

AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COUNCIL

Friday, March 27, 2026, at 9:30 AM

**Cornerstones
11150 Sunset Hills Rd
Suite 210
Reston, VA 20190**

Meeting Summary

AHAC Members Present:

1. Kerrie Wilson (Co-Chair)
2. Rip Sullivan (Co-Chair)
3. Cookie Blitz
4. Marlene Blum
5. John Boylan
6. Lorena Brady
7. Barbara Broman
8. Joe Fay
9. Marcie Foster
10. Hillary Hogan
11. Kamilah McAfee
12. Joe Mondoro (virtual)
13. Ilryong Moon
14. Ava Nguyen
15. Jill Norcross
16. Mary Paden
17. Dr. Gerald Poje
18. Tara Ruskowski
19. Josh Shumacker
20. Eleanor Vincent
21. Maura Williams
22. Shari Zamarra
23. Hap Connors

County Staff Present:

Jennifer Miller (DCE), Tom Fleetwood (HCD), Anna Shapiro (HCD), Meghan Van Dam (HCD), David Huaman (HCD), Corey Brocke (HCD)

Others Present:

Judy Singer

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Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Sullivan at 9:50 a.m.

Action Items

Poje moved to approve the meeting minutes from December 5, 2025. Boylan seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved.

Housing Production Initiative Updates

Wilson and Sullivan invited Miller to report on the cross agency Housing Task Force and housing production initiatives. Following an Economic Competitiveness Board Matter (identifying workforce housing as essential to competitiveness) and a Housing Board Matter (directing staff to increase supply and reduce barriers), the County formed a Task Force of about 50 staff from 13 agencies. The group meets with Supervisor Smith and the Board Chair and was instructed to stay largely resource neutral by focusing on internal reforms to move projects faster, incentivize production, and remove unintentional barriers across the “whole of housing.” A combined report from the Economic Competitiveness and Housing Task Forces is scheduled for May 12. A developer survey is underway, and AHAC members may also respond.

The Task Force concluded there is a critical supply demand gap that threatens economic health and workforce retention. Housing production has slowed sharply: housing stock growth from 2020–2024 is only ~2%, and rental supply has grown only about 5% in a decade, lagging neighboring jurisdictions. Fairfax has added roughly 2.3 jobs for every new housing unit (vs. a healthy 1.5:1), indicating strong job growth but insufficient housing, which pushes workers farther out. HR&A estimates a current need of ~15,000 additional homes and a total need of ~41,000–91,000 additional units by 2035, implying the County must roughly double housing production.

Affordability gaps are significant. A 100% AMI family of four (~\$164,000) can afford a home of about \$586,000, yet the median sales price is around \$770,000, affordable only to households above \$230,000, leaving a gap of roughly \$180,000. Only about 13% of new units in the past five years are affordable to households below 100% AMI, while about a third of new homes sold for more than \$1.1 million; recent single-family homes are largely above ~\$1.2 million. On the rental side, Fairfax rents have grown faster than nearly all neighbors and now trail only Arlington. Average rent growth has risen from about 2% per year pre-pandemic to about 5% post-pandemic, and average rents have increased from roughly \$1,800 to about \$2,534. The County is short an estimated 14,000 rental units for households at or below 60% AMI, and the private market does not adequately serve renters below about 80% AMI.

Miller noted that residents often oppose additional housing because they see their homes as their primary asset and worry about property values, traffic, and school crowding, even as data show a severe housing crisis. Developers and other applicants report that County policies limit housing supply, raise costs for affordable housing, and that the review process is fragmented. They seek simpler, more transparent requirements, additional financing tools, and a “yes, if...” culture for housing proposals. The Task Force has divided its recommendations between actions staff can implement administratively and changes requiring Board action.

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To encourage new housing, the County is identifying “Suburban Village Centers” where older commercial/suburban areas will be pre-designated in the Comprehensive Plan for mixed-use residential and retail, reducing the need for site-specific plan amendments. It is also exploring “Compact Housing Villages” and expanded Accessory Living Units (ALUs) to add small-scale density. Similar units in neighboring jurisdictions are being produced in the \$300,000 range (excluding land) and have proven useful for young adults, older adults, and other renters. Currently, fewer than about 6% of lots qualify for detached ALUs due to a two-acre minimum; staff are evaluating how to relax that standard, likely through iterative changes. A Congregate Living Zoning Ordinance Amendment, approved March 17, has expanded eligible locations for congregate living and clarified the definition.

