



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
Housing, Homeless and Neighborhood
Development (HHAND)
Advisory Commission
SUMMARY MINUTES
JANUARY 08, 2025



Call to Order

The Housing, Homeless and Neighborhood Development (HHAND) Advisory Commission meeting reached a quorum and was opened by Acting Chair David Rittenberg at 4:04PM. 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: David Rittenberg (Acting Chair), Richard Mystrom, Daniel Sager, Julie Greene-Graham, Michelle Baker, Jessica Parks

Absent: William Scott, Laura Reijns

MOA Staff

AHD: Darcie Montalvo, AHD Human Services Division Manager; Jed Drolet, CSD Program Manager; Chase Burghgrave, CSD Lead Planner; Valerie Madison, CSD Program Development Specialist; Kyle Mielke, CSD Program Development Specialist; Frankie Dahl, Senior Office Associate

Other Departments: Farina Brown, Special Assistant to the Mayor; Thea Agnew Bembem, Special Assistant to the Mayor; Graham Downey, Special Assistant to the Mayor

Guests or Presenters

None present today

B. Approval of Order of Business –Acting Chair entertained a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

<u>MOTION:</u> Richard Mystrom
<u>SECOND:</u> Julie Greene-Graham
<u>VOTE:</u> No Opposition

C. Approval of December 04, 2024, minutes

<u>MOTION:</u> Richard Mystrom
<u>SECOND:</u> Julie Greene-Graham
<u>VOTE:</u> No Opposition

D. Old Business

1. Update from the Special Assistants to the Mayor for Health and Homelessness
 - i. Warming Center Operations are active as of January 3rd and have been activated nightly since. On 1/7/25 the shelter reached capacity, which is 45 people at once. Shelter operators were able to move 11 people from warming shelters to

the CWS congregate shelter on 56th. The 4 staffers that are present are also there to connect people to services as they provide a place to get warm. Staff are collaborating closely with community partners such as APD, Hospitals, and other care centers. Shelters are activated based on the average temperature for the following week—if the average temperature of the next 7 days is below 20 degrees, activation is triggered. If it is above 20 degrees, warming centers will not be active.

- ii. Commissioners expressed that the metric for activating warming shelters is imperfect: when temperatures rise above freezing and precipitation turns from snow to rain, it can be deadly for people who are unsheltered. All kinds of inclement weather should be considered. Consistency in services is important for people who do not have access to phones or internet to check to see if centers are active. Community input will be important in finding the best, most cost-effective solutions.
- iii. 2024GP005 Social Welfare Services—this is an RFP related to HOME ARP funds and the deadline for submission has been extended to 1/15/2025. It is for housing services (rental assistance, navigation support, rapid rehousing, etc.) and any nonprofit is welcome to apply. The RFP is for \$2.5 million total—\$1 million of Municipal General Funds and \$1.5 Million of HOME ARP funds.

E. New Business

1. Election of New Chair and Vice Chair. Jessica Parks presiding

Election of Chair

Jessica Parks opened the floor for nominations: Richard Mystrom nominated David Rittenberg, and David Rittenberg accepted the nomination. No other nominations.
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VOTE: No Opposition

David Rittenberg has been elected the new HHAND Commission Chair

Election of Vice Chair

Jessica Parks opened the floor for nominations: David Rittenberg nominated Richard Mystrom, and Richard Mystrom accepted the nomination. No other nominations.

VOTE: No Opposition

Richard Mystrom has been elected the new HHAND Commission Vice-Chair

2. Presentation on the Mayor’s Housing Strategy from Graham Downey, Special Assistant to the Mayor
 - i. Affordability is often the focus of discussions around the housing difficulties we experience in Anchorage, but affordability is a function of supply. If Anchorage develops an abundance of housing that address different needs within the community, then affordability will improve. We currently have very low vacancy rates, which allows landlords to price their units competitively.
 - ii. There are 3 goals that are within the Municipality’s control: expanding incentives, cutting red tape, and streamlining the process. The municipality can leverage philanthropic and state funds to incentivize housing abundance and evaluate the actual efficacy of current tax abatement incentives to make sure they are effective. A collaborative process with the administration, the assembly, people from community councils and people with applicable experience to change the unnecessarily complex rules that are in place will

make it feasible to increase housing production. The administration intends to streamline internal processes to create systems that are fair, reliable, transparent, and predictable.

3. Preparation for the Annual HHAND Report

i. Farina Brown

- a. Response Open Meetings Act: For a five-member commission, going back to the statutory language, "'meeting' means a gathering of members of a governmental body when more than three members or a majority of the members, whichever is less, are present." We'd read it as "meeting means a gathering of ... [four] or [three] members, whichever is less, are present." Or, no more than two members can discuss commission business without being at a publicly noticed open meeting.
- b. Response HHAND Commission annual report: The mayor's office would benefit from a report highlighting feedback on the Homelessness and Health Strategy Document and actionable recommendations, informed by data, on addressing immediate and long-term housing and homelessness challenges in Anchorage. Key focus areas include strategies for increasing transitional and permanent supportive housing, insights on repurposing underutilized structures like the vacant facilities (when applicable) to decompress emergency shelters, and opportunities for expanding public-private partnerships in affordable housing development. Additionally, the report could offer guidance on integrating transportation and wraparound services to ensure housing accessibility and sustainability while identifying ways to revitalize at-risk neighborhoods—in a forward-looking report.

- ii. Commissioners will review previous reports before the next HHAND Meeting. At the next meeting, they will work on appointing a sub-committee that will schedule work sessions to work on the annual report. Commissioner Parks would like to lead this sub-committee.

F. General Public Comments —

- 1. None

G. Commissioner Comments —

- 1. Richard Mystrom expressed gratitude that the commission is now able to have a Quorum.
- 2. David Rittenberg welcomed new commissioners.

Chair entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting 5:32PM

MOTION: Richard Mystrom
SECOND: Julie Greene-Graham
VOTE: No Opposition

Meeting adjourned at 5:32 PM. The next HHAND Commission meeting is scheduled for February 05, 2025, from 4:00 – 5:30 pm., at 825 L Street, Conference Room #423, and through Microsoft Teams.