

The Central Virginian

Since 1912 • Serving Louisa County and Lake Anna

By Mitchell Sasser, Editor Feb 27, 2024 Updated Feb 28, 2024

Housing Foundation asks county for more funds

Executive Director Kim Hyland of the Fluvanna-Louisa Housing Foundation addressed the Board of Supervisors during a budget meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 20.

Hyland started off by sharing a philosophy of hers, the “broken windows theory,” that visible signs of disorder and misbehavior in a neighborhood encourage further disorder and misbehavior, leading to serious crimes.

Hyland stated the FLHF has five robust programs: essential home repair, accessibility ramps, home construction, affordable rental units, and financial education.

Currently, FLHF has four full time employees, with Assistant Director Lindell Chavis, Fluvanna Coordinator Wanda Armstrong, and Louisa Coordinator Annabelle Anderson. Hyland said two new positions are needed, an operations personnel to oversee construction projects and an administrative personnel to answer the volume of phone calls.

“With adding [Anderson] to our staff, it has made an enormous impact,” Hyland said. “And that is our biggest cost, funding our staff.”

Anderson helps manage all of the Louisa County home repair projects, and is involved in the process from the first phone call to the completion of the job, and everything in between. This includes getting grants and working on loan

applications. Anderson also helps manage the 22 rental properties, checking in with tenants and coordinating with contractors when issues arise. She also coordinates the ramp program and works with volunteer groups.

“One of the biggest impediments I think for Annabelle is how much time she has to spend on the phone, just the initial intake calls and walking people through the process, figuring out if we are able to help them,” Hyland said. “Having an administrative person just to answer calls and forward on the ones that have passed our initial screening onto her to actually process a grant application and a repair would be extremely beneficial. There was a point where she got up to 150 calls a day.”

Hyland said she took over the foundation around three and a half years ago.

“For operations, I’ve been wearing the hat of COO, CFO, and CEO,” Hyland said. “To have somebody come in and help with our major construction projects, oversight of some of our programming would be extremely beneficial to me, so I’m freed up to manage the day to day operations of the overall organization, make sure our finances are kept neat and tidy.”

Hyland said a goal in the community is to take down some of the dilapidated homes that are beyond repair and rebuild them, but there is an impediment.

“There are funds we can access to do things like that, but we can’t do it without personnel to administer,” Hyland said.

Hyland highlighted the significant contributions of the FLHF last year, which included 125 home repairs, \$282,000 awarded in grant, a \$300,000 grant to provide septic and well assistance, acquisition of land in Louisa for 25 Senior and workforce homes, acquisition of land in Fork Union to build 17 senior units, and 44 ramp projects.

In Louisa, Hyland said FLHF has performed repairs and done replacements for 12 roofs, 11 HVAC units, 27 plumbing/well/septic repairs, among other repairs.

Hyland said FLHF has been able to complete 55 projects with a total cost of \$190,506. 53% of repairs were funded with grants. She said without staff to assist homeowners in the application process, the funds would not be received by the residents.

“As we added staff, I think you can really see the impact we’ve been able to create in the counties,” Hyland said. “This doesn’t happen without Annabelle actually going through the process with people and meeting with them, going to their homes. It’s very time consuming and labor intensive.”

Hyland said FLHF is raising funds for new ramps, but demand is still outpacing supply. The average cost is \$3,500 per location, and she said they are currently trying to increase the number of volunteers involved. Hyland said there are about 200 ramps in the community.

The budget is shifting from \$1,000,000 to \$3,300,000, and Hyland said they are asking the county to invest in FLHF, because FLHF has invested in the community with residents receiving direct benefits.

There was an increase to \$45,000 for FLHF funding from Louisa County in 2024. There was a slight decrease in 2010 to \$25,650, but the budget has largely remained stagnant.

“I know we’re asking for a lot,” Hyland said. “We will continue to cannibalize our own funds if we don’t have the county supporting us in what we are doing.”

Hyland said Louisa should increase funding because of driving land and housing costs, the current housing crisis, and the lack of turnover with aging populations “staying in place.”

“Everybody has their eye on Louisa county, they love it, it’s a great place to live,” Hyland said. “But land and housing prices have dramatically increased in the past few years.”

Hyland said they have increased their community outreach, and people who need their services knew about FLHF, but the larger community was unaware. On April 6, Southern Revere will have a 5K and 10K to benefit FLHF.

Hyland said she sees the budget as an adjustment, not an increase.

“This is something where I believe we have been underfunded for many years,” Hyland said. “I think [BoS] needs to think of us as more like they do some other nonprofits like JABA or Jaunt that have significant funding. With the housing crisis going on, so much of the burden has fallen on our organization and we are not receiving appropriate funding for the level of work we are doing.”