



CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION ON HOUSING

One Courthouse Plaza 2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 700 Arlington, VA 22201
TEL 703.228.3760 FAX 703.228.3834 www.arlingtonva.us

Holly Bray,
Chairman

March 8, 2012

Hon. Mary Hynes, Chairman
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Buckingham Village 3
Item #30 on the County Board agenda for March 10, 2012

Dear Ms. Hynes:

At its March 1, 2012 public hearing, the Citizens Advisory Commission on Housing considered the affordable housing program for Buckingham Village 3 Phase 2. This item was also presented at the Bricks and Mortar and Homeownership Subcommittee meetings.

The Commission advises the County Board to revise the original homeownership program to a rental program and submit a 48-unit Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) project to the Virginia Housing Development Authority by March 16, 2012. The Housing Commission also recommends:

- The project consist of a mix of units at 40%, 50%, 60% and 80% of area median income;
- Allow for another attempt at homeownership at the end of the 15-year LIHTC affordability period;
- Have the County retain ownership of the land; and
- Direct staff to pursue the process necessary to authorize MIPAP funds to be used for first time home buyer assistance for qualifying residents of Buckingham neighborhood.

The Commission vote on the motion was 5-1-1. Members in favor are Ms. Bray, Mr. Certosimo, Ms. Falvey, Ms. Hogan, and Mr. Withers with Ms. McSweeney voting against and Mr. Browne abstaining. Ms. McSweeney voted against the project because she believed that while the original proposal was an open, participatory process with the community, this decision to alter the original plan was done quickly and without substantial conversations with the community to explain what had changed and why rental was proposed. In addition, she believes that while costs have gone up and home ownership is now more expensive, but not radically so, the County needs to have a conversation about its commitment to creating and funding affordable home ownership opportunities. The County currently has a goal, and reaffirmed that goal in adopting

the updated Housing Goals and Targets last spring, but has not funded MIPAP, the one tool it has to make home ownership possible, in about two years. If the County cannot make home ownership a reality in Buckingham, where it has control of the land, Ms. McSweeney questioned how we propose to make it work elsewhere in the County.

This was a difficult decision however; the Commission members weighed the original goals for the property set forth several years ago with the financial realities of today including a dramatically different single family marketplace, tightened credit standards, unstable job markets, and the lack of MIPAP funding. As Ms. McSweeney noted in her dissent, affordable single family home ownership is a goal but we do not have the tools to make that a reality. By moving forward with the low-income housing tax credit proposal along with the direction to pursue the process necessary to authorize MIPAP funds to qualifying residents of the Buckingham neighborhood we continue to provide affordable housing, we preserve the ability to do home ownership at the site when the tax credits expire, and we provide assistance and funding for those families in the Buckingham neighborhood who desire to own a home and qualify for both MIPAP and a conventional home loan. The low income tax credit proposal was determined by the majority of the Commissioners to be the most reasonable and fiscally sound solution. It will provide 48 committed affordable units with a mix of residents with incomes at 40%, 50%, 60% and 80% of AMI and the County will retain ownership of the land which will allow the possibility of home ownership at the site at a later date.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Holly Bray
Chairman