

## **Wrap up of the 2007 session for the Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition (MAHC)**

1. We convinced the Governor to restore and add additional funds AFTER the budget was announced. For those of you who know the legislative process, this is almost impossible to do. Thanks primarily to the skills of our terrific lobbyist, Barbara Hoffman, the Governor and other administrative officials were convinced that it had been an unintended mistake to budget \$5 million less this year than last for rental housing and special loan programs. Governor O'Malley came to Housing Day and personally announced that not only was the \$5 million to be restored, but he added another \$1 million to the homeownership programs for a total of \$6 million and, as a result, we have a total DHCD housing budget that exceeded last year. This was a good victory.
2. The Maryland Affordable Investment Fund (SB 644, HB 486) did not pass, despite excellent support and good legislative hearings. In the end it was doomed by the legislative leadership who decided that nothing could come out of Committees if it cost more than \$250,000. Since we were asking for \$100 million, obviously we were grounded for this year. The Governor and the Legislature want to fix the big budget deficit problems before the State takes on new financial obligations. Once that is done we expect to be very much back in the picture. It is possible that the legislature will call a special session in September/October to focus on revenue raising measures. Barbara Hoffman thinks it is not out of the question that in a special session to compensate for the pain of raising new revenues the legislature and Governor may be interested in adding some top priority new things (like the Investment Fund) to "sweeten" the package. Stay tuned, we may be back in gear sooner than expected.
3. The Local Government Enabling Legislation (SB 710, HB 784) did PASS--almost as proposed but with an important exception. We could not get the provision to waive or modify impact fees for affordable housing through the Committees. Some members dug in about the idea of giving that authority to local jurisdictions because of fears about the revenue impact on schools or other infrastructure funded by impact fees. This position frankly took us by surprise since the bill only enabled, not required, any of the local actions. But the opponents were not to be swayed, and we had to accept for this year what we could get. What we got was a bill that enables local jurisdictions to do the following to promote affordable housing: establish trust funds or appropriate fund; enact inclusionary zoning ordinances; provide land or property; and offer payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTS). Even without the impact fee provision this is an important piece of legislation that makes clear to all what local governments can do to provide affordable housing. We will be back next year with more advocacy homework done to add the waiving of impact fees to the list.
4. We had a great Housing Day. Over 50 groups cosponsored the event and 200 plus people turned out in force, even the Governor came for the first time! We had numerous key legislators stop by to express their support for the housing agenda. Most importantly all sorts of folks went to see their key legislators. We got great coverage that day and afterwards when your assorted emails and faxes put us "in their faces" (so to speak). Summary All in all a good year with real progress, nothing to regret. We did what we needed to do as the advocacy community and we got good results. The support for affordable housing as an issue now feels high profile in the General Assembly. It is politically correct to be for affordable housing. We have new allies. These are significant breakthroughs. I believe that we will get a significant housing trust fund in Maryland in the near future.

Trudy McFall

--*Legislative Chair, the Maryland Affordable Housing CoalitionHomes for America*