

ACHD Housing and Community Environment Program

Housing Advisory Committee

March, 6, 2025

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome & Introductions

Otis Pitts introduced himself and other ACHD staff. Dr. Iulia Vann welcomed and thanked everyone for coming for this special occasion. Mr. Pitts gave an overview of the tasks for the meeting. Each member introduced themselves. Mr. Pitts outlined the purpose of the committee, cited the Food Safety Advisory Committee as an example. Mr. Pitts directed the committee to the Sunshine Act and Robert's Rules. He stated that while the committee can choose its own bylaws, the Sunshine Act needs to be adhered to since they are a public agency.

2. Officer Vote (Chair & Vice-Chair)

Mr. Pitts outlined the position of Chair and Vice-Chair and opened up the floor for questions and nominations. Michelle Naccarati-Chapkis volunteered for either, John Katz nominated her and Sonya Tilghman seconded. Devon Goetze volunteered for Vice-Chair and Charlise Smith seconded. Mr. Katz formerly nominated Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis as Chair and Ms. Goetze as Vice-Chair, Dwight Boddorf seconded. All members present voted in favor. (12 yeas, 1 not present).

3. Call to Order

Michelle Naccarati-Chapkis called the meeting to order at 11:17am.

4. Roll Call of Members- Tim Murphy called roll.

Members Present: Michelle Naccarati-Chapkis, David Onufer, Devon Goetze, Sonya Tilghman, Dwight Boddorf, Charlise Smith, Gale Schwartz, John Katz, Bob Damewood, Sofia Bermeo, Dr. Noble Maseru, Jala Rucker

Members Absent: Megan Hammond

ACHD staff present: Dr. Iulia Vann, Kim Joyce, Otis Pitts, Tim Murphy, Maryann Manown, Victoria Baker, John Cronin, Sandy Fischer, Elizabeth Rubenstein, Ronnie Das

Other present: Ed Nusser and one member of press.

5. Discussion & Vote on Approving a 2025 Meeting Schedule

Mr. Pitts gave suggestions for meeting schedule starting in April and every two months following. Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked for input from the committee. Mr. Damewood agreed every two months sounded good. Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked about time of day. No objections to 11:00am-1:00pm. Meetings were set for first Thursday of every other month. Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis stated preferring in person meetings and committee agreed. Other meeting locations were discussed. Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis motioned for the schedule, Mr. Damewood seconded, all

members present voted in favor. Subcommittee meetings and special meetings can be decided as needed. Ms. Joyce interjected that the motion should be made by someone other than Chair. Ms. Tilghman motioned for the schedule, Mr. Damewood seconded, all members present voted in favor. First meeting was set for Thursday April 3rd 11:00am-1:00pm.

6. Housing & Community Environment Overview – Tim Murphy

-Mr. Damewood asked if the program's lead intervention is only after a child is poisoned. He also asked if there is data that can be searched for properties that have been identified with lead. Mr. Murphy explained this is for enforcement rather than public info. Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis mentioned there is a conversation with University of Pittsburgh about census tract information being used for tracking lead.

-Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked if the powerpoint could be made available to the committee. Mr. Murphy answered that it could and would be sent by email.

-Ms. Rucker asked if the program distinguishes between different violations. Mr. Murphy briefly explained violation classes.

-Dr. Maseru asked if the program tracks multiple complaints from the same location. Mr. Murphy briefly explained some functions of the Housing software and tracking. Dr. Maseru asked about mapping the cases. Mr. Murphy explained the program is not there at this time.

-Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked about Palisades and MonView and if the program was involved with the District Attorney and penalizing. Mr. Murphy explained a bit about the program's penalty policy, and that while the DA's office is playing their role, ACHD will continue its role in enforcing health regulations.

-Mr. Damewood asked about the program's process and how a case gets to a penalty. Mr. Murphy stated the presentation will include that, but instructed the committee to ask if there are still questions after he goes over those slides.

-Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked where the penalty goes to. Ms. Rubenstein explained that the money goes to the Environmental Health Fund. She explained that is a civil penalty, the health department does also have a rarely used option to issue a criminal injunction.

-Ms. Rucker asked what the timeline is for owners to pay penalties. Ms. Rubenstein said 30 days. Ms. Rucker asked what happens after that, can a landlord continue to operate? Mr. Murphy explained the property would get a lien. He also explained that landlord penalties can be affected by compliance history.

-Ms. Rucker asked about the tenants having the possibility of escrow with the county. Mr. Murphy explained that currently ACHD facilitates a Rent Withholding program in McKeesport, Duquesne, Clairton, and Pittsburgh based on the state law. Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked for those to be repeated. Mr. Damewood commented that the law for rent withholding has significant problems and that the program traps tenants in bad situations with substandard housing. He asked if the program would consider referring to Neighborhood Legal Services. Mr. Murphy stated that the program refers the public to resources such as NLS. Ms. Manown explained that as a former inspector our staff often does provide resources such as Neighborhood Legal Services and a number of others in the program's Tenant Resource Guide. Mr. Damewood asked if the Tenant Resource Guide can be shared to the committee. Mr. Murphy stated that it could and would be sent by email.

-Mr. Onufer asked about the cases where tenants do not respond. Mr. Murphy stated that staff make multiple attempts but require access in order to proceed with normal enforcement.

-Ms. Schwartz asked about the pause on cases for eviction. Mr. Murphy briefly explained the eviction policy. Ms. Rubenstein and multiple members discussed the policy and the fact that the program makes an exception for emergent conditions.

