



FLORIDA HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION ADVISORY COMMITTEES ASSESSMENT

JANUARY 2009

Report No. 09-S16

Scope

The Florida Government Accountability Act directs OPPAGA to review state agencies and their advisory committees, examine their costs, and evaluate their operations.¹ As part of our review, we examined the Affordable Housing Study Commission, the one advisory committee of the Florida Housing Finance Corporation, to assess its purposes, activities, related costs, and need for continuation. Our review addressed the following questions to determine its purpose, effectiveness, and public accessibility.²

- Why was the advisory committee created and has it fulfilled its specific purpose?
- Does the advisory committee's advice and support significantly contribute to the agency's mission?
- Are advisory committee members representative of the public and stakeholders affected by its actions and can the public readily access advisory committee proceedings, materials, and products?

Background

The Florida Housing Finance Corporation, a public corporation of the State of Florida located within the Department of Community Affairs, is the state's housing finance agency that administers federal and state resources to finance the

development of affordable homeowner and rental housing and assist homebuyers.

In Fiscal Year 2007-08, the corporation reported having one advisory committee, the Affordable Housing Study Commission, which was established by statute. The Florida Housing Finance Corporation reported that the commission incurred travel, staff, and other expenses totaling \$118,000 in Fiscal Year 2007-08.

Assessment and Recommendations

In assessing the corporation's advisory committee, we considered criteria including the intended purpose of the committee and if it had fulfilled that purpose, if it is effective in contributing to the corporation's mission, if committee members are representative of the public and stakeholders affected by its actions, and public accessibility to the committee.

We concluded that while the department's advisory committee was not created to provide advice to the department, it serves a public purpose by providing opportunities for stakeholder input or expertise. In addition, the committee performs activities that are consistent with legislative intent and are related to the corporation's mission to support the development of affordable housing in the state.

Based on our assessment of the the Affordable Housing Study Commission, we recommend that the Legislature

Continue

- Affordable Housing Study Commission

For more detailed information on our assessment and recommendations, please see Exhibit 1.

¹ Sections 11.901-11.920, *F.S.*

² Included in our review were advisory committees that the division was directed to include in its Agency Report to the Sunset Committee. These included advisory committees established in statute or by managerial initiative and defined in ss. 20.03 (3), (7), (8), (9), (10), and (12), *F.S.* The statutory definitions include commissions that exercise limited powers independently of the head of the department and boards of trustees that serve as an adjunct to a department to administer a public program.

Exhibit 1

The Florida Housing Finance Corporation Had One Advisory Committee in Fiscal Year 2007-08

Affordable Housing Study Commission

Fiscal Year 2007-08 ■ Cost: \$118,000 ■ Authorization: Statutory, created in 1986, s.420.609, F.S.

Purpose: Florida Statutes mandate that the Affordable Housing Study Commission analyzes solutions and programs which could begin to address the state's need for housing for the homeless; for very-low-income, low-income, and moderate-income persons; and for elderly persons, including programs or proposals which provide for:

- Offering low-interest and zero-interest loans for the development or rehabilitation of housing;
- Use of publicly owned lands and buildings as affordable housing sites;
- Coordination with federal initiatives, including development of an approved housing strategy;
- Streamlining the various state, regional, and local regulations, and housing and building codes governing the housing industry;
- Stimulation of public and private cooperative housing efforts;
- Implementation or expansion of the programs authorized in this chapter;
- Discovery and assessment of funding sources for low-cost housing construction and rehabilitation; and
- Development of such other solutions and programs as the commission deems appropriate.

The commission also reviews, evaluates, and makes recommendations regarding existing and proposed housing programs and initiatives. The commission provides these and any other housing recommendations to the secretary of the Department of Community Affairs, the Legislature, the governor, and the executive director of the corporation.

Effectiveness: The Florida Housing Finance Corporation reports that it relies on the in-depth studies of current state housing policy concerns and annual reports produced by the Affordable Housing Study Commission to help make informed policy decisions and recommendations to the Legislature for changes in statutory provisions. Recommendations from the commission have been used to make changes to program policies and develop requests for statutory changes by the Legislature.

Public Access: Currently, there are 21 commission members that represent various stakeholders, including elders, people living in rural areas, and local government. Commissioners serve two year terms, with about half cycling off every two years. In Fiscal Year 2007-08, the commission met five times. The commission chooses its own work topics, with input from the public and interested parties. In addition, the commission holds a stakeholders' meeting in conjunction with the Florida Housing Coalition's annual conference to encourage further input from interested parties on the commission's current topics.

Assessment: Annual reports issued by the commission provide useful information to the Florida Housing Finance Corporation. For example, the commission's 2007 annual report included findings and recommendations concerning the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program that were used by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to recommend statutory revisions by the Legislature.

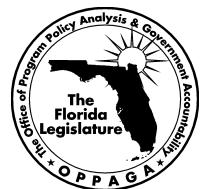
Recommendations: The Florida Affordable Housing Study Commission should be continued.

The Florida Government Accountability Act Sunset Reviews

The 2006 Legislature passed the Florida Government Accountability Act (Ch. 2006-146, *Laws of Florida*) to create a Sunset review process. The act

- establishes the process, criteria, and schedule for the Legislature to assess whether state agencies and advisory committees need to continue to exist;
- provides for the creation of a Legislative Sunset Advisory Committee and describes the membership and organization of the committee and committee duties; and
- requires reports and assistance from state agencies and the Legislature's Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA).

Using these reports and other information, the Sunset Advisory Committee is to produce a report that includes recommendations to abolish, continue, or reorganize an agency or advisory committee under review.



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