

Attachment A

Phoenix City Council Economic Development and Housing (EDH) Subcommittee Summary Minutes Wednesday, March 20, 2024

City Council Chambers
200 W. Jefferson St.
Phoenix, Ariz.

Subcommittee Members Present

Chairman Kevin Robinson, Chair
Councilwoman Yassamin Ansari
Councilwoman Kesha Hodge Washington

Subcommittee Members Absent

Vice Mayor Debra Stark

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Robinson called the Economic Development and Housing Subcommittee to order at 10:01 a.m. with Councilwoman Yassamin Ansari and Councilwoman Kesha Hodge Washington present.

Chairman Robinson began the meeting by congratulating Councilwoman Ansari on her upcoming transition from her role as a Councilwoman as she prepares for her run for United States Congress.

Councilwoman Ansari expressed her appreciation to Chairman Robinson and the subcommittee for their work, stating it feels bittersweet to say goodbye to the City Council. She shared the impactful work of the subcommittee on housing, opioid response, education, and the arts, noting that residents are encouraged by the progress being made. Councilwoman Ansari mentioned the thoughtful response to homeless solutions, rising issues with fentanyl, prevention programs, Narcan programs, and the forward-looking vision for the City. She expressed that it has been a huge honor for her to serve and that she will miss everyone.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Nancy Palmer, a resident of Surprise, commented on the importance of the right to counsel, sharing her personal experience with a management company involved in a pyramid scheme. She explained that despite being listed as the primary residence, they were renting out the property, and when the rent was abruptly raised, they faced eviction. Thanks to the right to counsel from Community Legal Services (CLS), she was able to postpone eviction until May 5th. She said she still faced homelessness as she has nowhere else to go. Ms. Palmer stated the need for tenants to have a voice in court proceedings, as judges often only hear the landlord's side and order tenants to pay owed money and vacate within seven days. She expressed her sympathy for others facing similar situations, including her own family.

Chairman Robinson requested Ms. Palmer to wait for her turn to address item seven on the agenda.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

1. Minutes of the Economic Development and Housing Subcommittee Meeting

Councilwoman Ansari made a motion to approve the minutes of the Feb. 14, 2024, Economic Development and Housing Subcommittee meeting. Councilwoman Hodge Washington seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

CONSENT ACTION (ITEMS 2-3)

Items 2-3 were for consent action. No presentations were planned, but City staff was available to answer questions.

2. Fiscal Year 2024-25 Housing and Urban Development Consolidated Plan Annual Action Plan

Consent only. No Councilmember requested additional information.

3. Artist Contract for 3rd Street Rio Salado Bicycle/ Pedestrian Bridge Public Art Projects

Consent only. No Councilmember requested additional information.

Councilwoman Ansari made a motion to approve Consent Items 2 and 3. Councilwoman Hodge Washington seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

INFORMATION ONLY (ITEM 4)

4. Head Start Birth to Five Monthly Report – Jan.

Information only. No Councilmember requested additional information.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION (ITEMS 5-7)

5. Opioid Response Planning Environmental Scan Results

Public Health Advisor Nicole Witt and Arizona State University Substance use and Addiction Translational Research Network (SATRN) Dr. Michelle Shiota presented on the item.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington asked to identify areas where additional funding could make a significant impact.

Dr. Shiota explained the prioritized investments outlined are mainly suitable for implementation at the City level. She included initiatives such as schools, harm reduction services, transportation, and housing, which are better suited to be implemented within the context of the City.

Ms. Witt added the collaboration between the Office of Public Health, Maricopa County, and state partners to ensure that proposed investments do not duplicate existing funding. She stated the importance of waiting for input from Maricopa County and other government partners before finalizing City level investments.

Chairman Robinson asked about additional measures that could be taken in terms of justice system diversion to address homelessness, acknowledging that incarceration is not a solution to the issue.

