Arlington County Housing Commission
Meeting Notes

The Housing Commission convened its meeting at **7:03pm** on **September 10, 2026**.

PRESENT (Virtually)	Commissioner Kellen MacBeth (Chair) Commissioner Nikki Blake Commissioner Joseph Ventrone Commissioner Elena Fierro Commissioner Anika Montgomery Commissioner Jason Schwartz Commissioner Bryan Coleman Commissioner Karen Serfis
ABSENT	Commissioner Danny Ross Commissioner Zack Linick
STAFF	Alex McMillen, Richard Tucker, Akeria Brown, Nick Rodgers, Aileen Winquist

---

View the Meeting Recording Here

Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda
Alice Hogan provided public comment on behalf of NVAHA. She said the Housing Grants Program is changing significantly and suggested the Commission receive an update from DHS. She asked if the County was reviewing the historic preservation process following the Melwood decision. Lastly, she noted the NVAHA's annual event will be on September 24th this year.

Approval of Notes – Action
There was one minor edit proposed to Alice Hogan's comment on mixed-income buildings. Joe Ventrone made a motion to approve the notes; Bryan Coleman seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

- View the July 9, 2026, Housing Commission notes here.

Homeownership Study Update – Information
Staff presented the item.

- View the staff presentation here.

Joe Ventrone asked how many county funds are going to rental versus homeownership programs. Staff answered that the Moderate-Income Purchase Assistance Program (MIPAP) has a budget of approximately $1.2M and that served about 11 households last year.

Joe Ventrone asked if AHIF is limited to being used on only rental housing. He said Arlington should consider directing more resources towards homeownership. He asked whether the County has considered using County-owned property to create homeownership opportunities. Staff answered that the County previously conducted a "public land for public good" process examining County-owned properties. Staff said most properties were not practical for housing development, although some opportunities for co-location on County-owned sites could exist. Staff also said opportunities may depend partly on the County's Capital Improvement Plan.

Kellen MacBeth asked whether the County had discussed or supported potential state-level legislation to assist older condo buildings with rising costs. Staff said they were not aware of specific legislation but indicated the County would likely be supportive. Staff said that, in the absence of funding, staff have encouraged condominium associations to examine their capital needs and plan for major expenses well in advance. Staff also said the County's condo education efforts are intended partly to prevent unexpected financial problems.

Kellen MacBeth asked whether the County tracks condominium fees and could identify buildings at risk of becoming unaffordable because of high fees or special assessments. He suggested that even a periodic snapshot could help the Commission, County Board, and state policymakers understand how many units might be at risk. Staff said they have access to MLS information and can extract condominium-fee data for many properties. However, they cautioned that the information is not standardized because agents enter fees differently and fees cover different combinations of utilities and amenities.

Jason Scwhartz said the current condominium market presents challenges, including weak demand and significant uncertainty for prospective buyers. He emphasized the importance of developing new condominiums with low HOA fees and low ongoing maintenance costs. He noted that the first EHO condominiums were expected to go on sale soon and were designed with relatively low HOA costs. He cautioned that encouraging someone to purchase a condominium is not automatically beneficial if the purchase exposes the household to significant mortgage, maintenance, resale, and transaction risks. He said the Commission should consider whether homeownership assistance actually improves people's financial position rather than simply shifting someone from renting to owning.

Joe Ventrone asked about the Key and Nash condominium development, where the developer provided several affordable homeownership units, and whether a similar model could be replicated. He specifically asked whether a model like that could be considered for other condominium developments, including 1501 Langston. Staff confirmed that there are four affordable homeownership units at Key and Nash as part of the County's inventory. Staff explained that the four units were sold to households at approximately 80% AMI at substantially below the market-rate price. Staff said the units must remain affordable and be resold to income-qualified households and must be used as the owner's primary residence.

