

**COMMUNITY MEETING NOTES
DECEMBER 3, 2020**

Members Present: Kenneth Winsley, Commissioner
Cynthia Calix, Commissioner via zoom

Staff Present: Willie B. McMahand, Jr., Executive Director
Terri Lloyd, Planning & Development Officer
Shazmine Gullett, Executive Assistant
Clarence Copeland, Safety Coordinator
Pam Young, Property Manager
Sharon Dunson, Resident Initiative Coordinator

Others Present: Shirley Carter, Concerned Citizen
Steven Folks, City Manager, City of Anniston
Clay Gresham, Concerned Citizen
Dr. Freddy Rimpsey, Concerned Citizen
Demetric Roberts, Councilman of Ward 2, City of Anniston
Rev. C. Cook, Concerned Citizen
Richard Jackson, Concerned Citizen

Mr. McMahand thanked everyone for coming out to the community meeting. He recalled AHA's regular board meeting, held November 12, 2020, in which there was a public hearing where several individuals expressed concerns about AHA's 5 year and Annual Plan. This is a follow up meeting to make sure those questions and concerns are addressed, and also to give out a fact sheet with additional information. After a brief presentation, Mr. McMahand will take comments from the public and afterwards discuss AHA's next steps in the planning process and then have closing comments.

Mr. McMahand pointed out that Cooper Homes has been listed as a priority in our Annual Plan document and also that a timeline for the redevelopment has been established. Dates for other projects have been moved out in order to see this project through. There will be a final comment period for the annual plan document next week, before it is sent to HUD.

The redevelopment plan for Cooper Homes goes back to 2014, when AHA realized we needed to make a decision on if the property should stay up or come down. It was apart of the West Anniston Master Plan, which was for the revitalization of the entire West Anniston. This was a partnership between AHA, the City and the Board of Education. There are details in the document that was handed out. When it was confirmed that the educational component would not happen back in 2018, AHA decided to put housing back on the site. After developers were brought on, we started to run into roadblocks due to the site not being clean. We have submitted the application to the state for the participation in

their cleanup program. We have requested that the Alabama Finance Association change their criteria and accept our cleanup plan which includes an engineered solution.

Dr. Freddy Rimpsey shared that he received a call from Chairman Dunn and was assured that things are moving on the Cooper Homes site. Rimpsey said it has been two weeks and he hasn't seen one truck haul in one load of dirt to the site. He pointed out that legal guidelines need to be followed as well as other regulations, and that he has spoken with the Justice Department and they have not heard from anyone at Anniston Housing Authority about disenfranchising seven to eight hundred black people, which is a serious offense and breaks federal law. He suggested that AHA find the money, and says if he was going to buy a house, he would make sure his finances are in order first, and AHA should have done the same.

Mr. McMahan replied, saying he will not turn this into a legal discussion, due to our legal team not being present. However, due to us receiving federal funds, we have to follow fair housing, and they verify everything that we do. Our demolition would not have been approved if we were not in line with the guidelines. Mr. McMahan also made it clear that when AHA decided to submit the demolition application for the Cooper site, there were about 80 residents living there, not hundreds. Among those residents, about 18 of them moved out on their own and did not wait to be relocated. Also, once residents were relocated, we tracked where they went and also added an additional step where Mr. McMahan personally went to every location, with the exception of one, which was a resident that had moved out of state, and where he interviewed the resident to make sure they were satisfied with their new home and the relocation process. Mr. McMahan referenced the handout for more details which gave zip codes of where the Cooper residents went. Most residents stayed in the West Anniston area.

Page 6 of the handout showed the plan that has been approved by ADEM for the Cooper site. This has 56 units for elderly with a parking lot in the middle and comes with a community building. Tax credit money is key to making this deal work, we will also go to HUD to get money out of our reserve account. Another way is to get a conventional loan, or through the 221 D-4 program, Capitol Fund money or ask the City to assist. Alabama is one of three states in the country that hasn't allocated funding for affordable housing.

Various questions were answered from the audience, including what happened to funding received from the City, which was recaptured due to timing issues, as well as other funding questions. Information on the (Rental Assistance Demonstration) RAD program is in the handout, and our Barber Terrace property will go RAD early next year. Residents have been relocated to the bottom of the site so that the top can be demolished and rebuilt. Everything is moving quickly, and almost everything is lined up. Once it is finished, we will move to another location to see what other sites may be eligible for RAD.

Mr. McMahan explained that we are trying to get to 500 families on the voucher program. He would love for a lot of those families to be in houses that we develop on the west side of the city. We have acquired land and have renovated a few properties as well.

We will have more of these meetings in the future to make sure that the community is well informed on AHA's plans. We will continue to follow guidelines and rules and be as transparent as possible. He asked that the community be patient with us as we go through our processes. Mr. McMahan stated that even if he's not here to see some of these finished products, he knows that there will be a plan in place for AHA to follow through with.

A member of the audience pointed out that the objective of housing authorities is temporary housing and it is not meant to be generational living situations. There needs to be coordination between the city, county and state to provide somewhere for people to have permanent housing. More people paying high rent, need to be paying mortgages. Mr. McMahan referenced our Family Self Sufficiency program, where a portion of participants rent goes into an escrow account. Once the participant graduates from the program, we will cut them a check for however much they've saved. Right now, the highest amount accumulated is almost \$11K to hopefully put down on a house.

When asked how can the community assist the housing authority, Mr. McMahan replied by advocating with us. The environmental issues in the city need to be addressed, the flood plains and pipe shops as well. It was also suggested that AHA do more than post in the Anniston Star, in which Mr. McMahan agreed and says we are looking at other ways to get information out to the community. We will come back soon with updates at our next meeting after the first of the year. We will also try to have the EPA and ADEM present at the meeting to answer any more questions concerning the Cooper site.