

DRAFT

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMISSION SYNOPSIS OF MEETING AT 6:00 PM

September 27, 2006

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Fink, Vice Chair Moreno, Commissioners Bock, Roberson, and Talivaa
MEMBERS ABSENT: Colacicco and Ordoñez
CITY STAFF: M. De Castro, A. Herrera, L. Krutko, and S. Murillo
GUESTS: Al Muñoz, Ron Johnson, Saul Wachter, and Phyllis Ward.
LOCATION: 200 E. Santa Clara Street, W-120, San José CA 95113

MEETING

1. Call to Order/Orders of the Day

The meeting was called to order at 6:04p.m.

2. Introductions

Guests and staff introduced themselves.

3. Announcements (1 min.)

No announcements.

4. Action Items (60 min.)

A. Recommendation to advise the City Council to consolidate the Community Development Block Grant Steering Committee with the Housing Advisory Commission (L. Krutko, Housing)

The Director went through a PowerPoint presentation which outlined the following: background on how CDBG was transferred to the Housing Department as a result of the approval of the FY 06-07 budget, the history of the CDBG program, the program objectives, and how CDBG funds are used in San Jose. In addition, the Director also discussed the reasons the Housing Department was making this recommendation and the impact on current Housing Advisory Commissioners.

The Vice Chair opened the discussion by stating that she was concerned that housing issues would not receive sufficient attention if meetings were limited to two hours. She wondered how it would be possible to limit meetings to two hours. The Director responded that this was a valid concern. She also added that the two hours was referenced in the staff report to be respectful of Commissioners' time. Also, staff reviewed previous CDBG agendas and minutes and their meetings were approximately one hour in duration. Al Muñoz also expressed concern about the meeting duration and indicated that he did not think that meeting for two hours was realistic. The Chair indicated that he would accept the two-hour meeting times as a target. He added that the Commission has demonstrated a commitment to getting the job done and he has faith that Commissioners would be willing to invest the time to get through an issue.

The Chair continued that he sees the merger as an opportunity. The HAC has focused on housing construction; however, there are many social issues that affect the quality of housing and the success of new housing development. He also added that one of the challenges will be to bring the CDBG members up to speed on housing issues.

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Commissioner Bock expressed concern that the Housing Advisory Commission meetings are already longer than two hours. She also added that there is a steep learning curve for Housing Advisory Commissioners and there may be a need to have an orientation for new members. She also expressed concern over the fact that she received the staff report regarding this issue on Saturday. Lastly, she expressed concern over the fact that the report references the scope of the HAC as addressing "existing" housing policies. The Director responded that the HAC's scope is not limited to existing housing policies and Commissioners are always welcome to bring forward other issues they would like the Department to work on, e.g., secondary units. The Director also added that study sessions can be provided to bring Commissioners up to speed.

The Vice Chair indicated that members of the CDBG Steering Committee need to understand that is a lot of work that needs to be done regarding housing issues.

Commissioner Talivaa expressed concern about limiting the meeting time to two hours. She also does not want the focus taken away from affordable housing. She also added that new Commissioners would need training. The Director emphasized that the two hours was a suggestion and not a limit.

The Vice Chair indicated that she is excited about the opportunity of merging the HAC and CDBG Steering Committee.

Commissioner Bock asked for clarification on what was meant by the "high-level" housing policy issues that are referenced in the memo. She also expressed concern over the composition of the HACDAC and the guidelines regarding representation from Council Districts. In response to the question about "high-level" housing policy issues, the Director responded that Commissioners set the priorities and that if there are issues they would like staff to bring forward they can make these requests of staff. Also, the composition of the HACDAC was taken from the current composition of the CDBG Steering Committee.

The Chair added that Commissioners are able to set the agenda. He also added that he would support the merger if the motion included tutorials for both groups to meet together and become familiarized with the policy issues on both fronts.

Current CDBG Steering Committee member Al Muñoz, commented that he supported the merger of the HAC and CDBG Steering Committee. He also added that there is a lot to learn about the CDBG process and that it would be important to provide a tutorial for those not familiarized with the process.

Commissioner Roberson indicated that the scope of the HAC is defined in the staff report. However, the report does not highlight what part of the scope of both commissions will be lost upon the merger. The Director responded that the HAC has by-laws which identify the scope. The CDBG Steering Committee does not have by-laws. Upon merging both commissions the HACDAC would have by-laws.

Saul Wachter of the Affordable Housing Network commented that the consolidation is not a good idea and the merger would dilute the work of the City in creating affordable housing. This merger would be taking place when there is already a shortage of affordable housing. Currently, the City does not have a policy to eliminate the shortage of affordable housing. Mr. Wachter closed by stating that this proposal should be sent back to the Housing Department for revision.

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Ron Johnson of the Affordable Housing Network agreed that there is an overlap in the population that is served by both respective Commissions. However, this similarity does not mean there is similarity in the tasks of both Commissions. The tasks of the HAC and CDBG Steering Committee are very different. He added that the HAC has been concerned with the housing crisis and the merger will eliminate that. Also, the merger will change the composition of those who will serve on the commission. By keeping the HAC and CDBG Steering Committee separate, the public has had two bodies to which they can express their concerns. The merge will reduce this opportunity to 1 body.

In response to Mr. Johnson's comments, Commissioner Bock stated that the public will have less of an opportunity to weigh-in on issues if the Commissions are merged.

The Chair commented that with the consolidation there may be less public forums. However, it allows for an integrated approach to addressing affordable housing issues. The HACDAC would have input on the agencies that receive grants. Also, he added that public participation on the HAC has been stable. Since the CDBG Steering Committee has not had a quorum and has had to cancel meetings, there has been no public participation in the past few months. He stated that he supports the merger if there is a proviso that there are tutorials for HAC Commissioners and CDBG Steering Committee members.

Commissioner Roberson stated that he is in favor of the merger, provided that the original scope of the HAC and CDBG Steering Committee become part of the scope of the newly created HACDAC.

The Vice Chair made a motion to consolidate the HAC and CDBG Steering Committee and added that the substantive scope of both Commissions should not be reduced, that staff work on providing tutorials to all members to ensure they can fully participate in discussions about housing policies and the CDBG process, and lastly, that public participating not be minimized as a result of the merge. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Roberson.

Phyllis Ward of the Affordable Housing Network spoke against the motion and endorsed the comments made by Mr. Wachter. She expressed concern over the make-up of the HACDAC (2 representatives from low-income council districts), and how this could impact affordable housing projects being built throughout the entire city. She added that the missions of both Commissions are different.

Commissioner Talivaa commented that she did not support the motion and that she felt Commissioners needed more time to think about this issue. Commissioner Bock agreed with Commissioner Talivaa and commented that the affordable housing crisis needs to be solved.

The Chair commented that if the HAC spends more time on housing issues, this will not necessarily result in more housing being built. The HAC is set up as an advisory body to the City Council.

The Director also added that the Housing Department is about much more than building new housing/production. Also, the CDBG program is not solely a social services grant program. CDBG money is also used for housing rehabilitation, etc. Housing and community development is all about assisting low income households.

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The Chair added that the programs funded by CDBG give people (who may be living in affordable housing developments) tools to live quality lives. He indicated that there is an organic connection between both issues.

A vote was taken on the motion put forth by Vice Chair Moreno. The Commission voted 3-2 to support staff's recommendation to merge the HAC and CDBG Steering Committee (Bock and Talivaa voted "no").

Commissioner Bock made a motion to have the HACDAC review the merge in 1-year and make changes if necessary. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Talivaa. The motion passed 4-1 (Roberson voted "no").

5. Public Comments

No further public comments.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30p.m.