Ms. Witt said the importance of reducing stigma around substance use and educating the community about Good Samaritan laws. She then said the need for increased outreach and education to build trust in diversion programs and ensure that services are readily available when individuals seek help. Ms. Witt also underscored the importance of collaboration with justice system colleagues to facilitate successful diversion and connection to necessary services.

Dr. Shiota added the need to support law enforcement colleagues in dealing with individuals struggling with addiction and homelessness. She said the importance of providing additional training to law enforcement and other City employees to effectively address these issues and bridge the gap between enforcing the law and providing social services.

6. Phoenix Public Library Bookmobile

Library Director Rita Hamilton and Deputy Library Director Karl Kendall presented on the item.

Chairman Robinson announced the retirement of Ms. Hamilton from the City and expressed gratitude for her dedicated years of service.

Mr. Kendall shared Bookmobile outreach has regular service Tuesday through Saturdays.

Councilwoman Ansari expressed her excitement about the new library initiative in the Estrella region, and the significance as the area's first library.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington expressed gratitude for the bookmobile program and hoping for its success to expand into a fleet of bookmobiles, fostering better communities and inspiring future generations of readers and authors.

7. Legal Representation for Evictions

Deputy City Manager Gina Montes and Deputy Human Services Director Susan Hallett presented on the item.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington asked about statistics on outcomes such as dismissals, continuances, settlements, and the proportion of cases involving monetary versus non-monetary defaults, seeking clarification on the program's effectiveness.

Ms. Montes requested Director of Litigation and Advocacy for Community Legal Services, Pamela Bridge to address members of the subcommittee for questions.

Ms. Bridge addressed concerns about the accuracy of data collection regarding outcomes of cases. She mentioned that while the current data may not fully reflect all successes, they are working on improving the data collection process to provide more accurate information in the future. She highlighted that there are often successful resolutions negotiated by advocates that may not neatly fit into predefined categories, such as settlements that prevent evictions while allowing tenants to move out on their terms. Ms. Bridge emphasized the importance of considering such negotiated resolutions, even if there may not be legal merit in the case.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington asked on whether the data indicates whether the percentages of cases primarily involve monetary defaults or non-monetary defaults. She also requested examples of the top cases in situations involving non-monetary defaults.

Ms. Bridge sought clarification on whether the question pertained to the percentage of cases where 75 percent involved non-payment of rent.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington replied yes.

Ms. Bridge clarified that among the cases they handle, 75 percent involve non-payment of rent and other types of cases include situations where tenants are alleged to have violated the lease, cases of non-renewals where landlords choose not to renew leases, and cases involving federally subsidized housing, which have different regulations. She can provide further breakdowns of these percentages.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington expressed interest in obtaining data regarding the demographics of tenants assisted by the program, particularly in light of the increasing older population. She emphasized the importance of extending the reach of the program to ensure awareness among individuals who may benefit from it.

Ms. Bridge mentioned that they collect demographic data on all clients who apply at Community Legal Services. She stated her staff aim to increase awareness of their services in the community through in-person events, monthly clinics, videos in Spanish and English, and distributing brochures to apartment complexes with high eviction rates, following a suggestion from a Justice Court judge.

Councilwoman Ansari expressed gratitude for bringing the discussion on right to counsel to the subcommittee. She highlighted the success of other jurisdictions, such as Philadelphia and Kansas City, in achieving significant savings and favorable outcomes for tenants through legal representation. She also raised questions about the eligibility criteria for the Community Legal Services program and potential recommendations for expanding it to specific income or demographic groups.

Ms. Bridge clarified that the current eligibility criteria for the Community Legal Services program include City residents who are within 200 percent of the federal poverty line. She mentioned that it's rare to turn down individuals with higher income levels who apply for services, as they may not typically apply due to the eligibility criteria. She mentioned at least one member of the household facing eviction must have some legal status in the United States to qualify for assistance.

