



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board October 6, 2020

Board Members Present: Rebecca Noell, Joe Stockburger, Katrina Kruger, Jim Corson, Jessica Schmidt, Shane Noble, Bret Rutherford, Hannah Olson, 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 public comment.

Meeting Minutes: Board member, Jim Corson, moved to approve the September meeting minutes. Board member, Bret Rutherford, 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. Staff will continue to explore and discuss how to move the project forward if no proposals are received within the next several months.

Construction at the 817 N 22nd Street property in ongoing and progressing as scheduled.

- **Housing Rehabilitation:** One new application was received in September. One project is still under construction, but moving slowly due to concerns surrounding COVID-19. A few other projects are moving forward toward possible loan closings.
- **First Time Homebuyer Program:** The program is receiving applications daily. Staff indicated that funding is still limited and there may need to be use of program repayments soon. Thirteen applications are pending closure for October and early November.

The NeighborWorks project at the C & C Resident Owned Community (ROC) is moving forward. Two small reimbursements have been submitted for general engineering work. There have been no visible infrastructure updates completed, though progress is being made.

- **Billings-Metro VISTA Project:** Staff has been discussing Host Site health, safety, and cleaning protocols with members as well as facilitating discussions among the group. B-MVP staff is also working to ensure that Host Site Supervisors are provided with training and meeting opportunities so that we can all be thinking about how to support VISTA members going into the winter months. New position listings for VISTA members starting in January 2021 should be finalized and posted within the next couple of weeks. One VISTA member did early terminate from service last month; however, she was hired full-time at her Host Site.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) COVID-19 / CARES Act Fund: Additional funding was awarded to the City of Billings last month bringing the total award to \$909,126. CD staff has also received supplementary guidance from HUD regarding funding allocation, amendments to the Annual Action Plan, and monitoring specifics.

Staff shared an update on the Community Member and Service Provider surveys that were sent out; survey responses will be used to develop a community needs assessment. So far, 1,679 Community Member surveys have been completed online. Returned hard-copy surveys continue to be entered into the database. The survey deadline was September 30th; however, surveys will continue to be accepted and entered as long as they are received. So far, 11 out of 80 Service Provider Surveys have been returned.

VISTA Members, Amber Nichols and Blake Matthews, introduced themselves to the group and reviewed some survey data gathered so far. They both serve on the Coronavirus Response Initiative VISTA project. For low-income respondents, the most significant impact of the coronavirus pandemic to date has been decreased income. A large percentage of respondents also indicate a lack of mental health resources. VISTA members plan to develop and post regular survey updates to the City website. This will include links to local mental health resources as well as unbiased, regularly updated COVID-19 statistics, per many respondent requests. A link to the webpage will be shared with CD Board members following the meeting. Survey results will be made public once finalized.

Staff will be developing the CDBG-CV grant application process that will be released concurrently with the CD Division's annual Affordable Housing Development application process. Next steps will include publicly advertising the grant application process and the CD Board's review and feedback of prioritized fund activities. Staff will then amend the Annual Action Plan for CD Board and City Council approvals and then submit it to HUD for approval.

Final CAPER Report Distributions & Presentation: Brenda Beckett presented the five-year impact results from the CAPER Report. The Draft CAPER was also presented via Public Hearing at the City Council's regular meeting on September 28, 2020, and Council Members Ronning and Joy provided positive comments and appreciation of the CD Board. As an overview, 289 families achieved home ownership through the First Time Home Buyer Program, 21 homes were repaired through the Housing Rehabilitation Program, and five homes were purchased through the Foreclosure Acquisition / Rehabilitation Program. Four homeownership units were developed by NeighborWorks Montana under the Affordable Housing Development Program, and over 2,700 people were assisted through AmeriCorps VISTA anti-poverty programs. The leveraging impact of the Billings Metro VISTA Project was also highlighted. VISTA Members have generated almost \$4.9 million as a result of their project efforts over the past ten years. \$2.4 million has been reinvested back into Montana communities as VISTA members live and spend their living allowances here. Since the CD Board provided input and recommendations on how to treat annual revenue within the CD Division's programs several years ago, repayment funds are now able to be reinvested into the community at a notable rate.

Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice: Report was postponed until the next CD Board meeting.

November Meeting: Due to the next regularly scheduled meeting falling on a general election day and CD staff being out of the office, the November CD Board Meeting was rescheduled for Tuesday, November 10, 2020.

Neighborhood Concerns and Happenings: Board Member, Jim Corson, inquired as to whether Council has submitted any other remarks or questions about the CDBG-CV funding. CD Staff noted that the CDBG-CV funding is now only to be used for prevention, preparation, and response to the coronavirus, not other infectious disease. They also shared that there have not been any other inquiries from Council members. Council Member Joy noted that there has not been any discussion of funding allocations yet, as there is a reluctance to commit funds when our community is seeing a rapid increase of cases and no concrete evidence on the most effective funding sources, most significant community needs, or procedures in place to monitor the funding.

Board Member, Bret Rutherford, reminded everyone that general election ballots will be sent out on Friday, October 9, 2020. He encouraged those who are mailing in ballots to return them at least a week before election day and that the election office is establishing drop sites.

Next Meeting: Board Chair, Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:00pm. The next meeting will be held on November 10, 2020.