



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
Housing, Homeless and Neighborhood Development (HHAND)
Advisory Commission
SUMMARY MINUTES
OCTOBER 02, 2024



Call to Order

The Housing, Homeless and Neighborhood Development (HHAND) Advisory Commission meeting reached a quorum and was opened by Chair Stephanie Taylor at 4:20pm. The meeting was staffed by the Anchorage Health Department (AHD), Human Services Division (HSD), Community Safety and Development (CSD).

A. Roll Call & Introductions

Commissioners Present	Commissioners Absent	Presenters
Stephanie Taylor, Chair David Rittenberg, Vice Chair Elsie Crossmon, Secretary Richard Mystrom Peggy Rotan	William Scott Daniel Sager	
AHD CSD Staff	MOA AHD Staff	Guests
Valerie Madison, Community Development Specialist Frankie Dahl, Senior Office Associate Jed Drolet, CS PM	Darcie Montalvo, HS Div Mgr.	Allen Kemplen, Fairview Community Council Farina Brown, Special Assistant to the Mayor Thea Agnew Bemben, Special Assistant to the Mayor

B. Approval of Order of Business –Chair entertained a motion to amend and approve the agenda.

<u>MOTION:</u> David Rittenberg
<u>SECOND:</u> Richard Mystrom
<u>VOTE:</u> No Opposition

C. Approval of September 04, 2024, minutes – Chair entertained a motion to approve minutes.

<u>MOTION:</u> David Rittenberg
<u>SECOND:</u> Richard Mystrom
<u>VOTE:</u> No Opposition

D. Old Business

- Daniel Sager presentation for the commission's consideration regarding neighborhood bear issues.
 - Daniel Sager was not present to give updates on this, but Stephanie Taylor reported her findings after inquiring with the Northeast Community Council. The only area where they see a problem is Centennial Park. There are quite a few homeless camps there, and there was an instance where a bear tore apart a tent with an unhoused person inside of it, but the person was unharmed. There are not a lot of bear proof cans in that area. There are occasional neighborhood alerts from people who are having issues with bears, but that is typically the extent of the issue there.

E. New Business

1. Guest speakers Allen Kemplen, Fairview Community Council – Reconnecting Communities.
 - Reconnecting Fairview—the plan proposes restoring community connectivity through the downsizing of the Ingra/Gambell highway couplet to three lanes each way instead of four, restoring safe pedestrian travel on the couplet (which could potentially include a bike path), and designing and creating a greenway for Fairview.
 - Allen Kemplen Referred to Handouts (which are linked on the CSD Website).
 - He reports that there has been a good amount of public engagement in the project. They have been working on advanced planning studies and working with contractors about this project.
 - Allen spoke to the history of the development of couplets—most other couplets in other neighborhoods are 3 lanes instead of 4. In 1965 the city explicitly acknowledged the negative impact of the corridor, and he stated that it is time to remedy the issue.
 - Allen spoke to the unsafe nature of pedestrian travel on the couplet, and how it is not accessible for people who experience disabilities.
 - Connecting urban neighborhoods through the Fairview Greenway—to strengthen a sense of community and to make Fairview safer, this plan proposes to turn Hyder St into a hybrid pedestrian travel area that connects the neighborhood to both Chester Creek Trail and Ship Creek Trail to create a bike/pedestrian greenway in the “island” of that couplet. This would be an investment in our greenbelt infrastructure and tourism infrastructure, and slow vehicle speeds. Arts and culture will be used to engage the community in the greenbelt.
2. Guest speakers Farina Brown and Thea Agnew Bemben, Special Assistants to the Mayor on Homelessness and Health—Update from the Mayor's Office

