



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

### Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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#### Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board

July 7, 2020

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

**Board Members Excused:** Laura Gittings-Carlson

**Staff Present:** Brenda Beckett, Dina Harmon, Tam Rodier, Carly Collins, Wyeth Friday

**Welcome / Introductions / Announcements:** The Community Development (CD) Board met via virtual videoconference as scheduled. Board Chair, Rebecca Noell, called the meeting to order at approximately 3:00pm.

**Public Comment:** No additional public comment.

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

#### Staff Reports:

- **Foreclosure Acquisition / Housing Rehabilitation Program:** The Request for Proposals on the 930 Steffanich property continue to be advertised on the City website and will remain open until a contract can be executed. No submissions have been made to date. It was discussed that this development may be of interest to a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) like Homeward or NeighborWorks. The inspection results at the 1219 12<sup>th</sup> St. W property indicated a need for extensive repairs and remediation. CD staff chose to back out of the deal. Earnest money was returned. HUD did ask for a copy of the inspection report, so CD staff is hoping that they reduce the asking price, as it has been vacant for several years. If price is lowered, CD staff may be looking at submitting another purchase offer. CD Staff offered to share pictures with the Board if requested.
- **Housing Rehabilitation:** One new application was submitted in June. One project is still under construction but moving slowly due to concerns surrounding COVID-19. Three preliminary projects are currently approved and ongoing. CD Staff received two inquiries that referred to the June Tidbits ad. These resulted in CD Staff receiving a new application as well as approving a new contractor for future projects.
- **First Time Homebuyer Program:** CD Staff reports receiving applications for the program almost daily. Funds are currently committed to several households that will close at the end of July or early August. No new households will be approved until after July 15<sup>th</sup> due to processes that occur at the end of the Fiscal Year. CD Staff will resume with application processing once funding is released and allocated accordingly.
- **Affordable Housing Development:** The infrastructure improvement project at the C & C Resident Owned Community (ROC) is moving forward. NeighborWorks has signed an initial engineering agreement with Sanderson Stewart.
- **Billings-Metro VISTA Project:** CD Staff continues to recruit new VISTA members for full-year service terms beginning in August 2020 and will continue to do so for another week or two – the deadline is July 24<sup>th</sup>. Five new VISTA members began service yesterday, July 6<sup>th</sup>. Five additional candidates are confirmed for the August 17<sup>th</sup> start date. Board Member, Katrina Kruger asked that CD Staff send out bios and introductions of all VISTA members.

**Additional Report on Foreclosure Acquisition / Rehab Property:** The bid opening for the 817 N 22<sup>nd</sup> Street project was held June 23<sup>rd</sup>. The City Council must take action on the bids within two weeks of the bid opening. CD Staff

will attend the City Council meeting July 13<sup>th</sup> to discuss the project. The CD Board does not need to make a recommendation on the bid award because it is a policy and advisory board only. CD staff noted that the City Administrator has been granted the authority to execute maximum contracts by City Council Resolution.

One qualified bid was submitted, but it exceeded staff estimates. CD staff will request that City Council reject all bids. This will allow CD staff to negotiate project scope and costs with the contractor. Some potential reasons for the high contractor bid are because there is no alley access and the project includes the installation of new fencing, tree removal, and tree trimming. If these issues are not addressed, this could become a code enforcement issue that would be costly to address. CD Staff is committed to ensuring completed projects do not become a liability or require too much maintenance for a new homeowner. Board Chair, Rebecca Noell, asked if there might be a way to separate tree removal/maintenance from the project, proposing that perhaps another City department could provide these services. CD staff responded that the CD Division has been billed by other departments for their services in the past and that it has generally been less expensive to contract with private businesses. However, CD Staff agreed it is worth looking into other options for fencing or different contractors, if needed. Wyeth expressed it may be worth checking with City forestry for additional contracting options or potential discounts on bulk buying materials. CD Staff will follow up.

**Consolidated Plan Submittal & Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) COVID-19 / CARES Act Fund:** Brenda shared that the Consolidated Plan was submitted to HUD on June 29<sup>th</sup>. HUD has a new representative that CD Staff will be working with, and they are responding promptly to inquiries. Brenda is hopeful that new fiscal year funds are released soon so that CD Staff can continue processing applications, especially for the First Time Homebuyer Program.

Tam presented additional concepts regarding the needs-assessment survey for CARES Act fund allocation. CD Staff will request survey responses from social service agencies as well as individuals/families. CD Staff continues to review various ways to survey people, as they must ensure that answers are coming from low-income households (which could be 20,000 families in Billings). Distribution methods may include a water bill mailer, advertisement in Tidbits, hard-copy or online surveys at public health agencies, and / or individual hard-copy or online surveys. CD Staff is also hopeful to bring on a new VISTA member to assist with the data collection and assessment processes as well as to form partnerships with other agencies that may assist. The Board was asked to continue sharing any other ideas for survey related questions or methods.

Brenda shared that she recently spoke with state officials who noted that the most significant need at this time is support for staff costs. There may also be a need for some facility changes (at specialized care facilities for example) such as visitation rooms that are more easily sanitized and separated from others or even additional technology resources to lessen concerns stemming from social isolation. There is also discussion of the need to gather more comprehensive data from local community members about whether job / income loss in the hospitality sector has increased the need for public assistance. Data is revealing that this correlation is apparent in other areas of the country.

Brenda reminded the Board that CD Staff must ensure that we have methods in place to determine avoidance of duplication for federal, state, and local funding. HUD is still advising that agencies wait to move forward until there is more guidance. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) has continued to issue findings on duplication, so agencies that may be in competition for this funding will likely have to sign an affidavit that states it is not duplicated funding. If duplication is determined, agencies will be made aware that funds will have to be repaid to the City. Wyeth mentioned that this process presents challenges and will take time, as we must be clear about what current funding sources are available versus what funding gaps exist. RiverStone Health will be able to share their findings in relation to this concern. Wyeth discussed that even with gaps, there may even be some reimbursement eligible activities, so we will have to determine if they will eventually be filled or if there are other needs.

**Review Allocation Process:** Brenda reviewed with the Board that the application process began in December. Other than the infrastructure improvement project at the C & C ROC, there were no other competitive

applications submitted this year. Brenda called on the Board to share any changes that they propose for the allocation process. No changes were suggested at this time.

**Neighborhood Concerns and Happenings:** Board member, Jim Corson, reminded the CD Board of the South Side Gardener's Market and how well they continue to operate while following health related guidelines.

Board member, Bret Rutherford, reminded everyone that today is election day.

Council Member, Denise Joy, shared with the CD Board that City Council received an update last night on COVID-19 data in Yellowstone County. It indicated that every person that tests positive for coronavirus likely spreads it to 5-10 additional people. She expressed that the health concerns in our area are far from over, so waiting on additional guidance for the CARES Act funding allocations will be more impactful on our community.

Wyeth shared that Project Re:Code efforts are moving forward. Staff is currently determining how to hold a public meeting and comment for testimony to use in City Council and with County Commissioners, but they will be holding some hybrid meetings on three different topics from July 21<sup>st</sup> – July 23<sup>rd</sup>. Wyeth will ensure CD Board members receive information regarding these meetings.

**Next Meeting:** Board Chair, Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:00pm. The next meeting will be held on August 4, 2020.