for proposals for county-contracted homeless services is expected to be released in 2023.

Update on the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice

Hilary Chapman, Housing Program Manager, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, gave an update to the Board on the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI), also known as the regional fair housing plan. Eight jurisdictions are participating in the AI to include the counties of Fairfax, Arlington, Loudoun, and Prince William, Virginia, and Montgomery, Maryland, the cities of Alexandria, Virginia, and Gaithersburg, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. The plan covers the years 2023 to 2027 and includes information specific to each jurisdiction as well as regional goals and action steps. Each of the eight local governments are working towards the same regional goals; however, implementation may vary at the local levels. Ms. Chapman reviewed the seven draft regional goals which were composed to focus efforts and housing investments in the areas with the greatest potential for impact. In addition, Fairfax County has two additional draft strategies to consider that are specific only to the County. Ms. Chapman noted that public comment on the plan is anticipated

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to begin in December 2022 and last for 60 days. All local governments will be separately asked to consider the plan prior to the final document being submitted to HUD in late spring 2023.