Karen Serfis supported the idea of post-purchase counseling for homebuyers. She recommended making counseling a formal requirement because borrowers may not participate voluntarily after purchasing. She suggested using FHA approval status as a possible way to identify condominium buildings experiencing financial or physical problems. She said a lack of FHA approval can sometimes indicate financial or repair issues and could provide a relatively easy starting point for identifying buildings needing assistance.

Low Residential Study – Information
Staff presented the item.

- View the staff presentation here.

Elena asked how the proposed limits would account for:

- residents who want to build ADUs;
- properties that are subdivided to create additional housing; and
- projects such as converting a duplex into a triplex.

She said these projects can increase impervious area but also increase the amount of housing in Arlington and asked how the study balances those competing objectives. Staff said they have received similar feedback concerning ADUs and EHO. Staff said that Phase 3 of the study would address administration of the limits, including potential exceptions or additional flexibility. Staff specifically mentioned accessibility-related paving as an issue staff would need to consider. Staff said the County has multiple goals and that the study needs to balance environmental objectives with housing and other priorities.

Staff added that if a property is subdivided, each resulting property would need to meet the applicable zoning standards. Staff explained that detached accessory dwellings currently count toward applicable lot-coverage limits. Staff said staff they are aware of the tension between impervious-area limits and housing production and have consulted builders and other industry professionals. Staff said that the Affordable Housing Master Plan is one of the County's policy documents that staff is considering as part of the tradeoffs required by the Board's charge.

Karen Serfis asked how the County currently regulates situations where homeowners pave front yards for parking or install large patios. She specifically asked whether permits are required. Staff said paving used for parking or driveways counts toward lot coverage. They explained that a land-disturbance permit generally comes into play at approximately 2,500 square feet of disturbance. Smaller paving projects may therefore occur without that permit, although zoning requirements still apply. Staff explained that some patios do not count toward lot coverage under the current rules, particularly certain at-grade or low-height patios. Staff identified this distinction as one reason the proposed impervious-area approach would be different: the intent is for the total impervious-area limit to capture all hard surfaces.

Kellen MacBeth asked how a raised deck would be treated when the ground underneath remains natural and can absorb rainfall. He asked how that would differ from a patio. Staff said a deck with a natural surface underneath is currently not considered impervious for stormwater purposes. A deck over a patio or other impervious surface would be treated differently. Staff said they are working to make the definitions consistent across stormwater, land-disturbance, and zoning processes. Kellen MacBeth said the County could potentially incentivize homeowners to choose designs such as decks that are better for stormwater management.

Alice Hogan provided public comment. She said she was glad staff was considering the relationship between the proposed limits and ADUs and EHO. She cautioned against creating a policy that would discourage additional housing, particularly projects that create multiple units in a single structure. She said she hoped the eventual rules would not create disincentives for EHO or other forms of additional housing.

Kellen MacBeth asked whether staff was considering the number of households on a property when calculating appropriate impervious area. Staff said the short answer is yes. Staff explained that approximately 87% of lots in the low-residential study area have a one-family dwelling, based on the primary dataset staff is using. Staff said EHO has separate parking requirements from one- and two-family dwellings, and those differences were already taken into account when the Board adopted the EHO zoning provisions. Staff is factoring those differences into its forthcoming recommendations for EHO. Staff also noted that EHO was not part of the original study scope because it had previously been prohibited, but the legal changes have caused staff to add EHO to the study. Staff said the timing of any EHO-specific impervious-area amendment would depend partly on the status of the ongoing legal case and discussions with the County Attorney. Kellen said he wanted to emphasize that the Commission did not want the study to discourage construction or maintenance of ADUs. He suggested that staff should

consider not only avoiding harm to ADU development but whether the zoning approach could actually incentivize additional ADUs. He noted that increasing ADU production is an objective in multiple County plans.