To reduce costs for affordable projects, staff are reviewing whether to adjust proffer expectations and application fees so affordable projects are not treated identically to market-rate projects, including allowing some amenities to be shared with neighboring developments. A special exception pathway for affordable housing is being developed to address site-specific impacts without requiring full rezoning, while still allowing community input. These ideas will be incorporated into Phase 2 of the Policy Plan Amendment and an update to the housing element of the Comprehensive Plan, which will clarify housing policies, align with Board housing goals, and embody key Task Force initiatives.

Miller also outlined efforts to expand financial tools. The Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority is exploring new financing products to better leverage existing housing funds, recognizing that current sources are insufficient given rising construction costs. Staff are examining potential tax relief or incentives to ease the property tax burden for qualifying affordable projects. A new purchase assistance program is under consideration that would use state funds for down payment assistance, closing costs, and interest rate buy-downs for households at or below 80% AMI.

Internally, the County is working to simplify processes and improve coordination. Under a “Faith in Housing” initiative, staff are preparing toolkits and designating a point of contact to help faith communities with land but little development expertise pursue housing. The Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Zoning Ordinance review is being elevated to a Priority 1 work item, with a focus on shifting some elements to administrative approval and potentially eliminating the currently inactive ADU Board to streamline decision-making. The County is also seeking more flexibility in handling projects that require both Comprehensive Plan amendments and zoning cases, including dual processing and more flexible treatment of density in focused areas such as transit station areas.

Land Development Services will build on its dedicated project team model by adding a project manager for housing—likely focused on affordable housing—to serve as a single point of contact and coordinate reviews across agencies. Data from similar efforts show that dedicated project management can substantially reduce review time, though specific deadlines cannot be guaranteed. Developers continue to cite transportation and VDOT coordination as major pain points, and improving that interface is a priority. County and VDOT staff are forming work groups to clarify which analyses are needed at which stage and to avoid unnecessary or duplicative studies.

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Miller noted that community engagement practices are not standardized across the County. Chief Equity Officer Toni Zollicoffer is leading an effort with Housing and Community Development, Neighborhood and Community Services, Public Works, and others to identify best practices and establish more consistent, appropriate engagement approaches for similar types of projects, with attention to better reflecting the communities where projects are proposed.

Miller described a proposed Real Estate Opportunities Team—a small group that would look strategically across County-owned land for co-location and redevelopment opportunities, working closely with Housing and Community Development and Capital Facilities to identify sites suitable for housing, including affordable housing.

For next steps, she said a technical survey was sent to the development community on March 19, closing April 2, and that its results will be used to refine the plan before the May 12 Board presentation. The May 12 session is intended to confirm Board support for the overall direction and timelines, not to make final decisions on specific zoning changes. Each initiative will have defined objectives, timelines, and performance measures, rolled into a consolidated work plan. Staff will provide quarterly or semi-annual updates to the Board and will align the zoning ordinance work program with the Board's stated priority to address the housing crisis.

Paden reported on regional discussions where planners urged reframing affordable housing as essential infrastructure, like roads, needed to keep communities livable for a full range of workers rather than as charity. Miller said this aligns with the Board's thinking and with feedback from economic and workforce groups and the Economic Development Authority, all of whom cite workforce housing shortages and the cost of living as major constraints on business attraction; the challenge is building public support to fund housing at that level of priority.

Paden expressed concern that expanded revitalization areas around suburban villages and community business centers—where many older, relatively affordable apartment buildings are located—could accelerate gentrification. She questioned incentives that favor large parcel consolidation and demolition, noted that tenants often receive little or no early notice, and urged the County to use tools such as CDFI funding to invest in preserving and improving existing neighborhoods and to engage residents before redevelopment decisions are made.

Miller acknowledged the difficulty of preserving affordability while encouraging redevelopment. Shapiro said the County is working toward “no net loss” by pushing developers to preserve units one-for-one in redevelopment projects, but that this is challenging when market-rate developers do not use County affordable housing tools. Proposed tax-based tools are intended to help embed affordability more directly into market projects and support no-net-loss goals.

