

**Charter**  
**Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Affordability (AHCOHA)**  
**February 26, 2017**

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**Chartering Authority:** City Council.

**Introduction and Background:** At the City Council's January 13, 2017 Retreat, the City Council discussed formation of an Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Affordability, at its February 14, 2017 meeting the City Council referred this matter to a meeting of the Chairs of the Land Use and Environment, Finance and General Government Committees for further consideration. This meeting was held on February 21, 2017 and the chairs discussed the structure, purpose and work plan of an Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Affordability as reflected below.

The growing urgency and impact of homelessness and the effect of cost burdened households is evident throughout Thurston County. The recently opened Warming Center is seeing over 200 people per day pass through its doors. According to the survey of Downtown business owners done by the Thurston Economic Development Council, as a precursor to the Downtown Strategy, the impacts of homelessness on downtown businesses is one of their primary concerns. According to the United Way of Thurston County's ALICE Report over 35% of Thurston County residents and 41% of Olympia's residents struggle to afford basic necessities. The necessities include: housing, food, child care, health care and transportation.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction reports that countywide 1,526 students were identified as homeless in the 2014-2015 schoolyear up from 889 in 2009-2010 - a 71% increase. School age homelessness continues to impact our region with over 444 students being identified as homeless in the Olympia School District and 754 in the North Thurston School District. Of the 1,526 students identified as homeless in 2014-2015, 85 were identified as unsheltered.

Housing affordability and homelessness are important regional issues and require a regional approach. Thurston County has approximately \$3.2 million per year from a variety of federal, state and local sources to allocate for affordable housing. The City of Olympia has approximately \$400,000 per year in federal Community Development Block Grant funds that could be used to address housing affordability and homelessness. In addition to its CDBG resources it has also used its staff time, land and buildings to actively support services and facilities in such ventures as LIHI's Billy Frank Jr. Place and Family Support Center's Pear Blossom Place.

Olympia's Downtown is visibly and significantly impacted by homelessness and will need the support and cooperation of Thurston County, the Cities of Lacey

and Tumwater and the local housing and homelessness service providers to begin to have a positive impact on this situation. Concerns about homelessness and its impacts on downtown have been consistently raised throughout the Downtown Strategy process.

Olympia is home to many of the region's most vulnerable homeless citizens. The lives of these individuals are threatened by a lack of a targeted and adequately funded response. These individuals have significant impacts on City and regional services as well as collateral impacts on downtown businesses and property. A solution to this dilemma is needed.

Affordable housing, workforce housing, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, emergency shelter, and day center are all part of the full spectrum of affordable housing and services needed in our region to respond to and prevent homelessness and its impacts. Resources are limited for these services and facilities while the need for these services is high so resources must be allocated to have the maximum benefit and in a highly coordinated and strategic manner. It is also critical to support and incentivize the private and non-profit housing market to provide housing units that are affordable to people with low to moderate incomes (ie. below Thurston County median income). This should be accomplished by preserving and rehabilitating existing housing units as well as construction new units.

Homelessness and housing affordability are regional issues and must be addressed at a regional level both from a policy and operational perspective. Facilities and services should be sited in a manner that allows for effective access and utilization by targeted populations while minimizing the impacts to the surrounding properties, businesses, residences and neighborhoods. Services and facilities should be distributed throughout the region.

The City's Comprehensive Plan provides guidance and support for these initiatives.

**Membership:** The Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Affordability will consist of the Chairs of the three standing City Council Committees. (Councilmember Roe, Councilmember Hankins and Councilmember Cooper)

**The Purpose:** Given the disproportionate impact that homeless has on Olympia, the City sees a role for itself in helping to understand and respond to these and other related issues and to help to clearly articulate an Olympia perspective on these issues at a local and regional level. The committee will gather and package information and develop options for City Council's consideration.

The Ad Hoc Housing Committee on Housing Affordability will work with city staff, Thurston County elected and appointed officials, the Cities of Lacey and

Tumwater and the local service providers to develop a greater understanding of the full spectrum of housing affordability issues and to consider policy options for addressing these issues at a local and regional level.

The City has three primary ways to respond to issues related to housing affordability and homeless. These include: 1. Allocation of resources. 2. Regulations and 3. Partnerships. The Ad Hoc Committee should explore all three of these avenues and develop options for City Council further consideration.

The Ad Hoc Committee Housing on Affordable Housing's initial charge will cover:

1. **Examine Housing Funding Options** - Coordinate and confer with Thurston County, other jurisdictions, local housing providers, service providers and interest groups to examine the need for affordable housing and homeless facilities and services and the potential scope, scale, timing and approach to funding options.
2. **Explore Partnerships Options** - Explore ways to enhance coordination, cooperation and commitment to regional approaches and strategic thinking to addressing the needs and impacts of homelessness and housing affordability.
3. **Consider Public Engagement Options** - Consider measures to inform, consult, educate and involve the community in discussions about the impacts and needs related to homelessness and housing affordability.
4. **Review Tools** - Review the financial and regulatory tools available to the City to influence housing affordability and homelessness. Develop strategic options for their deployment based on the realities of local housing market.

A detailed work plan will be approved by City Council in the same manner as the City Council's standing committees.

#### **Operations:**

- The Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Affordability will meet every two weeks for no more than 5 months and will publish a meeting schedule. Meetings occurring outside the regular published meeting times shall be considered to be special meetings and shall be noticed.
- Meeting minutes shall be posted in a manner consistent with all other Council Committees.
- A temporary staff liaison shall be appointed by the City Manager and shall provide short-term administrative and technical support to the committee as may reasonably be required until additional staffing can be supported.

- The Chair shall report Committee activity on a regular basis under City Council Reports and shall schedule study sessions as needed to keep Council informed of its work.

**Timeline:**

- The Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Affordability's regular meeting time will initially be on Friday afternoon March 10, 2017 starting at 3:15. The Committee will meet twice per month as agreed to by the members until the end of July. The status of the committee will be reassessed at that time.

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