Jason Scwartz thanked staff for clarifying the EHO treatment. He emphasized that sufficient lot coverage for parking and access is critical to making EHO condominiums viable. He said that if EHO projects cannot accommodate appropriate parking and access, developers may choose a lower-density development option instead. He argued that the analysis should consider households per lot, rather than looking only at the number of lots. He also raised infrastructure considerations, arguing that denser development can support infrastructure costs more efficiently than low-density development. He expressed concern about existing homeowners whose properties already have high levels of lot coverage and how new limits could affect them. He said the County should consider long-term equity and impacts at the household level, not simply at the individual-property level. Staff appreciated the feedback concerning EHO. Staff emphasized that the interdepartmental team includes Housing staff and people with EHO experience. They said staff has specifically discussed parking and other issues associated with multi-unit development during its recent internal meetings. Staff said the study team is therefore not approaching the issue solely from an environmental perspective.

Kellen MacBeth asked whether green roofs or other stormwater-friendly features could be considered when establishing impervious-area limits. He asked whether a property with a green roof, green-roofed carport, or another stormwater-management feature could potentially receive additional impervious-area capacity. He suggested using the zoning process to incentivize environmentally beneficial behavior rather than simply imposing a cap. Staff said green roofs can provide stormwater benefits and can receive credit toward stormwater-management requirements. However, staff said a green roof would still generally count as impervious area under the proposed impervious-area framework. She explained that state definitions distinguish between natural surfaces and engineered pervious surfaces. Staff noted that the County already provides stormwater-utility credits for measures such as pervious surfaces, rain gardens, rain barrels, native plantings, and tree plantings.

Mike Novotny provided public comment and identified himself as an ADU builder who works extensively in Arlington. He said he was encouraged by the Commission's questions about ADUs but was concerned about the potential effect of the proposed impervious-area limits. He said the lower and middle proposed bands could be lower than the existing lot-coverage allowances for many R5 and R6 properties. He explained that impervious area is broader than lot coverage because it can include walkways, patios, pools, and other surfaces. He said he often works with existing homes where there is enough lot coverage under the current rules to add an ADU, but the additional impervious surfaces could make the project infeasible under the proposed limits. He expressed particular concern about the proposed caps for larger parcels, which he said are often among the properties most suitable for ADUs. He said he was not convinced that a bonus or exception would necessarily solve the problem because an existing property could already be close to its limit before accounting for pathways, patios, or other features. He suggested that staff consider whether detached ADUs should be excluded from the impervious-area calculation, noting their relatively small, permitted footprints. He urged the County to avoid creating a situation in which homeowners begin planning an ADU without realizing that a new impervious-area rule could prevent the project.

Fair Housing Plan – Information

Kellen MacBeth said the Commission changed this item from an action item to an information item and plans to have it as an action item in October. He explained that he had compiled a tracker of the 71 goals and sub-goals in the Regional Fair Housing Plan. He said he had previously asked County staff to update the tracker with the County's own implementation information, but that request was declined.

He said the Commission has information from various briefings and conversations indicating that some goals have progressed while others have not. He said the upcoming changes to the Office of Human Rights was another reason to postpone formal action until October. He also noted that the Commission has repeatedly written to the County Board about fair housing but that many recommendations have not resulted in action.

Joe Ventrone said the Commission should avoid trying to concentrate on all 71 goals. He recommended focusing on the issues that are most important. He specifically identified homeownership and voucher utilization as areas that appeared underdeveloped in the tracker and closely connected to the Fair Housing Plan. He said he would follow up with his recommendations in writing.

Kellen MacBeth explained that the original tracker was created with the expectation that staff would update it. He said staff subsequently indicated that updating the entire tracker would require too much staff time and that the Commission should identify specific issues it wanted updates on. He said he understood that staff are stretched thin but expressed frustration that the Commission has difficulty determining what recommendations should be prioritized when it lacks current implementation information. He suggested that the Commission request a synthesized update rather than attempting to track every goal individually.

Bryan Coleman said the underlying problem is not necessarily the length of the list. He said that when the Commission narrows the list to a few headline items, those items can still get pushed aside; when the Commission provides the entire list, it can become too burdensome. He said the more important issue is ensuring that the County Board and staff follow through with the recommendations and make the recommendations a priority. He suggested the Commission think intentionally about how to use its role to obtain follow-through.