-Mr. Boddorf asked if they can be provided with flyers. Mr. Murphy said he would provide a pdf by email, some flyers were brought for the meeting, and Ms. Manown could provide more physical copies if requested.

-Dr. Maseru asked if the program provides tenants rights info. Mr. Murphy cited the Tenant Resource Guide.

-Ms. Bermeo asked what information the program gathers with a complaint and if it is shared. Mr. Murphy explained when anonymous is possible and that information is typically not shared. She asked if there would ever be a question about immigration status. Mr. Murphy explained that the program would never ask about legal status or social security numbers, what the program asks for is just what is needed for following up and getting access. She asked what the department would share. Mr. Murphy explained a Right To Know request is possible and Mr. Cronin answered that personal info is redacted.

-Ms. Bermeo asked if there were language services available. Mr. Murphy responded that the county does have a company contracted for language services, the lead program has a bi-lingual educator that is sometimes utilized, and inspectors often used a language app. A member asked what the educator's second language is and Mr. Murphy responded that it is Spanish.

-Dr. Maseru asked if the Tenant Resource Guide was available in other languages. Currently no, Mr. Murphy went over what literature is available in other languages.

-Dr. Maseru asked about the lead in the water system, what has been replaced and what has not. Mr. Boddorf stated that his borough did have to submit water samples to the Department of Environmental Protection as part of removing lead water lines. Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis cited the map of replaced water lines available in the City of Pittsburgh. Members would like to work together on the information being made available for areas outside of the city.

-Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked about the demolitions in Article VI. Mr. Murphy explained that it is a rarely used capability, typically staff would refer to the municipality.

-Mr. Boddorf asked how that referral comes in because he has never seen one in his time with 2 different municipalities.

-Dr. Maseru believed there is an opportunity to be proactive with demolitions and consequences, such as rats. Mr. Murphy explained cost is an issue as the program is geared to enforcement and keeping owners responsible.

-Mr. Damewood stated he appreciated the presentation and all the questions asked.

-Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked where the violation classing can be found in Article VI. Mr. Murphy directed everyone to page 2 to go over violation class levels and gave examples. She then asked for a quick overview of Article VI.

-Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked about units like AirBNB. Mr. Murphy explained that due to the short term and private nature of AirBNB it is difficult to regulate currently.

-Ms. Rucker asked about access issues and why landlords are not required to provide access for inspectors. Mr. Murphy explained that the program is there at the request of the tenant.

-Ms. Rucker then asked about appeals. Mr. Murphy went over the process for appeals. She then asked about tenants filing an appeal. Ms. Rubenstein explained that a tenant is not receiving an action against them, therefore, do not have anything to appeal. Ms. Rucker asked if an appeal could be filed for a case closed due to eviction. Mr. Cronin stated that it has not happened but it could.

-Mr. Damewood asked if tenants can participate where an order to vacate is issued. Mr. Murphy and Mr. Cronin stated that an order to vacate is not a situation they have seen happen. Ms. Manown and Ms. Rubenstein mentioned cases they recall years ago where the department did work with tenants that were displaced due to an order to vacate.

-Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked how often extensions are issued and how long. Mr. Murphy explained extensions are issued in the interest of having a repair completed if progress or proof of effort is provided, such as an invoice for needed equipment.

-Ms. Tilghman asked when an order to vacate would be issued if not for cases such as MonView. Mr. Murphy explained that it is unlikely due to the ramifications, such as risk of creating homelessness.

-Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked if there are other articles the program uses. Mr. Murphy went over Article IX and Article XII, but stated the committee's main objective is Article VI, the housing code.

-Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked if the committee would prefer to read over Article VI on their own or continue going over the document in the meeting. Members all agreed they would prefer to read solo and return with questions.

-Ms. Rucker asked what is the acronym IPMC. Mr. Murphy responded that it is the International Property Maintenance Code, one of many regulations used to justify Article VI.

7. Next Meeting: To Be Determined

Next meeting was set for Thursday April 3rd, 2025 at 11:00am.

Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked Mr. Damewood his ideas on projects. Mr. Damewood was interested in contacting other locations on how they have done working groups/subgroups.

Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked the committee if there are particular presentations or subjects they would like information on.

Ms. Tilghman asked Mr. Pitts and Mr. Murphy if there was anything in the works that would be brought to the committee. Mr. Pitts explained that there was a draft in progress that ACHD would like to discuss at the next meeting.

Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked Mr. Damewood to hold off on the working groups until everyone got a handle on the program and the regulations.

Mr. Damewood stated his interest in working groups aligned with the county and the possibility of doing "clean and lien".

Ms. Rucker will provide a list of ideas.

Ms. Goetz suggested polls through email to determine priorities. Ms. Rubenstein explained this is a public meeting and therefore official committee business must be open to the public, not through emails.

Ms. Rubenstein explained Robert's Rules or another set of rules should be adopted by vote.

Mr. Murphy said that quorum was majority plus one, which for this committee was 8 members. Ms. Tilghman stated that quorum for this group would be 7 members. Mr. Pitts said that the committee could decide what would be considered quorum.

Ms. Naccarati-Chapkis asked about the other locations that could be considered for future meetings and if that included the office of the program. Mr. Murphy stated that is an option, and that it would be up to the committee. Next meeting will remain at the same location, 542 4th Avenue.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Nusser thanked everyone and sent Executive Sara Innamorato's regrets. He said that the executive's office was looking forward to the committee's work.

Mr. Boddorf motioned adjournment. All members present voted in favor.

Adjourned 12:52pm.