



HOUSING COMMISSION Regular Meeting

Monday, July 7, 2025
City Hall Room 110
11:00 a.m.

- MINUTES -

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Staff Liaison Nicole at 11:06 AM.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioner Peterson, Vice Chair Boswell, Commissioner Rivers, Commissioner Morgan, and Councilman Riggenbach.

There are two members of the Commission attending remotely, Commissioner La Rue and Commissioner Genzel, who are attending via GoToMeetings. The Open Meetings Act accounts for limited circumstances electronic attendance is allowed under (5 ILCS 120/7). Sec. 7 Attendance by a means other than physical presence. (a) If a quorum of the members of the public body is physically present as required by Section 2.01, a majority of the public body may allow a member of that body to attend the meeting by other means if the member is prevented from physically attending because of: (i) personal illness or disability; (ii) employment purposes or the business of the public body; or (iii) a family or other emergency. "Other means" is by video or audio conference.

Commissioner La Rue stated that she is attending remotely due to a family emergency. Councilman Riggenbach motioned to allow Commissioner La Rue remote attendance. Seconded by Commissioner Peterson. All in Favor.

Commissioner Genzel stated that she is attending remotely due to personal illness. Vice Chair Boswell motioned to allow Commissioner Genzel remote attendance. Seconded by Commissioner Peterson. All in Favor.

Under the Open Meetings Act, these would both be a limited circumstance in which electronic attendance is allowed under 5 ILCS 120/7.

Staff Present: Staff Liaison Nicole Morrow.

There is currently an opening on the Commission and the Commission is waiting for the Mayor's office to appoint someone new. With that being said, a quorum was established with those present at the start time of the meeting.

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III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: April 7th 2025. and June 2nd 2025

Motion to approve the April 7th minutes made by Vice Chair Boswell. Seconded by Commissioner Peterson. All in Favor.

Motion to approve the June 2nd minutes made by Vice Chair Boswell. Seconded by Commissioner Peterson. All in Favor.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no members present from the public at this time that wished to comment.

V. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Planning and Zoning Monthly Summary Report

There were no comments or questions from the Commission regarding the Planning and Zoning items.

B. City Council Update

Councilman Riggensbach stated that the policy session will really surmise where the City is. Now that the bill has been passed, the City is waiting to see what the bill will do for PHA in particular, as well as CDBG. The council was very supportive of all the initiatives that had been happening regarding the unsheltered. The motel project was continued until the end of July. All but about 17 of the residents at the motel were moved/had plans to be moved into permanent housing. Councilman Riggensbach shared that Staff Liaison Nicole has done a remarkable job working with the service providers to get this accomplished. The big question now is what the Federal Government will do in this regard.

C. Staff Department Update

Much of the staff department update for this month ties in with the policy session.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Homeless Discussion: Policy Session Recap

The policy session was held with City Council very specifically on the topic of homelessness, just considering many of the projects that Council has approved funding for as well as a lot of talk around town and amongst the service providers with everything that's been transpiring since January and also November with the passage of the camping ban ordinance. Phoenix Manor, which is the old Methodist College and prior to that was the old Ramada Inn, is being turned into 55 units of permanent supportive housing that will have 24 hour staff on site and mental health providers. The lower level is going to have a health clinic and other resources including a daycare and the upper floor is going to be a medical respite for individuals that are discharging from the hospital who do not have a permanent address and need to recover. This could be impacted by the federal funding bill that has passed because a lot of those are related to Medicaid waivers, and that's part of the funding source that's tied into those medical respite units. The remaining floors 2-6 are going to be a mix of single bedrooms all the way up to four bedroom units. This will not only serve individuals experiencing homelessness that are in shelters, but also families as we've seen a rise in family homelessness.

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The old Labor Temple has come down and will be part of the Salvation Army shelter expansion. The Salvation Army will be increasing their beds from 45 beds for single males to 72 to help support another population that has seen an uptick in both unsheltered homelessness and also a lot of overflow at both the shelters for men.

At the policy session recap, the Community Development Department provided an update on the flexible rent program which is the partnership program with the City & County Health Department and housing families that are experiencing homelessness that have income. The flexible rent program is currently in the process of screening 10 new families for that program and three leased up at the end of June, so it has been a successful program thus far.

For the motel project, there have been 108 individuals that came through the motel from its inception on January 3rd and that number stays the same from then until last week. There have been 51 individuals placed in permanent supportive housing and another 22 that entered the hotel project but were then moved to other shelters as appropriate. Dream Center expanded who they were able to serve, so several couples were moved over to the Dream Center. Dream Center also started taking households with pets. A lot of the time there are individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness because they aren't able to take their pet and the pet is a family member. There are multiple housing applications in progress and that number is down from 22 individuals not having a housing solution down to 17 and the hope is that most of those, if not all, will come to fruition before the funding runs out on this current extension at the end of July. Commissioner Peterson asked if the people that are being rehoused are using the flexible rent program. Staff Liaison Nicole stated that the motel individuals have been a mix of permanent supportive housing through Phoenix Community Development Services. Other individuals have been housed through PHA. PHA implemented what they call a displacement preference, which is very responsive to the ordinance that passed in November so that these individuals can be pushed through that pipeline a little faster and make sure that they're included when PHA does a regular pool. These individuals are not being pulled off the waitlist faster necessarily, but it almost guarantees them a spot every time that they start looking at applications. Most of the housing placements have been through those two providers and there have been a couple individuals that have either gone to a treatment center long-term or sober living.

