



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board

September 1, 2020

Board Members Present: Rebecca Noell, Joe Stockburger, Katrina Kruger, Jim Corson, Jessica Schmidt, Shane Noble, Bret Rutherford

Board Members Excused: Council Member Denise Joy, Hannah Olson, Laura Gittings-Carlson

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 Comment: No public comment.

Meeting Minutes: Board member, Jim Corson, moved to approve the August meeting minutes with noted corrections from Katrina Kruger. 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. Board Chair, Rebecca Noell, proposed a question about expenditure deadlines for this project. Brenda Beckett indicated that the project will follow HUD's demolition / disposition timeline. Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDO) are aware of the Steffanich property already, but if there are no proposals submitted within the next several months, the Division may explore the option of using HOME funds to encourage a CHDO such as NeighborWorks or HOMEward to take on the project.. Tam Rodier specified that the property is zoned for a single family or duplex structure and the Division will encourage the development of homeownership units, as rental properties would require ongoing monitoring.
Construction at the 817 N 22nd Street property is ongoing and progressing as scheduled.
- **Housing Rehabilitation:** Two new applications were received in August. One project is still under construction but moving slowly due to concerns surrounding COVID-19. Four additional projects are currently moving forward toward possible loan closings.
- **First Time Homebuyer Program:** Dina Harmon reported that the program is still receiving numerous applications every week and indicated that funding assistance may become more limited. Two applications are pending closure within the next two to three weeks. Housing trends in Billings are also exposing the need for more affordable housing. There are significantly less housing options that are listed for less than \$200,000, which is also a concern.
- **Billings-Metro VISTA Project:** Carly Collins reported that four additional members started service terms yesterday. The project is focusing on supporting a significantly larger group this year, and the VISTA Leader will be instrumental in shaping this effort. Staff is currently working on Host Site recruitment for VISTA member placements beginning in January 2021. Host sites and position descriptions will likely be finalized in October, and VISTA member recruitment will begin. A VISTA member is experiencing some housing issues, and the CD Board was asked to share any leads on housing opportunities.

AmeriCorps VISTA Member Update / Parkland Gleaning with Billings Parks & Recreation: VISTA Member Emma Shenton began a VISTA service term at Billings Parks & Recreation in February 2020. Emma shared details regarding her VISTA project assignment including the history of the project, current efforts, and how she envisions future gleaning efforts. Emma has updated fallingfruit.org with local data and is currently recruiting volunteers to help with gleaning, weeding, planting, and tree species verification. Emma is developing volunteer guides and shared that volunteers can be involved as needed or long-term, which includes the option to "adopt a park" and schedule their own gleaning or donation events. Emma is also creating outreach guides and a donation recipient list which currently includes thirteen organizations. Katrina Kruger provided contact information for a scout's volunteer program, and Shane Noble suggested additional outreach to schools and universities may be beneficial.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) COVID-19 / CARES Act Fund: Additional guidance from HUD has been released. The emphasis is still that services / funding cannot be duplicated and there must be a normal procurement process prior to allocation. There will likely need to be some subrecipient training on use of funds. The current guidance heavily references other guidance, so staff is sorting through this. Ideally, CD staff is hoping to receive applications for funding in early December so that it can be rolled into regular application / allocation process for the CD Division.

Tam Rodier shared that the community member surveys have been printed and will start going out in water bill mailers on Friday, September 4. Tam will be contacting service providers, approaching community members at events such as the Gardener's Market, and working to reach community members in rental situations. The online community member survey has also been finalized and will be sent out to the CD Board. The service provider survey has been printed. VISTA members will help create a final provider distribution list as well as create and manage survey collection and data analysis. Once results are determined, findings will be presented to the CD Board to review any potential gaps and start prioritizing funding needs. City Council will need to approve funding allocations, and then staff will amend the Annual Action Plan.

Neighborhood Concerns and Happenings:

Wyeth Friday shared information on the timeline of the Project Re:Code rollout. Wyeth shared that staff is scheduling some common regulatory meetings and is looking at making a formal recommendation to City Council and County Commissioners in October / November.

Wyeth also shared that CD Board may have heard of a proposed housing project on Jackson Street. Wyeth shared that this project is seeking state CDBG funding, not local CDBG funding. There is a public interest meeting tomorrow at Optimist Park, and likely a presentation with City Council next week. CD staff has contacts with developing entities but are not currently involved in this project.

Board member, Bret Rutherford, reminded the CD Board that the City's Public Mill Levy ballots have been mailed, and asked everyone to please return ballots by September 15.

Rebecca shared that she would like to know if the rollback of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule will impact CD efforts in Billings. Brenda shared that HUD is still supporting fair housing choice and not excluding people with specific income. Brenda shared that the Montana Department of Commerce is taking the lead on the state's Analysis of Impediments (AI) to Fair Housing Choice, however she will share the highlights of the AI findings from Billings at the next CD Board meeting.

Next Meeting: Board Chair, Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:00pm. The next meeting will be held on October 6, 2020.