Councilwoman Ansari asked next steps to expand program.

Ms. Montes expressed willingness to further explore funding options for the right to counsel program, acknowledging the tight budget environment and the need to prioritize current services funded with federal funds. She suggested looking into alternative funding sources beyond the general fund. Additionally, she agreed to gather data on past evictions and their effects on individuals' housing searches for future discussion. Chairman Robinson emphasized the importance of exploring opportunities for additional funding, both from governmental sources and the private sector, to support the right to counsel program. He acknowledged the budgetary constraints but emphasized the significance of partnering with other entities to move the program forward.

Chairman Robinson opened the floor to public comment.

Miesha Fish shared her experience as a longtime resident of Phoenix who has faced homelessness, received Section 8 assistance, and is passionate about advocacy work for housing rights. She mentioned the importance of the source of income ordinance in preventing discrimination against voucher holders and low-income individuals but expressed disappointment in its enforcement. Ms. Fish stated the need for better education for landlords, enforcement procedures, and the right to counsel for tenants facing eviction, citing personal vulnerability to homelessness without legal representation. She thanked the council for their attention to these issues.

Nancy Palmer shared her distressing situation, stating that she and her family are facing homelessness despite efforts to prevent eviction. She recounted their struggles, including being misled by their landlord, facing unaffordable rent increases, and encountering legal obstacles. She said there is urgent need for legal representation to protect their housing rights and prevent unjust eviction. She appealed for assistance from anyone who could provide legal support and urged council members to address systemic issues contributing to her predicament.

John Pollack commented on insights into the effectiveness of right to counsel programs in civil cases. He shared data demonstrating the success of such programs in various jurisdictions, including significant rates of tenant retention and resolution of disputes. Mr. Pollack emphasized that these programs can benefit both tenants and landlords by facilitating smoother communication and dispute resolution. He addressed funding concerns, noting that the scope of eligibility for right to counsel can be adjusted based on available resources.

Keith Knight advocated for the implementation of the right to counsel policy. He highlighted the impact the policy can have on housing stability, leading to decreased homelessness, lower healthcare costs, and greater economic mobility. He then added the potential for Phoenix to become a beacon of societal health and progress by implementing the right to counsel.

Andrea Luna Servantes emphasized the importance of implementing a right to counsel ordinance for tenants facing eviction in Phoenix. She highlighted the positive outcomes seen when tenants have legal representation and pointed out that preventative measures like this can provide a good return on investment, ultimately costing less than finding housing options after individuals become homeless. She thanked those involved in the presentation and urged the subcommittee to move forward with implementing the right to counsel ordinance.

Mac Gar shared his personal experience of being evicted from a company where he had invested money, and he emphasized the need for the City to address such issues. He mentioned facing eviction from an apartment that was taken over by the company, leading to an unaffordable rent increase. He expressed gratitude for the arguments presented to the council and voiced his support for their programs.

Morning Star Bloom, representing Worker Power and speaking as a renter herself, highlighted the significant rise in rent costs, with many renters in Phoenix spending over 30 percent of their income on rent. She referenced a study showing that over 50 percent of renter households in Arizona are burdened by rent costs, increasing the risk of eviction and homelessness. She stated the importance of right to counsel as a critical step in addressing homelessness at its root, citing research on pilot programs that demonstrate cost savings for the City. She encouraged the council to extend right to counsel to as many people as possible, recognizing the budgetary concerns while emphasizing the need for a holistic community effort to make a difference.

Charli Sheaburger voiced the need for a right to counsel in the community, sharing a personal story about a family member who struggles with manic depressive disorder and faces challenges in maintaining housing due to lack of consistent medication and support. She highlighted the importance of providing legal assistance through a right to counsel program for individuals like his family member and others facing mental health challenges, especially when navigating eviction court. She expressed gratitude for the consideration of such a program, emphasizing the critical need for it in the community.

