



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board August 6, 2019

Board Members Present: Rebecca Noell, Joe Stockburger, Jim Corson, Jessica Schmidt, Katrina Kruger, Bret Rutherford, Council Member Denise Joy

Board Members Excused: Laura Gittings-Carlson

Staff Present: Brenda Beckett, Dina Harmon, Tam Rodier

Welcome / Introductions / Announcements: The Community Development (CD) Board met in the 6th Floor Conference Room, Miller Building, 2825 3rd Avenue North, Billings, Montana. Board member Rebecca Noell, called the meeting to order at approximately 3:00pm. There are still two CD Board positions available.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Meeting Minutes: Board member Jim Corson moved to approve the May meeting minutes and the motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Staff Reports:

- **First Time Home Buyer Program:** The program is up and running and there are 12 closings scheduled to close next week. A Board member asked about the City's investment for homebuyers and there is a \$10,000 loan available through the Community Development Block Grant homebuyer program and \$15,000 through the HOME Investment Partnerships program.
- **Affordable Housing Development:** The properties are now available for FTHB clients to view. A Board member asked about the Sage Towers development. The project was sold and the City was repaid a total of \$150,000 in HOME funds, which will be reprogrammed into the next fiscal year for the First Time Home Buyer program.
- **Foreclosure Acquisition / Housing Rehabilitation Program:** The 19th Street project has successfully been sold to a low income homeowner. The buildings on the Steffanich property will most likely be demolished. A Request for Proposal will be issued for demolition. A Board member asked about getting more than one unit on the Steffanich property. Staff noted that two units could be developed on the lot without a zone change.
- **Housing Rehabilitation:** One new loan was closed prior to the end of the fiscal year. Several applicants were over income last month and their loan applications were denied. Construction is underway at four homes and three homeowners continue to seek bids. In response to a Board member's question, staff reviewed the process for a homeowner to disagree with staff's decision to deny an application; homeowners can always appeal to the Community Development Board and then to the City Council for a final determination.
- **Billings-Metro VISTA Project:** Staff on-boarded eight VISTA members in July and one will be brought on board in August. Staff noted a VISTA alum will be sworn into service with the Billings Police Department in September. Board members and City staff noted what an amazing accomplishment this is - and Council member Joy said that new officers traditionally are presented to the City Council. A board member noted that another VISTA alum will be leaving employment with Channel 7 television to start a master's degree program.

AmeriCorps VISTA Update: Beckett relayed information regarding the VISTA Convening she attended in late July in Orlando, Florida. She also reviewed events surrounding the Transformation and Sustainability Plan that is being implemented by the Corporation of National and Community Service (CNCS). This included a new criminal background and fingerprint check process for City staff members, new performance measures, and new guidance on the eGrants system and warnings about noncompliance. The plan also includes closing all of the state field offices, opening regional field offices, and eliminating large numbers of CNCS staff members. The Montana field office has been closed and CNCS staff is teleworking until November - when they will be laid off completely. Beckett noted that the City was approved for an 18 month grant just prior to the CD Board meeting commencing.

A CD Board member asked about the number of VISTA members the City has on board at present. Although it seems as though we have a smaller number of members serving, it's really due to timing. We have a good applicant pool for the VISTA positions available.

A Board member asked about the location for the regional office for the Billings Metro VISTA Project, and staff noted that it will be located in Denver.

Review Allocation Process: An opportunity for the Board to offer input about the allocations process in preparation for the next fiscal year. Staff noted that work will need to begin this fall on the five-year Consolidated Plan, which takes about 400 hours to write and edit.

A Board member noted that it's been a couple of years since the Board went to the Task Force meetings and suggested outreach occur again this year. Task Forces are mentioned frequently at the City Council meetings. Council member Joy noted recent experience in attendance at various Task Force meetings. Staff noted that the most helpful information provided related to the home buyer / repair programs, and several Board members agreed. The Board also noted that the Task Force leadership training, organized by Wyeth Friday, was very beneficial to everyone. The Board member graciously volunteered to garner the most recent Task Force contact list from the Planning & Community Services Department and to contact Task Forces (sometime after Labor Day) to schedule CD Board member visits.

September Meeting: Board member Katrina Krueger moved to cancel the September meetings; the motion was seconded. A vote was taken and approved unanimously.

Neighborhood Concerns and Happenings:

- Jim Corson noted some interesting articles on housing that have been recently published in the Missoulian.
- Council member Joy said she has seen issues with housing affordability in many places nationwide, including over-crowding, and eviction. She also discussed the affordability of housing in Bozeman, how complicated the building process is, and how difficult it can be to find contractors. She noted that we will just continue to work at making an impact in affordable housing.

Next Meeting: Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at 4:15pm. The next meeting will be held on October 1, 2019.