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Paden also urged that tax incentives be extended beyond large developers to nonprofit builders and smaller projects, noting new state authority for tax breaks for nonprofit affordable housing. Shapiro responded that tax exemptions for affordable housing projects are a key element of the County's financial initiatives and are being prepared as an additional tool to reduce the subsidy needed per project and tie tax relief directly to affordability.

On engagement, Shapiro described a new community engagement model, first used on a County-owned East County site, that brings staff to the community before Comprehensive Plan or zoning actions. Staff start by explaining affordable housing (AMI levels, income ranges, rents, design standards) and then solicit input on community priorities, infrastructure, and amenities. This approach, now being applied to sites like Dulles Greene and the Centreville Library co-location, is intended to secure robust, representative input early, using multiple formats (in-person, virtual, and surveys), so that by the time projects reach formal hearings, core issues have been addressed and later stages focus on refinements rather than fundamental conflicts.

Poje asked how the County is engaging FCPS and the Park Authority with the urgency of housing needs, noting that much progress has been made using Board-controlled land but that school and park properties have not yet been tapped for affordable housing. He suggested that, over time, school sites and other public properties could be repurposed or intensified and that land cost is one of the biggest constraints on producing more affordable units. He also stressed that change comes from engaging key decision-makers and opinion leaders rather than trying to reach the entire population with technical material, and urged more targeted outreach to those who can shape public opinion and help move the County toward "yes" on solutions.

Miller said the Park Authority's mission is to preserve open space and provide high-quality parkland, and that there is a strong constituency opposed to losing park space, making any conversion to housing politically difficult. Schools manage their own property, though land swaps among the School Board, County, and Park Authority sometimes occur. She agreed there may be additional opportunities for strategic land use, including through the proposed Real Estate Opportunities Team, which could examine County-controlled and other public sites for acquisition, swaps, or redevelopment potential.

Miller reiterated that the Task Force's Phase 1 focus has been on identifying technical and process changes within County control that remove unintentional barriers and make it easier to deliver more housing while still meeting community expectations. She acknowledged that the presentation and underlying work are highly technical and said that Phase 2 must focus on "storytelling" and public communication. Staff are working with Public Affairs to distill the complex data and recommendations into accessible materials—such as a concise slide set that explains the problem with clear graphics and a companion piece that shows what the County is doing (e.g., leveraging \$1 of County funds into \$4 of development). Existing Housing Authority presentation materials and videos are being incorporated into this effort, with the goal of producing a more public-friendly narrative that can support broader engagement and advocacy.

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Shumacker noted that other jurisdictions, such as Los Angeles County, have reduced housing rebuilding and permitting timelines from months to about two weeks and suggested Fairfax explore similar efficiencies, including using AI to identify developable sites and streamline reviews.

Miller said the County already maintains a detailed inventory of County-owned properties and is working to better leverage AI within Land Development Services, particularly for site permits. She added that staff are also examining a “trust the seal” approach where stamped engineering plans would receive less duplicative County review, though attorneys are cautious. Shumacker emphasized that advanced AI tools can rapidly synthesize complex geospatial and policy information and could be adapted to support Fairfax’s housing production work, noting there is still a learning curve in fully integrating such tools.

Blum asked whether special populations, especially people with disabilities and those needing long-term care, are adequately addressed in County planning. She stressed that most assisted living and continuing care communities in Fairfax are unaffordable, despite a growing senior population, and urged the County to treat them as permanent housing with supports and to define a clearer role in incentivizing affordable options.

Shapiro said the recent needs assessment did include seniors but agreed that more focused analysis is needed on residents of all ages who require permanent supportive housing or intensive services. She noted the high cost of developing even standard affordable rentals and the added complexity of services but cited successes where 24/7 services are co-located with shelters and in nonprofit scattered-site models. She agreed there is a significant unmet need for housing with wraparound services and said future work will look more directly at these models.

Blitz confirmed that the new state “faith in housing” bill would not take effect until January 2027 and must be re-approved next year. She supported the County’s proposed assistance to faith institutions but noted internal and community resistance, citing a church that spent significant resources planning affordable housing for lower-income seniors and workers but was strongly opposed by a vocal minority at a community meeting. She stressed that, if the bill advances, Fairfax must be ready to actively support such projects and manage NIMBY opposition.

