

CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
WORK SESSION MINUTES
October 3, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.
CitySpace, 100 5th Street NE

The Charlottesville City Council held a special meeting in the format of a work session on Tuesday, October 3, 2023. Mayor Snook called the meeting to order with all members present: Mayor Lloyd Snook, Vice Mayor Juandiego Wade, and Councilors Michael Payne, Brian Pinkston, and Leah Puryear.

Mayor Snook stated that this meeting and several subsequent special meetings are an opportunity for City Council to spend more time in discussion on items that have been considered for some time by the Planning Commission. In response to citizen concerns about potential property tax increases related to the results of the updated Zoning Ordinance, Mr. Snook read a statement from City Assessor Jeffrey Davis. In the letter Mr. Davis stated:

“The Assessor’s Office will not immediately revise assessments to match “what can be built on site.” To my knowledge, no one in the Assessor’s Office made that statement.

I think it is logical to assume, that by increasing the density, property values may rise over time, but there is no basis for an immediate increase in assessments.

The Assessor’s Office analyzes sales data to determine real estate assessments. Until there is sufficient sales information to provide direction, we will not adjust the present values.”

Regarding a question about the legality of the Zoning Code as related to inclusion of the Department of Transportation, Mr. Stroman stated that the allegation has no bearing on the current process and is ill-founded. He stated that an allegation from a year ago regarding the Comprehensive Plan is ill-founded and the Comprehensive Plan is still in place.

Responding to a question from Mr. Snook, John Sales, Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority Executive Director, listed qualifications for University of Virginia students to qualify for low-income housing. Sunshine Mathon, Executive Director of Piedmont Housing Alliance (PHA), and a volunteer on the Charlottesville Housing Advisory Committee as well as state and national housing committees, shared information about the use of Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) for rentals, specifically the Kindewood redevelopment, making units that would normally be market-rate into 80% Area Median Income (AMI) units, allowing PHA controls for student populations to move into the community.

James Freas, Director of Neighborhood Development Services, introduced speakers for the work session.

Antoine Williams, Housing Programs Manager with the Charlottesville Office of Community Solutions, defined “placement” and “anti-displacement”. Placement is defined as the action of putting someone or something in a particular place or the fact of being placed or the action of finding a home, job, or school for someone. Anti-displacement generally refers to strategies and

policies to prevent the involuntary displacement of long standing, often lower income residents from their neighborhoods due to gentrification or other development pressures. An anti-displacement strategy framework aims to create inclusive, stable communities where residents can afford to live and thrive.

He shared data about the racial makeup of Charlottesville, showing that the Black (non-Hispanic) population had the largest decrease, dropping 1.9 percent to 17.3%. He presented four components for the City of Charlottesville Anti-displacement Framework:

- Affordable Housing Plan
- Comprehensive Plan, Strategic Plan Framework
- Zoning Code ADU Ordinance and Manual
- People + Process = Service Capacity

Mr. Williams spoke about what Zoning Ordinances can and cannot do to tackle anti-displacement. Zoning Ordinances cannot address economic inequality, control property values, or address all displacement causes. He listed tools that the city should use to prevent displacement in its housing strategy.

Mr. Mathon explained the differences between land banks and land trusts. He and Mr. Williams answered questions from Council about land banks, land trusts, home ownership and tax abatement opportunities. Mr. Mathon presented recommendations for short-term and long-term solutions to address affordable housing.

Phil D'Oronzio, Planning Commissioner and member of the Housing Advisory Committee, gave an example of family subdivision rules in Fluvanna County.

Vice Mayor Wade reviewed tools to use for keeping people in their homes and making them more affordable, as well as ways to make the largest impact.

City Attorney Jacob Stroman provided clarity about family lot divisions and the fundamental right to acquire and dispose of property.

Discussion continued about development rights and guardrails, land purchase competitiveness, sensitive area overlays, and tools for preservation of affordable home ownership and rentals, addressing working class housing availability, and working with community partners to provide deeply affordable housing. Mr. Mathon mentioned that the strategies for tackling anti-displacement are a bit of an experiment.

Councilor Pinkston stated for the record that he believes this Council and the next iteration of Council are committed to contributing significant funds to support the policies being discussed as well as the staffing component that will be required.

Councilor Puryear spoke about property tax increases from nearby developments negatively impacting renters. She stated that intentions for preservation of affordable housing homeownership and rental need to be clearly stated.

Joy Johnson, Chair of the Housing Advisory Committee, stated that there is a housing investor who fixes up homes and rents them to people in the neighborhood affordably, and she wonders why others cannot do the same. She referred to a comment about homes being lost because of deaths and replied that developers are taking advantage of lower income neighborhood situations to purchase properties. She stated that there needs to be a policy that says to developers to respect existing neighborhoods, and that development around low-income neighborhoods is causing tax hardship for residents.

City Manager Sam Sanders confirmed next steps for the HAC to bring further recommendation. Mr. Stroman stated that a key deadline would be when the Planning Commission will issue its recommendations to City Council. To incorporate HAC recommendations, the recommendations will need to come to City Council within the next couple of weeks in order to meet an advertising deadline.

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

BY Order of City Council

BY Kyna Thomas, Clerk of Council