



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board August 4, 2020

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

Board Members Excused: Bret Rutherford, Katrina Kruger

Staff Present: 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 Safety Mill Levy: Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator presented on the proposed Public Safety Mill Levy. Ballots will be mailed out August 28th and will be due September 15th. Mr. Iffland proposed that the repeal and replace mill levy is to retain the status quo in public safety as well as prepare for future public safety needs. He indicated that expenditures are currently exceeding revenues in the general public safety fund. A website has been created so that others may seek additional information at www.billingsmt.gov/ps2020. Kevin and Chris Kukulski, City Administrator, are scheduling community presentations and can arrange for more, if requested.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Meeting Minutes: Board member, Jim Corson, moved to approve the July 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.

On the property at 817 N 22nd Street, staff reduced the project scope and requested revised quotes for some line items, which resulted in a lower total project quote. Some changes to the contract included demolition of the rear patio cover with a concrete patio finish, reduction to the number of trees removed with an increase to the amount of tree trimming, and installation of a chain-link fence instead of a 6' cedar fence. The Construction Agreement has been executed, and work has begun.

- **Housing Rehabilitation:** One new application was received in July. One project is still under construction but moving slowly due to concerns surrounding COVID-19. Four preliminarily approved projects are currently moving forward toward loan closings.
- **First Time Homebuyer Program:** CD Staff reports receiving multiple applications per day. Council Member Denise Joy asked about the increase in applications. CD Staff indicated that this is a yearly trend, as realtors and lenders tend to refer more frequently during this time of year because of past knowledge of new funding. Funds are now managed more equally and disbursed more evenly throughout the year, but the trend of increased applications has continued.
- **Affordable Housing Development:** The infrastructure improvement project at the C & C Resident Owned Community (ROC) is moving forward. Sanderson Stewart finished their on-site survey work and agreements are in routing. Board member, Jim Corson, asked whether the funding is provided up front or if it is a reimbursement process. CD Staff assured the Board that it is a reimbursement agreement.

- **Billings-Metro VISTA Project:** CD Staff will cease recruitment for new VISTA members in the next week, as 6 additional candidates are confirmed for the August 17th start date, and there will likely be some additional slots filled for the August 31st start date. VISTA Leader, Isabel Keddy-Hector, sat in on today's meeting, and was introduced to the group. Her role as a VISTA Leader was discussed.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) COVID-19 / CARES Act Fund: Wyeth shared that discussions with RiverStone Health are continuing. He noted the need for this funding to primarily benefit low-income families and individuals. He explained the range of funding that can be accessed and utilized in our community in order to avoid duplication. No further guidance from HUD has been issued, but Brenda is hopeful it will be released later this month.

Tam reviewed her drafted surveys for the needs assessment. Surveys will be available to individuals and families via Survey Monkey. They will also be available as hard-copy surveys through social service providers, in a water bill mailer, at City Hall, the Library, Gardener's Market, etc. CD Board members shared their thoughts on the length of the survey, details about demographic data needs, ideas on condensing household information questions, and using churches to distribute surveys as well. Tam will review and assess in the next review process.

Service provider surveys will be distributed via Survey Monkey, online advertisement(s), email blasts, and as hard-copy surveys. CD Board members provided feedback and suggestions for improvement including what is meant by "service providers," contacting United Way for additional outreach efforts, engaging local social service coalitions, and leaving room for open-ended questions. Tam expressed that open-ended question responses can be difficult to analyze when specific measures are not set, but she and CD Staff will assess, and update as appropriate.

Neighborhood Concerns and Happenings: Board member, Jim Corson, reminded the CD Board that the HUB will be closing. He also reported the Mental Health Center will be advertising for a new Executive Director, as the current Director is retiring at the end of the year.

Council Member, Denise Joy, asked CD staff if affordable housing developers approach the City for new projects, as this came up during a City Council meeting. Wyeth expressed that the City sometimes hears from them when it comes to funding sources or state requirements for environmental reviews. He explained that there is also a state CDBG program that the CD office is not involved with, so staff reviews these inquiries carefully. It often depends on the type of project and how they are moving forward or if a partnership is already established with the CD office. Tam expressed that she has written letters of support for a few projects in the past.

Rebecca shared that she would like further discussion on how the rollback of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule will impact CD efforts. For example, will this affect how we measure our own community data, how we continue to be fair and equitable, and how we ensure that low-income housing is not concentrated in one area. Wyeth shared that he and Brenda will continue to sort through these changes.

Next Meeting: Board Chair, Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:00pm. The next meeting will be held on September 1, 2020.