



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board

June 1, 2021

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

Board Members Excused: Laura Gittings-Carlson, Katrina Kruger, Bret Rutherford

Staff Present: Brenda Beckett, Dina Harmon, Tam Rodier, 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 May 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 will continue researching alternative ways to develop the property and will have more information at a future meeting.

The purchase at 817 N. 22nd Street was finalized last month. Staff shared a thank you note from the new homeowner.
- **Housing Rehabilitation:** One new application was received in May. This program will be on hold while staff works through processes to address other funding allocated to the City (CDBG-CV & ARPA). All applicants were informed that they will be placed on a waiting list.
- **First Time Home Buyer Program (FTHB):** There are HOME funds available to assist approximately 23 more households until the program receives its annual allocation. There is no remaining Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for the program at this time. There are six pending closings for June which is a little slower than normal for this time of year. This could be due to applicants having a difficult time finding housing below the purchase price limit; however, the limit did just increase to \$237,000. Staff clarified that the previous limit was \$228,000.
- **Affordable Housing Development:** City Council approved the additional funding for the CDBG infrastructure improvements at the C & C Resident Owned Community (ROC) through NeighborWorks as recommended by the CD Board in May. Staff has sent the agreement amendment to NeighborWorks for review and signature. Board Member, Jim Corson, asked if the improvements will be underway this summer to which staff agreed this was likely.
- **Billings-Metro VISTA Project (B-MVP):** Current members are traveling to Bozeman for In-Service Training this week. Staff received three new inquiries last month from non-profit agencies about becoming VISTA Host Sites in the future. The B-MVP is seeking additional full-year service members to begin service terms in July & August with a final placement deadline of July 16th. VISTA Orientation planning is underway for two onboarding weeks starting July 6th and August 16th. Three VISTA members have been placed and confirmed so far.

Community Development Block Grant COVID-19 (CDBG-CV) / CARES Act Funding: Colin Peterson from The Salvation Army provided information regarding the mission and vision of the organization as well as details about

their application for CDBG-CV funding. Mr. Peterson reported that the meal program was previously funded mostly by an individual donor; however he is no longer able to assist. With unemployment benefits ending and potential changes to SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) benefits, The Salvation Army expects an increased level of food insecurity this fall and the need for funding to address this. Board members asked various questions regarding how the organization currently covers the cost of food, what type of income verification they obtain from beneficiaries, and if staff is trained on anti-discrimination practices. Mr. Peterson indicated that The Salvation Army does participate in some training, and also operates on the basis of non-discrimination. Mr. Peterson noted that the organization obtains food from other local service providers including the MRM, Family Service, and Billings Food Bank. They do not currently have an income criteria / requirement, but they serve meals in predominately low-income areas at mostly established sites. Staff informed The Salvation Army that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires some type of income verification whether that be actual, self-reported, and / or a determination that individuals served belong to HUD's identified need categories. Mr. Peterson indicated that the organization is improving their collection of demographic information and indicated The Salvation Army does have the ability to report as required. CD staff will provide information regarding the required demographics as outlined by HUD. The application also indicated the need for equipment in their commercial kitchen, to which staff ensured that Mr. Peterson was aware that there are stipulations to how long equipment must be used / kept within the agency. Board member, Jessica Schmidt, asked if the funding will be used to increase the amount of food or expand the locations in which meals are served. Mr. Peterson reported that it will mostly be an increase to the amount of food, however additional locations are a possibility as well.

With only two applications submitted, staff discussed with the Board that there are several options at this point to determine priorities for remaining funds. The Board was informed that they may make specific recommendations to City Council in the future to address a demonstrated need without identifying any agencies that might undertake the activity. The Board may also suggest additional activities be added to CDBG-CV funding. The application process can remain open or can be closed and then re-opened in several months. Another option is that approved subrecipients can renew their agreements and allocate additional funding depending on amounts. Staff can submit amendments that reflect these options. Staff reviewed the timeline for funding allocations based on when the Board provides their recommendations and determined that the soonest approval from City Council could occur on June 28th. Staff clarified that initial funding allocations to subrecipients must be expended within 12 months and will be provided on a reimbursement basis. Staff also noted that reimbursements can only occur if organizations are reporting the required demographics and / or providing verification that facilities are located in a low-mod income area and predominantly serve people with lower incomes.

Board member, Jessica Schmidt, inquired as to how the Downtown Billings Alliance Business Improvement District (BID) plans to maintain cleaning protocols in their proposed public restroom installation. Staff discussed that a centralized bathroom location has been demonstrated as a preferable option, and there is evidence that a lack of public restrooms is a significant issue for community residents, business owners, and employees responsible for cleanup. Board member, Joe Stockburger, inquired as to why the funding request from The Salvation Army was quite low. Brenda Beckett expressed that there can be language in the sub-recipient agreement that allows for additional funding allocations based on need. Joe also inquired as to how soon the BID restrooms would be installed knowing there are delays in the construction industry. The applicant must provide a timeline, and action / expenditures must occur within 12 months. If funding cannot be expended within that timeframe, there must be an alternative plan to release those funds.

Rebecca Noell proposed that the CD Board move forward with recommendations today rather than hold a special meeting. The Board agreed. Jim Corson moved to recommend funding allocations to The Salvation Army and the Business Improvement District to City Council. Hannah Olson seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the recommendations were approved unanimously.

Brenda Beckett explained that the CD Board priorities must be established by June 15th in order to meet the deadline for the amendment that would need to be submitted to HUD. The Board may use the established

priorities as identified in the Coronavirus Assessment Report completed previously. The Board could also propose additional recommendations such as the additional cleaning and handwashing stations in public restrooms to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Staff clarified that the Board may also propose that CD staff pursue other activities as identified and include that in their recommendation to City Council. Staff indicated that the best option might be for the Board to propose a recommendation at this meeting regarding the funding of additional activities. This could include priorities in public services and facilities with the emphasis on other city departments and / or additional cleaning in public restrooms to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Jim Corson moved to include a recommendation to City Council regarding broader categories while prioritizing public services and facilities. Joe Stockburger seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Reviewing Allocation Process for CDBG / HOME: The Board indicated that there was a comprehensive understanding of the process, and no additional discussion was necessary.

July Meeting: The Board determined that the July meeting would be canceled tentatively unless additional action on a new Public Hearing is required per HUD's recommendations.

Neighborhood Concerns and Happenings: Council Member Denise Joy expressed thanks for the CD Board's process and collaboration. She indicated that the public restroom priority is relevant, as Council continues to receive several requests from the community at large to address similar concerns.

Next Meeting: Board Chair Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:30pm. The next meeting will be held on August 3, 2021.