



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

2825 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North, Billings, MT 59101 Phone: 406.657.8281 Fax: 406.294.7595 Relay: 711 [www.CityofBillings.net/ComDev](http://www.CityofBillings.net/ComDev)

### Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board May 4, 2021

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

**Board Members Excused:** Laura Gittings-Carlson, Bret Rutherford

**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 April meeting minutes. Board member, Shane Noble, seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

#### Staff Reports:

- **Foreclosure Acquisition / Housing Rehabilitation Program:** No proposals have been submitted for development at the 930 Steffanich property. Staff has started researching alternative ways to develop the property and will have more information for the Board at a future meeting.  
The property at 817 N. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street is scheduled to close the sale on May 14<sup>th</sup> to a first-time homebuyer.
- **Housing Rehabilitation:** One new application was received in April. Four projects are in various stages of the rehab process. Funding is available to assist one or two more homeowners during this fiscal year.
- **First Time Home Buyer Program (FTHB):** There is no remaining Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for the program; however, there are HOME funds available to assist approximately 25 more households. There are four closings scheduled for May and two for June.
- **Affordable Housing Development:** One bid was received for the CDBG infrastructure improvements at the C & C Resident Owned Community (ROC) through NeighborWorks. It was more than expected; however, it is understandable knowing the cost of supplies and materials at this time. Wyeth Friday expressed that there are several other City projects experiencing challenges with project costs and bids. Brenda Beckett expressed that there is also a contractor shortage, and it appears to be another ripple effect from the pandemic. NeighborWorks was faced with eliminating certain project components such as speed bumps and fire hydrants or submitting a request for additional funding. NeighborWorks chose to request additional funding.

There are remaining CDBG funds from repayments as well as for staff to purchase foreclosure properties, though there have been very few foreclosure properties available for purchase recently. It is staff's recommendation to allocate the additional funds to the NeighborWorks project. Board member, Katrina Kruger, clarified that this is a grant application, and no funds would be recouped from this project; staff confirmed this. If the CD Board recommends the additional funding allocation, it will then be presented to City Council for final approval.

Jim Corson moved to approve an allocation of 155K to NeighborWorks to complete the project. Katrina Kruger seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the funding recommendation was approved unanimously.

- **Billings-Metro VISTA Project (B-MVP):** Current members are doing well and actively working through their projects. Sixteen members will finish service this summer. There are also (16) sixteen position listings advertised for full-year AmeriCorps VISTA members starting service in July / August. As of right now, there is one member confirmed to start in July, and several other candidates in various stages of the interview process.

**AmeriCorps VISTA Member Update – Billings Metro VISTA Project Leader:** AmeriCorps VISTA Leader, Isabel Keddy-Hector, introduced herself and shared her assignment to produce legacy materials for the B-MVP. Isabel's focus for this meeting was on food security initiatives taken on by VISTA Members. She reviewed the definition of food security and statistics regarding people experiencing hunger in Billings and in Montana. Isabel discussed various VISTA projects and outcomes including community gardens, parkland gleaned, seed banks, and the development of community fridges. On average, VISTA members leverage approximately \$8,500 to support food security initiatives each year. This year alone, the Magic City Community Gardens Coalition donated 13,500 pounds of produce from community “gifting gardens” to local non-profit organizations serving low-income beneficiaries. Isabel demonstrated how AmeriCorps VISTA members continue to raise community awareness and build sustainable projects in our area.

**Community Development Block Grant COVID-19 (CDBG-CV) / CARES Act Funding:** Tam Rodier discussed that the website and applications for funding went live on April 19th. There have been inquiries from some organizations regarding technical assistance in preparation for submitting applications. Applications are due by 5pm on Friday, May 14<sup>th</sup>. Staff will be providing all of the application materials to the CD Board as well as a survey designed to help rate applications around May 17<sup>th</sup>. The ranking survey as well as an example of a final application was previewed.

Tam reviewed the timeline for application review and allocation with the Board. CD Board members can request a special meeting after the regularly scheduled meeting on June 1<sup>st</sup> if they need additional time to review applications. The public comment period will begin June 25<sup>th</sup>. Staff plans to attend the City Council Work Session on July 19<sup>th</sup> and request approval from City Council during their regular meeting on July 26<sup>th</sup>. There is also an opportunity to move this timeline back a bit depending on the CD Board's needs and preferences.

Jim Corson asked if the applicants will have the opportunity to attend the CD Board meeting in which their materials and application information is discussed. Brenda Beckett assured the board this is correct, and they will be involved in each step of the process. Wyeth Friday also confirmed that he reached out to City departments about the funding opportunity with Directors and provided application information to them as well. Wyeth did receive an inquiry about funding guidelines from Parks and Recreation. City Council also received the information via the City Administrator's report. Jim Corson encouraged CD Board members to discuss funding opportunities and continue to network with local agencies. Board Vice Chair, Jessica Schmidt, asked about tracking application reviews. Staff assured the CD Board that they can provide them with alternative tracking and ranking tools if needed. Board Chair, Rebecca Noell, asked for members to provide information to staff on their availability for a potential special meeting in June.

**American Rescue Plan: HOME-ARP Funding:** The City of Billings recently received a HOME-ARP allocation from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Funding can be used to provide housing for people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness using specific assessments and verifications including those in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Funding could be used for a variety of projects including tenant based rental assistance, the development of affordable housing, and potentially some supportive services. There is no current guidance on how to use the funding allocations or other details including how to avoid duplication of benefits. Guidance is expected to be released by HUD later this fall. CD staff will likely look to obtain information from local agencies already working with this service population to determine funding priorities and goals. Jessica Schmidt asked for staff to send out the definition of homeless / at-risk of homelessness.

**Neighborhood Concerns and Happenings:** Jim Corson's email address has been updated and the new contact list has been sent to the Board. Rebecca Noell will be on KULR8 tonight for an interview regarding her thoughts on a planning meeting that occurred at the Metra.

**Next Meeting:** Board Chair Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:10pm. The next meeting will be held on June 1, 2021.