- Acknowledged that addressing homelessness is incredibly complex, and that collaboration, engagement, and continuity at the operational level are necessary.
- There will be a lot of change over the next 12 months. For the first 100 days, the major object is ensuring that we stand up Congregate vs. non-congregate beds. Congregate beds—56th avenue is continuously at capacity. The administration recognizes that as temperatures drops, we will need to have more inside places for our unhoused neighbors to be.
- A lot of public comment and concern of the cost of standing up non-congregate. There is a better and more financially stable way to address homelessness than non-congregate beds, but we are in a position where temperatures are dropping quickly and we need to do something **now** to make sure for this next season, there are places for folks to shelter. The only model that the current administration has the capacity to act upon **now** is the one set up by previous administrations where the MOA activates non-congregate shelter beds.
- Anchorage does not have the infrastructure or capacity to support homeless citizens. We have been relying on outside providers to provide services for decades.
- Crime in unsheltered communities—the way that our unhoused neighbors engage in their community has changed, and has in some instances become more aggressive. This is not a reflection of every person that is unhoused in Anchorage, but a reflection of the MOA lacking the capacity and infrastructure to support individuals who experience homelessness and connect them to services. Partnership with APD to move towards that goal of safety and connection to services. HOPE Teams are being activated, which are teams comprised of a sworn officer and social work navigator that are dedicated to working in the homeless camps to proactively connect folks to services.
- Communities are not unwilling to host their unhoused neighbors; they are unwilling to host the crime that has become associated with their unhoused neighbors.
- The MOA had an influx of funds from COVID to put up non-congregate shelter beds quickly, but we have continued that model and no longer have the funding for it. It is coming from taxpayer dollars.
- The Mayor's Office would like to start directing people who would like to be engaged in the homelessness conversation to the HHAND commission, to start a dialogue with community members.
- What the MOA wants is for these shelter areas to be the first step towards moving unhoused people into safer, housed situations. Not for them to remain in sheltered situations indefinitely.
- The new administration has expressed a desire to be engaged and to help facilitate what the HHAND commission does. HHAND has been officially added as a partner on the Mayor's 100-day plan in regards to Homelessness.

- Commissioners are interested in what they can do to affect change: writing letters or statements, serving on RFP committees etc.
3. Jed Drolet—update on 2024 substantial amendments fund reallocation
- There was public comment that questioned the ability to do sole-source procurement for the projects that were chosen.
 - Will be doing an RFGP process instead
 - Focusing on Public Services, Acquisition of properties for housing, and HOME ARP
 - HHAND Members would be a good fit for the RFGP review committee as long as they do not have a conflict of interest.

Chair Entertained a motion to postpone the following new business to accommodate time for public comment:

- A report from David Rittenberg on planning future tours to various facilities that are addressing homelessness and housing issues
- Discussing preparation for the annual HHAND Report on Homelessness that is due in June 2025

MOTION: David Rittenberg
SECOND: Richard Mystrom
VOTE: No Opposition

Chair Entertained a motion to add 10 minutes to the meeting to accommodate time for public comment:

MOTION: David Rittenberg
SECOND: Elsie Crossman
VOTE: No Opposition

F. Public Comments –

- Kenny Peterson, a previous member of HAND and HCOSH, submitted public comment about the capacity of the HHAND commission. He provided perspective for what the commission has done previously, and his hopes for what it can accomplish in the future.

G. Commissioners Comments –

- David Rittenberg has been in contact with Commissioner William Scott via email, and is expecting Commissioner Scott to send a letter of resignation soon
- David Rittenberg stated that the Commission needs updated guidance on the open meetings act and how it applies to HHAND members speaking outside of the monthly meeting. The language currently states that if 2 or more members talk, it needs to be publicly noticed, which is very stringent and would make it

very difficult for them to have basic conversations to touch base. The representatives from the Mayor's office will look into it.

- Chair Stephanie Taylor issued her resignation.

I. Reports - None

Chair entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting 5:40 pm

<u>MOTION:</u> David Rittenberg
<u>SECOND:</u> Richard Mystrom
<u>VOTE:</u> No Opposition

Meeting adjourned at 5:40 pm. The next HHAND Commission meeting is scheduled for November 06, 2024, from 4:00 – 5:30 pm., at 825 L Street, Conference Room #423, and through Microsoft Teams.