



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board May 7, 2024

Board Members Present: Rebecca Noell, Kathleen Candelaria, Erica Doornek, Hans Abbey, Ali Pistora

Board Members Excused: Joe Stockburger, James Allen, Valerie Courtney

Board Members Absent: Jenna Martin

City Council Representative: None

Staff Present: Brenda Beckett, Dina Harmon, Tam Rodier

Guests: AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) Team “Gold 6” - Connor Hill, Gabe Lutter-Gardella, Jasa Sesay, Clem Gottschalk, Crew Childress, Colben Rodriguez, and Xavier Felder

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:

Ali Pistora said she attended the Local Government Review Committee meeting at the library. She gave a brief overview of the process, timeline, and costs. During the meeting, Council Member Kendra Shaw spoke about the importance / value of City Boards.

Erica Doornek reminded everyone about school levy ballots due today.

Public Comment:

Connor Hill share his first impression of Billings, the largest city in the state.

Meeting Minutes: Board member Kathleen Candelaria made a motion to approve the April 2, 2024, minutes as written and distributed. Board member Erica Doornek seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. A vote was taken, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)

Tam Rodier said she would be introducing the team to the City Council on Monday, May 13, and read her prepared introduction. She then asked team members to share why they choose to serve with NCCC, what projects they had worked on so far, what their favorite project was, and what they hoped to do after service. Each team member responded. Board members asked a few additional questions, then asked the team if they had any questions for the Board.

Staff Reports:

- **First Time Home Buyer Program (FTHB):** Dina reported applications are picking up. She has three households preparing to close soon; two later in May and one in June.

- **Affordable Housing Development (AHD):** Dina said the City's legal staff approved legal documents for the Mitchell Court Apartments project. The City Council is scheduled to take action on May 28, 2024.

Brenda Beckett commented that it generally takes four years from application to lease-up for new AHD projects. This one is moving much faster and may be completed in two years.

- **Foreclosure Acquisition / Housing Rehabilitation Program:** Tam Rodier shared the following:

Updated Resolution and Contract Limits

- Copies of the Foreclosure Program overview document, which includes a map of all properties purchased since 2010, before / after pictures, and a flow chart of the process.
- She said that of the 11 properties that have been rehabilitated and sold to low-income FTHBs, 7 were sold to households under 50% AMI, and 4 to households under 80% AMI.
- Staff would welcome CD Board members to provide public comments in support of a Resolution being presented to the City Council May 13. The proposed Resolution adopts standardized, market-driven contract limits, includes the ability to purchase vacant lots upon which new affordable housing would be built, and continues City Administrator authority to sell properties through the program. If Board members wish to make public comments, but are unable to attend the meeting in person, they may email comments to all City Council members by sending it to council@billingsmt.gov before 3:00 p.m. on May 13.

Steffanich Property

- Staff is regularly watering the new trees until the property sells.
- Dina distributed the property information flyer to approved FTHB applicants and is awaiting a viable Buy-Sell Agreement.

Brenda added that the City's assistance will ensure the low-income household's mortgage payment will be no more than 30% of their income. Kathleen stated the City's assistance enables an important wealth building aspect that renters do not have.

1709 St. Johns Avenue

- The City Council will take action on the Bid Award for the housing rehab project at their May 13 meeting.
- Supplies and materials have been purchased for the xeriscaping project. River rock, pea gravel, garden soil, and plants have been ordered and should be delivered this week. Tools have been borrowed from the City's Parks Department.
- A 30-yard roll-off dumpster has been ordered and will also be delivered to the site. The NCCC team will remove and dispose of the handicap ramp at the rear of the house, the garden shed and contents, deteriorated landscaping elements, and miscellaneous junk.
- The NCCC team will start work on the xeriscaping project on Monday, May 13. They are scheduled to spend a total of 10 days working on the project; it should be completed by mid-June. Board members are welcome to stop by to see the team in action, or to see the finished xeriscaping.

- **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 open to the public soon. Grand re-opening is scheduled for Saturday, June 22, with food, face painting, dunk tank, etc.

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

- **Billings Metro VISTA Project (BMVP):** Carly Collins was unable to attend today's meeting, so she left a written report that was printed and distributed during the meeting, which included the following:
 - Held a Quarterly Supervisor Meeting on April 4th – Members are doing well on project goals; new members have hit the ground running on service goals.
 - Attended a “Neighbors & Neighborhoods” Event with current members and Alums on April 11th (see photo). VISTAs presented on their projects and reasons why they came to (and why some have decided to stay) in Billings. MSU-Billings students, community members, and the U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic discussed Service oriented career opportunities.
 - Recruitment is slow right now, but sounds like it is statewide from other sponsors.
 - Our next In Service Training event for members is scheduled for Friday, June 7th in Livingston with Shannon Stober.
 - National AmeriCorps staff, including the CPO from D.C., will be visiting the B-MVP including Host Site visits on Wednesday, June 12th – it is a big opportunity for us to highlight our program!
- **HOME-ARP:**
 - Carly is finalizing the written agreements for subrecipients this week
 - Next steps:
 - Legal department will review agreements and provide any necessary changes
 - Schedule City Council for final approval of CD Board recommendations of initial \$100k allocations for six qualified subrecipients
 - Schedule Subrecipient Training on grant administration, reporting, and monitoring:

Annual Action Plan (AAP) & Allocation Process Review: Brenda said she sent Board members a link to the recording of the April 22 City Council meeting at which the AAP was discussed. The AAP was approved by a very slim margin. She asked Board members for their feedback on Council member comments during the meeting, suggestions for going forward, etc.

The Board discussed that perhaps some City Council members had not been educated about CDBG / HOME funding, project eligibility, regulations, community outreach, and public comment periods. Board members discussed the possibility of doing an educational session and public hearing with the City Council in August BEFORE the CAPER is presented in September.

Other education options discussed:

- Inviting the City Administrator and the Mayor to a CD Board meeting.
- Board members presenting at a City Council Work Session(s) to ensure all members are educated (with staff support).
- City Council member survey:
 - Loan vs. grants,
 - “Did you know...” questions to determine their knowledge base,
 - Rank project options (determine top priorities),
 - Provide a timeline flow chart,
 - Discuss past successes.

June / July Meeting Discussion: Rebecca said she would like to meet in June to get the missing Board members thoughts, perspectives, and feedback on potential changes to the allocation process. The Board will discuss whether or not to hold the July meeting at the June meeting.

Neighborhood Concerns & Happenings: None

Next Meeting: Board Chair Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 5:00 p.m. The next regular in-person meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m. on June 4, 2024.