



WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 20, 2024

WORKING SESSION

I. ROLL CALL

A Working Session of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners was held at the Administration Building, in the City of Ann Arbor, Michigan, on March 20, 2024.

The meeting was called to order at 05:34 PM by Comm. Somerville, Chair of the Working Session.

Members Present:	Comms. Shannon Beeman, Justin Hodge, Andy LaBarre, Crystal Lyte, Jason Maciejewski, Yousef Rabhi, Caroline Sanders, Katie Scott, Annie Somerville
Members Absent:	None.
Others Present	Greg Dill, County Administrator; Andrew DeLeeuw, Deputy County Administrator; Michelle Billard & Michael Auten, Corporation Counsel; Crystal Campbell, Public Information Officer; Brady Peck, Director of Operations; Terrence Williams, Administration; Jason Fee, Facilities Management; Guillermo Hernandez, Director of Human Resources; Jeff Rose, ITS; Ashley Hall, BOC Communications and Operations Manager; David Saims, Veterans Affairs; Bryce Allmacher, Clerk's Office; and members of the public.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Elizabeth Thompson spoke about the Commission on Aging's Annual Report, which is to be discussed by the Board later on in the evening.

Monica Ross-Williams said they plan to give public comment at the Board of Commissioners session following this meeting.

Aaron Cooper introduced himself as the new Executive Director of Avalon Housing.

Roberto Caballo asked about local police's involvement with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Eric Sturgess said that there is a lack of accountability in how County funds are spent.

III. REPORT FROM THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

IV. REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS LIAISON

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- A. Marie Gress, Chair of the Commission on Aging (COA), presented the COA's Annual Report. Gress conveyed a local senior's firsthand account of social isolation and the resources they accessed to mitigate its effects. Gress provided an overview of the COA's accomplishments in 2023 and detailed areas in which financial support for aging services increased. The COA's work is primarily informed by data from the Area Agency on Aging 1-B, the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, the Washtenaw County Data Dashboard, and the Washtenaw County Opportunity Index. Gress highlighted the most critical needs of older adults in Washtenaw County, focusing primarily on access to transportation, housing, and supporting individuals with disabilities. Gress provided data evidencing the need for a Washtenaw County senior millage.

Comm. LaBarre asked for a more detailed recommendation as to how the County can support aging services.

Gress committed to providing a more detailed recommendation to the Board.

Gress detailed the COA's recommendations to the Board which were passed earlier in the year.

Comm. Sanders asked about Gress's statement that the County only spent \$93,000 to support senior services in 2023; Comm. Sanders asked about potential overlap between allocations to other County programs and whether those allocations may support seniors indirectly.

Gress stated the \$93,000 was dedicated to senior nutrition programs, retired seniors volunteers program, and foster grandparents.

Comm. Sanders asked about seniors' willingness to support a millage for older adult services.

Gress said that her conversations with seniors have been generally supportive, but that some worry resources will be allocated in a geographically inequitable way.

Comm. Maciejewski stated that a recent SEMCOG report suggested that Washtenaw County townships will soon be home to the oldest populations on average in all of Southeastern Michigan. Comm. Maciejewski said that it is difficult to collect data on socially isolated populations, which makes the needs of seniors difficult to quantify.

- B. Nathan Voght, Economic Development Specialist, gave a presentation on new housing subsidies available through the Michigan State Housing and Development Authority (MSHDA). Voght provided an overview of Washtenaw County's Brownfield Redevelopment Program and the statutes that empower and regulate it. The newest amendment to Michigan's Brownfield Redevelopment Finance Act gives MSHDA expanded authority to award subsidies to new development projects statewide. The amendment expands opportunities to employ Brownfield and TIF financing for designated affordable projects. Voght stated that guidance from MSHDA on how to

exercise the amendment effectively does not apply well to Washtenaw County due to the area's above average incomes and housing prices. The amendment additionally expands eligible activities to be covered using Brownfield funds.

Comm. Hodge asked what the Board can do to best prepare to effectively use the expanded authority of the Brownfield Program.

Voght said that the Board should continue to engage in conversations with communities Countywide.

Comm. Rabhi stated that he is concerned with the implementation of the amended program and that Brownfield financing is primarily used by developers to subsidize their own profits.

Comm. Rabhi asked about the expansion of eligible activities under this amendment and expressed concern that Brownfield funds could be used to subsidize developments that are not in the public interest.

Voght reiterated that Brownfield funds are allocated at the discretion of local Brownfield authorities and governments.

Comm. Beeman asked about the possibility of using Brownfield funds to support a hypothetical development of a single unit of housing located on a solar farm.

Voght stated that the property likely would not have a high enough taxable value to support a TIF.

Comm. Maciejewski asked about local jurisdictions' capacity to effectively utilize the Brownfield program.

Voght stated that Comm. Maciejewski's question speaks to the advantage of having a regional Brownfield program, Voght said that his office can support local jurisdictions who have limited experience with Brownfield and TIF financing.

Comm. Beeman asked about Brownfield's compatibility with other forms of public subsidy.

Voght said that Brownfield funds can typically be employed alongside other public funds.

Comm. Rabhi suggested the Board discuss the County's population loss at a future Working Session.

VI. ITEMS FOR CURRENT/FUTURE DISCUSSION

VII. ADJOURN TO NEXT SESSION

Comm. Beeman, seconded by Comm. Rabhi, moved to adjourn. Voice vote - motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 06:42 PM.

Annie Somerville, Chair of the Working Session
Lawrence Kestenbaum, Clerk/Register

By: Bryce Allmacher, Deputy Clerk

Board Approved: April 3, 2024