Kellen MacBeth said he believes the Commission's sustained advocacy and advice have contributed to changes the County has made on fair housing. He said the process has nevertheless been frustratingly slow. He identified the County's Office of Human Rights as an area where the County has taken too long to acknowledge and address structural problems. He raised the **"**Golden Girls" policy—removing the restrictive definition of family in zoning—as an example of a recommendation that the Commission has repeatedly raised without seeing action. He noted that Fairfax and Alexandria have made similar changes and that the County's own fair-housing planning documents identify the issue as a goal. He said County Board members generally appear to agree with the policy but no Board member has yet taken responsibility for championing it.

Bryan Coleman suggested that the Commission identify its top five priorities and determine which County Board members might be receptive to championing them. He said the Commission should use its available influence more strategically rather than simply continuing to repeat recommendations.

Kellen MacBeth clarified that the Commission's role is primarily advisory. He said the Commission can recommend, meet with Board members, and strongly communicate its views, but does not have the same advocacy tools as outside organizations. He said the Commission could nevertheless use focused priorities and subcommittees to concentrate its work.

Karen Serfis suggested that the Commission establish aspirational deadlines for some longstanding recommendations. She specifically suggested setting a target date for action on the "Golden Girls" policy.

Kellen MacBeth said the Commission cannot enforce a deadline but could recommend that the Board commit to a target date. He said the Commission's existing tracker could be used to show:

- What the Commission has asked the County to do.
- What the County has completed.
- What the County has expressed interest in doing but has not completed.

He said making that status information clearer to the public could also help outside advocates understand where issues stand. He said the Commission could ask the Board to establish a target date for completion of longstanding priorities.

Jason Schwartz said focusing on a smaller number of specific items could make the Commission more effective. He used the low-residential study as an example of an issue that received strong attention from other County advisory bodies. He suggested that concentrating on a few priorities, while coordinating with outside advocacy, could create greater leverage.

Kellen MacBeth agreed that focused work could be useful. He explained that they have previously used subcommittees to concentrate the Commission's work. He noted that even establishing subcommittees can require coordination with the County Board. He said the Commission has limited authority because it serves at the pleasure of the Board, but it can still have meaningful influence. He offered the low-residential study and Homeownership Study as examples where he had specifically requested briefings so the Commission could understand and comment on issues that otherwise might not have come before it.

Kellen MacBeth asked whether someone could brief the Commission in October on any changes to the Office of Human Rights. He also asked whether the Fair Housing Plan and Affordable Housing Master Plan implementation updates could be moved to October rather than waiting until November. Staff said they would follow up on these requests.

Development Updates – Information

Staff reported that loan documents for the Barcroft 5th renovation phase were going to the County Board in September. Staff said construction was expected to begin in October if approved. Staff also reported that the Boston Park and Buckingham Commercial Area Planning Study remained on track to begin in fall 2026.

- View the Development Updates here.

Subcommittee Reports – Information

Kellen MacBeth said the first IPHAS subcommittee's meeting had not yet occurred and was expected in October.

Jason Schwartz gave an update on the Climate Action Plan meeting. He discussed ongoing climate-policy work and the need to consider housing affordability and equity alongside environmental goals.

Karen Serfis volunteered to serve as the Housing Commission's representative to CDCAC, as she is no longer a recipient of CDCAC funds.

Kellen MacBeth reported that the scheduled TLC Subcommittee on the Human Rights Ordinance and Housing meeting had been canceled because there was no quorum. He said the prior meeting had included a briefing from the Office of Human Rights but did not produce substantially new information. He said the subcommittee continues to ask about possible changes to the Human Rights Ordinance and has received general responses that the County is always willing to consider improvements. He

expressed frustration that the Commission has been providing the same feedback for years without clear movement.

Staff reported that the AHOWG was underway and the County Board's newly established working group will be examining the affordable housing ordinance and future amendment process.

Meeting adjourned at **9:55pm**.