Community Development Director Joe Dulin talked about potential federal budget cuts. This was just a hypothetical to say that as there is talk of solutions, the federal budget needs to be kept in mind because that will impact the ability to leverage resources like PHA when it comes to housing. Many of the other projects include federal funding, state funding, and private funding so there's a lot of different projects that have a mix of funding to keep everything running, so there is a possibility that there will be an evaluation of what impact there will be in the near future.

There were several presenters at the policy session, one being Kate Green who is the director of the Continuum of Care. The Continuum covers a multi-county area including Tazwell, Woodford, Peoria, and Fulton. Kate is looking at working closely with the City and the area impacted here but also keeping a wider lens for the entire four counties. The issues within each of the counties are different from each other but there are also similarities. Kate talked about the Continuum of Care and who all is a part of that which includes a lot of different funded providers because an individual experiencing housing instability or homelessness is impacted by lots of different systems, whether that's the criminal justice system, lack of childcare, finding employment, etc.

The point-in-time count is held at the end of January and service providers will go out and look for individuals that are experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The number of individuals has grown drastically. There was a decrease during COVID because of the moratorium, but as that moratorium has lifted and with hard times economically, there are quite a few more individuals that are experiencing homelessness.

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When talking about accessing vulnerability and prioritization, to highlight three of the programs that the continuum has, there is permanent supportive housing which is residential with 24-hour staffing, rapid rehousing which is rental assistance up to two years based off income, and there's the City's flexible rent program. When individuals are entered into the continuum of care database, it does not mean that you have a guaranteed housing placement because there are just not enough resources. All housing providers, shelter care providers, 2-1-1, and the City all have the ability to access the shared database system.

Trillium did a presentation about their work with the 100-day challenge that's tied in very specifically with the hotel project trying to rapidly get the individuals housed and create different kinds of projects in an incubator to see what could work. Trillium has been very hands-on with the individuals and helping them get connected with medication assisted recovery for those that are interested while also making sure to build relationships with the individuals.

Commissioner Sanders entered the room at 11:34 AM.

The Dream Center also gave a presentation and shared that they expanded their services to allow couples and also individuals with dogs. Dream Center's program ended in the middle of June, but they still have those families with them and are looking to get them housed prior to fully sunsetting the program. The Dream Center presented very specifically on what they call Compassion Village, which is their proposal for tiny homes. Andy King, the director at Dream Center, walked through some of the work that they've been doing with an organization called Pallet. Pallet has prefabricated tiny homes that are either single or double occupancy, are erected very quickly and can provide housing solutions for individuals that may not be able to engage with a traditional shelter project. Their proposal included 32 homes, 30 singles and 2 doubles. Each unit has its own keypad and does not include any cooking or bathrooms. The cooking and bathrooms would be in the common buildings that would also be hooked to City services. The community would also include some community space, picnic areas, a check-in and security area, very likely to include a dog park, and would all of the showers would be accessible.

The purpose of the policy session was to provide the baseline of where everything was currently and see what Council might be interested in staff pursuing. The first policy question was does Council support the concept of tiny homes. The answer was yes, Council is very interested. City staff have been working to examine the City's building code and fire code to ensure that a village of that nature would be able to fit with current building and zoning codes or what new rules would need to be created. The second policy question was does Council support providing an extension for funding. The answer was yes; the extension was approved at the Council meeting the following Tuesday. The last two policy questions didn't really get discussed because the tiny homes were the focus of the discussion. The third question was does Council wish to allocate additional general fund money or consider other revenue options for the Community Development Department to continue to focus on homelessness. A lot of that is going to tie in with the Federal Government because there are projects and programs that are here at the City that will be impacted by any sort of changes to federal allocations. The fourth question was are there any other initiative programs, processes, or ordinance changes that City Council wishes staff to pursue. At the time, the major pursuit was tiny homes and what would that need to make that viable in the City.

What City staff is wanting to do with the guidance of Council is to build something that others could also provide. The City would create parameters and that would allow anyone that's interested in a project like a tiny home to come forward and show what they've got and that it would fit with the guidelines that are being created. This way both Dream Center can be a player in the potential solution, but it also opens up and ensures that further regulations for new projects don't have to be taken back to the drawing board and that there is something that is built into place and codified that would continue forward. The bigger discussion that will be had is thinking through different policies that would bring income into the City, whether that was through a form of tax inclusionary zoning, so alternative revenue sources that would keep money flowing into the City

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to continue to direct out specifically for housing projects. This will likely be the next conversation and one that will be discussed by the Housing Commission to see what creative ideas there are.

Commissioner Genzel was in attendance at the policy session and shared a few things that she took away from the meeting. Commissioner Genzel stated that when all of the encampment stuff started, one of the things that Councilman Riegenbach said was that it gives us the opportunity to really pull together, and that's one of the things that was mentioned at the session is that the organizations that presented feel like they're all more connected and working together. Commissioner Genzel shared that another thing that came up in the session is that there's still some misinformation in the community about homelessness and people coming from other places and a couple of City Council members talked about why are we providing services for people who come from someplace else, but the continuum of care has that information of how many people come from someplace else and also the people from Peoria sometimes go elsewhere.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Affordable Housing Plan Updates and Next Steps

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no members of the public present at this time that wished to comment.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Boswell made a motion to adjourn at 11:55 AM and this was seconded by Commissioner Peterson. All in Favor, meeting adjourned.

Next Regular Meeting: Monday, August 4th, 2025 at 11AM