Sebastian Del Portillo expressed his support for the right to counsel program in Phoenix, emphasizing its importance in preventing homelessness and eviction. He thanked various individuals involved in advocating for the program and highlighted the significance of viewing it as a cost-saving measure for the city rather than a spending program. He shared anecdotes from his experiences supporting individuals facing eviction, illustrating the dire need for legal representation in eviction court. He

emphasized the need for fairness and justice in court proceedings and urged the city to adopt a right to counsel ordinance to protect vulnerable community members from eviction and homelessness.

Noelle Lewis recounted being evicted in November 2023 and described the feelings of neglect, dehumanization, and lack of support she experienced during the eviction process. She shared the importance of recognizing the human aspect of eviction and the need for empathy and support from society and the City. She highlighted her own struggles, including dealing with a car accident and the loss of a maternal figure, which compounded her mental and emotional challenges during the eviction process. She advocated for the right to counsel, urging everyone to approach the issue with compassion and empathy, recognizing it as a fundamental human right.

Danielle Witcher expressed her support for passing the right to counsel ordinance, emphasizing its potential to save the City money and prevent homelessness. She shared her experience in Ohio, where similar measures have been implemented, she highlighted the importance of legal representation in legal proceedings, including negotiations. She then urged the Council to prioritize this legal procedure and ensure that counsel is available to those who need it.

Evelynne Castillo urged the Council to pass an ordinance implementing a right to counsel program. She shared her personal experiences of homelessness and instability due to the lack of affordable housing in Arizona. She highlighted the impact of the housing crisis on families and communities, stressing that providing legal representation to tenants facing eviction is crucial in protecting their rights and preventing unlawful evictions. She called on the Council to prioritize affordable housing and ensure that everyone has access to safe and dignified living conditions.

Luke Black shared his personal experience as a renter in Phoenix and highlighted the need for right to legal counsel for those facing eviction. He recounted a situation where he was threatened with eviction over a minor issue regarding a grill on his patio, emphasizing the common occurrence of landlords taking advantage of renters. He stressed that access to legal representation is essential for tenants who often face challenges in attending legal proceedings due to work or other commitments. He urged the Council to proactively address the predatory practices of landlords by implementing a right to counsel program, emphasizing that the necessary funding is readily available. He then encouraged the Council to prioritize the well-being of the community by directing funds towards this initiative.

Chairman Robinson closed the floor to public comment.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington provided some follow-up based on the public comments received during the meeting. She mentioned the recent extension of funding, now totaling \$1.3 million until December 31st of the current year. She expressed trust that any shortfall would be brought back to the subcommittee and council for potential

extension. She proposed considering additional levels of income eligibility beyond the current threshold of 200 percent of the federal poverty limit, along with the budgetary impact of such adjustments. She suggested exploring private funding options, citing Detroit as an example where private funding facilitated program implementation. Councilwoman Hodge Washington emphasized the importance of expanding the scope of funding sources for the program.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION (ITEMS 8-10)

8. Abandoned Shopping Cart Program Update

Deputy City Manager Gina Montes, Neighborhood Services Director Spencer Self, and Deputy Neighborhood Services Director Anamaria Ortega presented on the item.

Councilwoman Ansari made a motion to approve the item. Councilwoman Hodge Washington seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

9. Enhanced Municipal Services District (EMSD) Boundary Expansion

Assistant Community and Economic Development Director Eric Johnson and Deputy Community and Economic Development Director Xandon Keating presented on the item.

Councilwoman Ansari made a motion to approve the item. Councilwoman Hodge Washington seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

10. Phoenix Youth R.I.S.E (Summer Youth Program)

Assistant Community and Economic Development Director Eric Johnson and Business and Workforce Deputy Director LaSetta Hogans presented on the item.

Councilwoman Ansari made a motion to approve the item. Councilwoman Hodge Washington seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Robinson adjourned the meeting at 12:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Johnathan Gates
Management Fellow