



# Howard County Council

George Howard Building  
3430 Court House Drive  
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043-4392

## COUNCILMEMBERS

Mary Kay Sigaty, Chairperson  
District 4  
Jon Weinstein, Vice Chairperson  
District 1  
Calvin Ball  
District 2  
Jennifer Terrasa  
District 3  
Greg Fox  
District 5

Minutes (approved)  
Legislative Work Session  
January 26, 2015  
4:30 p.m.  
C. Vernon Gray Conference Room

Members Present: Mary Kay Sigaty, Chair; Jon Weinstein, Vice Chair; Calvin Ball; Greg Fox; Jen Terrasa

Staff Present: Jessica Feldmark, Administrator

The Chair opened the meeting at 4:35 p.m.

Guests invited to discuss CR124-2014 included Tom Carbo, Executive Director, Howard County Housing Commission; Andrea Ingram, Executive Director, Grassroots Crisis Intervention; Russ Snyder, President and CEO, Volunteers of America Chesapeake; and Jim Sents, Vice President, Corrections, Veterans, and Housing Services, Volunteers of America Chesapeake.

Ms. Terrasa mentioned community concerns about public process and asked Mr. Carbo to discuss what the process has been. Mr. Carbo explained that discussions started with the Board to Promote Self Sufficiency and the Committee to End Homelessness after the Plan to End Homelessness was adopted in 2010. He referred to multiple community meetings, press releases, and Council hearings related to this project over the past three years. He explained that the project will still need to go through the Planning Board so there will be an additional public hearing then.

Ms. Terrasa noted that the resolution before the Council is not to approve the project and asked for clarification on why CR124-2014 is necessary. Mr. Carbo clarified that when land for the project was originally transferred from the County to the Commission, the Commission was trying to minimize the land needed and only request 1.7 acres. However, under the zoning, the project requires a minimum of three acres. Therefore, another Council Resolution was necessary to transfer an additional 1.3 acres.

Ms. Terrasa asked about the selection of Volunteers of America. Mr. Carbo explained that VOA is the only organization the Commission was aware that provides the full range of services required for this project from development to property management to case management and supportive services for residents.

Dr. Ball asked if the RFP was advertised. Mr. Carbo confirmed that the RFP was advertised and that VOA was the only entity that responded. Mr. Ball clarified that Vesta had an opportunity to respond but did not. Mr. Fox asked if Vesta had contacted the Commission at all, to express interest or request additional time. Mr. Carbo confirmed that Vesta had not contacted the Commission. Mr. Weinstein asked if the Commission received any inquiries through the procurement process from any other entities. Mr. Carbo confirmed that they did not.

Dr. Ball noted that there is generally strong community support for the Plan to End Homelessness, but not necessarily an understanding of how this project fits into that plan. Ms. Ingram noted that Grassroots receives about 80 new crisis calls each month. She explained that when we talk about ending homelessness, what we really should be looking to do is make homelessness as brief and as rare as possible, so that when people do face homelessness, we can respond quickly and help them before they sink into chronic homelessness. She stressed that this project will make a huge dent in our chronically homeless population and is one piece out of many different moving parts that work together in Howard County's coordinated system of services.

Mr. Carbo added that moving chronically homeless individuals out of crisis shelter beds and into permanent housing is important not only because it provides a permanent housing solution for those individuals, but also because it opens up space for individuals who need temporary crisis shelter. He explained that the "housing first" model recognizes that homeless individuals are in a continual state of crisis which makes it difficult to address other issues. Once an individual has housing, that level of crisis has been eliminated and the person will be better situated to address other issues.

Mr. Weinstein asked about the point-in-time survey and who would be eligible candidates for these apartments. Mr. Sents reported that last year's point-in-time survey reported 170 homeless people in Howard County, of whom 98 were single adults. Ms. Ingram and Mr. Sents estimated that approximately half of those 98 adults may be chronically homeless individuals who would likely be eligible for this housing.

Ms. Sigaty stressed that the homeless individuals are not strangers – they are known members of our community and some have lived in our community for a long time. As we learn to live with our neighbors, this is one more way to be a compassionate community.

Mr. Fox asked for clarification on the various forms of shelter and supportive housing programs and which residents are considered homeless. Ms. Ingram and Mr. Sents explained that residents of group homes are not considered homeless. Individuals in emergency shelter, temporary motel shelter, transitional housing, or safe havens are considered sheltered homeless. Residents of the small efficiency apartments would not be considered homeless because that will be in a permanent housing solution. Mr. Snyder clarified that residents will have leases and be required to pay rent which will be set at 30% of their gross income.

Mr. Weinstein asked for clarification that this would be a standard apartment building, with the day resource center being essentially equivalent to first floor retail space since it would serve homeless individuals who do not live in the building. Mr. Sents confirmed and noted that each tenant will sign a standard lease, a HUD addendum to the lease, and a community living agreement.

Ms. Terrasa asked about the community living agreement and what measures would be in place to address the community's concerns about safety. Mr. Sents explained that the community living agreement sets out the rules of the community, behavior standards, and visitation guidelines. Drug and alcohol use will be prohibited. There are supportive services on site to help residents stay in compliance. If there are problems, they have a graduated, progressive

disciplinary process in place which includes informal sanctions, mandated treatment, and eviction only as a last resort.

Ms. Terrasa expressed the community's concern about a potential increase in panhandling. Ms. Ingram stressed that the day resource center has been located across the street for the past six years so it will not be a new presence in the community. She stated that the day resource center has likely helped decrease panhandling by helping individuals get off the street. She also expressed an interest in working with the County to help reduce panhandling.

Ms. Terrasa raised additional concerns about the lack of public transit serving the site. Mr. Sents indicated that they would work with the County to try to get a transit stop closer to the site. Mr. Carbo noted that Grassroots provides van service for the day resource center and that VOA plans to provide a van service for residents. Mr. Snyder also pointed that a number of residents will have their own vehicles.

Mr. Weinstein requested clarification of the timeline for the project's anticipated completion. Mr. Snyder stated that they expect the project to take about 18 months once funding is finalized, which they anticipate will occur this spring.

Mr. Fox asked about the source of funds for the full development and construction budget as well as the operating budget. Mr. Snyder and Mr. Carbo gave an overview the various sources of funding: \$4.25M in Housing Commission bonds, \$500k grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, \$250k State bond bill, \$250k County match, \$225k CDBG funding, \$2.65M Partnership Rental Housing Program funds, and the balance coming from Shelter and Transitional Housing Grant funds. Mr. Sents gave an overview of various sources of operating funds and indicated that VOA anticipate requesting \$125-150k annually in CSP funds from the County.

Ms. Terrasa also requested that VOA identify a point of contact for community concerns moving forward. Mr. Snyder agreed that the property manager will be available to the community and Mr. Sents will be available as well.

The Chair thanked all the guests for attending and adjourned the session at 5:30 p.m.