Sullivan said AHAC and others regularly discuss the need to demystify and de-stigmatize affordable housing and counter neighborhood misconceptions, acknowledging that this is a major political hurdle. He shared that he voted for the bill, despite some County reservations, because he believes it is important to keep faith-based housing efforts moving while the Governor considers possible changes before signing. Moon noted data showing beginning Fairfax teachers spend about 46% of their salary on housing, highlighting how hard it is for them to live and work in the County. He asked whether FCPS-owned older buildings or other properties could be repurposed as housing, while recognizing likely neighborhood resistance and not advocating for reducing parkland.

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Miller said that if FCPS wants to pursue housing, the County can assist through rezoning or special exceptions, though school sites in established neighborhoods face strong anti-density sentiment. She cited a teacher-oriented project in Falls Church that has struggled to house only teachers, showing both promise and limits of that model.

Shapiro added that FCRHA could partner with FCPS if land is made available, but fair housing rules make it difficult to limit units strictly to teachers. The County can use preferences and targeted marketing to reach teachers and school staff, while keeping eligibility broad enough (e.g., other public employees and general renters) to ensure full occupancy and a stable community.

Boylan observed that Fairfax hosts many military personnel but has little dedicated military housing, suggesting DOD buy high density buildings to house service members and free up local homes. He also reiterated that investing County dollars in housing and HCD is an investment in jobs throughout the economy.

Miller explained that DOD policy is to rely on local housing and maintain only enough on base housing where market analyses show a shortfall; installations like Fort Belvoir and Bolling are already at capacity, and DOD is not seeking to buy or build more dedicated housing, partly to encourage integration into communities. She acknowledged that military stationing adds pressure to the local market.

Miller further noted that households around 80% AMI face acute strain: some residents report barely managing current housing costs and feeling that any tax increase pushes them toward leaving the County. Long-time homeowners with sharply appreciated home values also feel squeezed by rising taxes, complicating efforts to fund housing initiatives.

Sullivan reported that the recent General Assembly session was generally very successful for housing, even though not all goals were achieved and some bills are imperfect. He highlighted the “faith-based” housing bill, which he supported, noting that it is delayed in taking effect until January 2027 (rather than the usual July effective date) and is structured as a five-year pilot that will sunset unless reenacted. He acknowledged that Fairfax County has concerns with the bill and questioned whether the five-year sunset was wise, but emphasized his view that tapping churches and other places of worship for housing is important.

Sullivan said both the Governor and General Assembly were highly focused on affordability and housing this session. Key accomplishments included additional funding for the Housing Trust Fund, creation of a new loan vehicle for affordable housing, measures to strengthen renter protections (e.g., slowing evictions and giving tenants more time), and new powers for localities such as rights of first refusal to help preserve existing affordable units. While these actions do not solve all housing challenges, he believes they move the needle and expects the Governor to sign the housing bills, perhaps with some tweaks but without vetoes. He noted that one of his own bills did not pass but is likely to be implemented administratively, and he reiterated ongoing concerns that VDOT processes take too long, observing that there is now an increased emphasis on streamlining transportation reviews for housing and other projects.

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Wilson emphasized that the key next step is translating the Task Force's technical work and the timeline for upcoming Board actions into clear message points AHAC can use to help educate the public. She invited members (including those who participated via Zoom) to send questions and recommendations for Miller to consider as she prepares the May 12 presentation.

Miller noted staff are trying to anticipate NIMBY arguments, and Shapiro stressed the need for messaging that resonates with communities. Wilson added that Fairfax is already doing relatively strong outreach compared with other jurisdictions, and that AHAC's continued input on messaging will be important.

Paden emphasized that effective housing messaging requires professional social marketing and communication expertise, not adhoc efforts. She noted that Public Affairs can simplify technical information but argued the County must go beyond basic facts, using targeted, evidence based messaging to reach different audiences and build support for affordable housing.

Budget / Legislative Notes

Wilson briefed AHAC on the FY27 budget context, noting that the County Executive's advertised budget maintains the existing 1¼-penny dedication for housing and adds about a 12.5% increase in housing-related positions, but no additional ongoing housing revenue. She highlighted data (provided by Paden) showing that since FY25 the Board has committed nearly \$200 million—closer to \$235 million—in baseline and one-time funds for affordable housing, with AHAC playing a key role in advocating for sustained funding.

