



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board

March 5, 2024

Board Members Present: Rebecca Noell, Joe Stockburger, Kathleen Candelaria, Erica Doornek, James Allen, Valerie Courtney, Hans Abbey

Board Members Excused: Ali Pistora

Board Members Absent: Jenna Martin

City Council Representative: Denise Joy

Staff Present: Brenda Beckett, Carly Collins, Dina Harmon, Tam Rodier

Guests: Amanda Stonerock, Stonerock Consulting (representing Alternatives), Steve Simonson, Billings Association of Realtors, VISTA Abi Scherer

Welcome / Introductions: The Community Development (CD) Board met in the 6th Floor Conference Room of the Miller Building. Board Chair Rebecca Noell called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Board members and guests were invited to introduce themselves.

Announcements: Brenda Beckett, with Wyeth Friday's permission, said Wyeth received some unfortunate health news last week and would be out for an extended period of time.

Brenda said she participated in a new City Council member orientation session earlier today. She also plans to prepare an orientation packet for the new CD Board members. If the new Board members are interested, she will schedule a time to go through it with the new CD Board members soon.

Public Comment: Steve Simonson, representing the Billings Association of Realtors (BAR), announced that the BAR is one of 17 applicants out of over 1,500 local associations being interviewed for one of four national awards. Their entry is a Community Land Trust project. They are partnering with the Montana Board of Housing and Trust Montana. Council member Tom Rupsis will be their representative.

Meeting Minutes: Board member James Allen made a motion to approve the February 6, 2024, minutes as written and distributed. Board member Kathleen Candelaria seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. A vote was taken and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Staff Reports:

- **First Time Home Buyer Program (FTHB):** Dina reported one family will close on their purchase of their home this week. Another family will close on their home March 31st.
- **Affordable Housing Development (AHD):** Dina stated that the Mitchell Court project environmental review record has been submitted to HUD. The City Council will take action on the project at their March 25 meeting.
- **Foreclosure Acquisition / Housing Rehabilitation Program:** Tam Rodier shared the following:

[Steffanich Property](#)

- While the contractor is under contract for installing the xeriscaping and trees, the weather has not been cooperative, so work has not yet begun.

1709 St. Johns Avenue

- One bid was received in response to the Invitation for Bids (IFB). The bid was in excess of staff's estimate and the limit within Resolution 17-10660, which stipulates the maximum rehabilitation cost is fifty percent (50%) of the current HUD purchase price limit. For this project, that means \$167,950. Staff is therefore recommending the City Council reject all bids at their March 11 meeting. Staff will then revise the IFB to reduce potential project costs and re-advertise for bids.

Brenda said staff is considering a revision to the Resolution that would remove the rehabilitation limit of 50% of the current HUD purchase price limit.

- Staff submitted an application for an AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) team to implement Xeriscaping on the property this spring. We were notified today that our application has been APPROVED!

- **CDBG / CDBG-CV Projects:** Tam also gave the following project updates:

North Park: The restroom, shade shelter, and adult exercise projects are wrapping up and should be opened to the public this spring.

Parks Accessibility Projects: The accessibility improvements at the Pioneer Park restroom, North Park Center, and the Zimmerman Center are also wrapping up.

- **Billings Metro VISTA Project (BMVP):** Carly Collins reported:

- The new AmeriCorps VISTA grant application is due next Friday; it will include seven host sites.
- Current VISTA members will be recognized before the City Council on Monday, March 11th. Each will be given an opportunity to introduce themselves and their projects.
- VISTA members will be traveling to Helena next Tuesday for the annual ServeMontana Symposium, which runs through Friday.

HOME-ARP Discussion, Next Steps: Carly showed a *HOME-ARP: Implementation & Compliance* slide and explained each of the following:

- Program Requirement Grid
- Staff Policies & Procedures – a packet of draft documents, forms, checklists, certifications, etc. were distributed; she asked that Board members let her know if they have suggested changes and/or additions.
- Subrecipient Guidebook & Toolbox – shared draft document. She said subrecipients will develop their own program rules and she will review and approve.
- Intake & Service Provision
- Quarterly Reporting – Reimbursements will be made for specific client(s) for specific services (HOME-ARP only; doesn't mean they can't serve ineligible clients; the City will just not reimburse subrecipients for non-HOME-ARP clients)
- Monitoring
- Participant & Services Tracking Worksheet – she showed the Excel spreadsheet on screen and explained that most fields had dropdown lists to ensure the correct information was entered.

The CD Board will take action on funding recommendations at the April 2nd meeting. Staff is recommending up to \$100,000 to each of the six agencies. Each will include some type of "contract renewable" feature. To be eligible for contract renewal, subrecipients must have met all contract terms and conditions.

Staff Recommendation for Funding Allocation & Annual Action Plan: Brenda Beckett reviewed the FY 2024-2025 Community Development proposed activities list. She said HUD has not yet posted allocation amounts. However, she distributed copies of the preliminary estimated revenues and recommended budget. She said she will have updated balances to report next month.

She is working on the draft Annual Action Plan, which must be distributed and posted online by late March.

CDBG Application Received: Brenda reported one CDBG application was received from Intermountain Professionals Foundation. Copies of the application, questions sent, and applicant responses were distributed to CD Board members for review last month. The application remains substantially incomplete. The applicant was invited to attend this meeting. Brenda said this is a high-risk project to fund as there are no established and public outcomes available for review.

Board Member James Allen made a motion to reject the application from Intermountain Professionals. Board Member Erica Doornek seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. A vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Neighborhood Concerns & Happenings:

Council member Denise Joy said:

- The City Council is participating in a strategic planning retreat March 15-16. New Council member Kennedy suggested that if housing was not on the agenda, it should be. He said there is City-owned property near South 27th Street that the City should consider donating to a nonprofit to build affordable housing there. Denise said she is not sure if this would be pursued; it may just be an educational opportunity for new City Council members.
- Asked if anyone knew anything about the newly constructed duplexes on Viceroy that have not yet been occupied. No one knew anything about the project.
- The Salvation Army's proposed William Booth Village on 6th Avenue North has been put on hold due to a \$3 million increase in project costs necessary to install plumbing (toilets and laundry) in each cabin unit. She said this is sad because this type of housing is desperately needed (below zero temps in January caused one homeless man to lose his feet to frostbite).

Kathleen Candelaria said she had conversations with the County Clerk & Recorder's Office and the Sheriff's Department about foreclosures for a client. She said she learned that many of the foreclosures in Billings are being purchased by investors from Utah.

Next Meeting: Board Chair Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:30 p.m. The next regular in-person meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m. on April 2, 2024.