

Interagency Council on Affordable Housing

Thursday March 28, 2013

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

State Capitol

Hartford, Connecticut

Members Present: Anne Foley (Chair), Claudette Beaulieu (DSS) for Commissioner Roderick Bremby, Barbara Geller (DMHAS), Commissioner Catherine Smith (DECD), Howard Rifkin (Partnership for Strong Communities), Betsy Crum (Connecticut Housing Coalition), Jenny Vesco (DCF) for Kim Somaroo-Rodriguez, Eric Chatman (Connecticut Housing Finance Authority), Commissioner Evonne Klein (DOH), Joseph Martel (Council Appointee) and Fran Martin (Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness).

I. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:15. Members introduced themselves.

II. Approve the January 8th and February 25th Meeting Minutes

Barbara Geller moved approval of the January 8th and February 25th meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Eric Chatman. The motion was approved on a voice vote with one amendment, to correct the spelling of Chatman.

III. Brief Commissioner Klein on the Council's Work

The Chair provided an update on the Council's activities over the past ten months. The Chair reiterated the Governor's expectation to combine state housing functions into one new State Office of Housing that will support three main goals: (1) to be more consumer-friendly and easier to navigate for clients; (2) to enhance the state's productivity and ensure a comprehensive approach to housing initiatives; and (3) to provide an effective structure to bring the state housing agenda to the forefront. Other major points presented include:

- The Interagency Council was established to advise and assist the Commissioner of the Department of Housing in the planning and implementation of the new department as well as develop strategies and recommendations for implementation of the new department.
- One major task of the Council was to identify and recommend specific programs for transfer to the new department. The Chair referenced the Council's 2013 Report which includes the list of programs recommended for transfer. The majority of programs recommended for transfer are programs currently administered by the Departments of Economic and Community Development and Social Services.

- Council recommendations regarding improvements to the effectiveness of the state’s housing delivery structure by ensuring that the new department:
 - Utilizes flexible funding mechanisms and eliminate bureaucratic hurdles
 - Enhances predictability.
 - Provides transparency in processes and decision-making and encourages resident participation.
 - Leverages opportunities.
 - Promotes accountability by creating and measuring objectives – across all housing agencies and systems.
 - Implements a unified approach to state financing for affordable housing that brings together all housing resources in the state.
 - Creates an organization and staff culture that avoids a regulatory mentality and focuses on development, program administration and production.

The Chair stated that the Council strongly feels that the Commissioner should take into consideration the above recommendations during the early planning phases of the new department.

The Chair briefly reviewed other recommendations related to the organizational structure, prioritization of housing resources, and enhanced coordination across housing systems. The Chair asked for comments by Council members, who expressed their willingness to assist the Commissioner in any way possible.

IV. Commissioner’s Update on the Department of Housing

Commissioner Klein expressed her commitment to use a comprehensive and centralized approach to housing services that will be a one stop for information regarding available resources, programs, applications for families and individuals as well as for developers and community leaders. Initial work has begun regarding the organizational structure and determining the most effective approach to transition programs and staff to the new department. The Commissioner is working on an outreach strategy to meet with municipalities, state agencies and other entities to receive input on the housing needs of their residents and clients.

V. Update on Proposed 2013 Housing Legislation

Kelly Sinko (OPM) reviewed a fact sheet on House Bill 6366, *An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Department of Housing*. The bill was drafted according to the recommendations of the Council in its January 2013 report. In addition to transferring the appropriate programs and functions from existing state agencies to the Department of Housing, the bill also adds representation from the state Departments of Education and Developmental Services as well as the President of ConnNAHRO to the membership of the Interagency Council. The bill also contained substitute language based on input the

Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut (LARCC) that preserved some statutes that were to be repealed in the original language.

After a brief discussion, Council members agreed that the State Department on Aging should also have membership on the Council.

VI. Review Revised Council Workplan

The Chair reviewed the revised work plan. The work plan outlines Council activities on a monthly basis, organized around the Council's quarterly meetings. No additional changes were suggested.

VII. Next Steps

The next Council meeting is scheduled for May 7th from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Lyceum in Hartford.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.