Wilson reported that FCRHA Chair Lenore Stanton and the FCRHA have, for the first time, formally recommended that the County add another ¼-penny for housing, underscoring the urgency of current needs. She explained that AHAC's draft FY27 position—reflected in the handout—would commend the Board's progress while reiterating AHAC's long-standing goal of a full 2-penny dedication for housing, and would again address carryover, the current budget, and guidance language for the next budget year. Blum highlighted a proposed \$350,000 cut that would eliminate the low and moderate income home repair pilot program after its first year. She noted the program serves vulnerable homeowners not covered by the longstanding elderly home repair program and helps them preserve homeownership. Blum argued that, even as the budget rightly increases funding for homelessness services and shelters, cutting a prevention focused program risks creating more homelessness and is self defeating. She urged the County to continue the pilot longer to fully evaluate its impact. Paden agreed.

Wilson outlined the fiscal context, noting about \$23 million in unallocated funds, with most carryover already effectively committed. The current housing budget is just over \$42 million, while a full 2-penny equivalent would be roughly \$70 million, representing a major increase. She said the core question for AHAC is how to frame its testimony—reaffirming the 2-penny goal while acknowledging current budget constraints and deciding how forcefully to press for that level now. She noted that additional data (from Paden) and suggested amendments (from Blum) will inform the final language.

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Fay commented on the draft FY27 budget position, saying he preferred the version that emphasizes “meaningful progress” in increasing the housing budget without naming a specific dollar amount, given current fiscal constraints. He said the four-bullet format clearly highlights what AHAC is asking for and prevents key points from being buried in paragraphs. Fay characterized this approach as a good compromise that both respects and reiterates the Board’s previously adopted housing goals while urging meaningful budget increases and sustained funding over time.

Paden emphasized that AHAC’s position aligns with the Board’s own commitment to a 2penny housing dedication. She recalled that the County’s resources panel assumed a County contribution of about \$85,000 per unit and concluded that reaching a 10,000unit goal over 15 years would require roughly 2 pennies, or about \$57 million per year. In practice, she noted, annual funding has been closer to \$40 million and inconsistent, meaning the County is underinvesting relative to its stated goals. Paden argued that the Board needs a clear, long term funding plan to match its production targets, praising HCD’s leveraging of existing funds but stressing that substantially more base funding is still needed.

Wilson confirmed that any data or charts in AHAC’s written budget testimony will be vetted by staff for accuracy. She asked members if they support the four bullet messaging framework that stresses urgency, reiterates AHAC’s and the Board’s housing goals, and calls for “meaningful progress” in the budget without naming a specific amount; no one objected.

Blum’s motion to seek restoration of \$350,000 for the low and moderate- income- home repair pilot program was discussed, with Paden proposing a friendly amendment to also reference eviction -prevention supports (utility relief, legal representation) without specifying dollar figures. Wilson suggested addressing these prevention items in a separate paragraph as critical investments; members agreed.

Wilson noted AHAC will be Speaker #1 at the April 15 budget hearing (3:00 p.m.). Because Sullivan will be out of town, Boylan agreed to present AHAC’s testimony. Wilson said refined message points will be shared so members can use them in other meetings and town halls. Poje urged sharing AHAC’s final position with partner organizations so they can echo the same themes; Wilson agreed. Paden added that NAACP will submit similar comments and is organizing about 14 lived experience speakers.

Foster reported on outreach in Mantua, where residents are increasingly worried about affordability. Fleetwood’s presentation there helped residents connect visible local projects to County housing investments; both Foster and Fleetwood emphasized the value of early, small-group conversations before specific proposals appear.

Wilson highlighted the Northern Virginia Supportive Housing Institute and noted that Williams, Ruszkowski, and Vincent were recognized as “Champions of Supportive Housing.” Fleetwood thanked AHAC members for their advocacy on the Penn Daw shelter and Franconia Government Center projects, saying their testimony helped counter misinformation and shape decisions. Brady updated members on affordable

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housing efforts in Herndon and community concerns about being included, particularly for households at 30–40% AMI.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Next AHAC Meeting:

June 12, 2026 at 9:30 a.m.

Location: TBD

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