



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board June 4, 2024

Board Members Present: Joe Stockburger, Kathleen Candelaria, James Allen, Ali Pistora, Hans Abbey

Board Members Excused: Rebecca Noell

Board Members Absent: Erica Doornek, Jenna Martin, Valerie Courtney

City Council Representative: Denise Joy

Staff Present: Brenda Beckett, Carly Collins, Tam Rodier

Guests: Patti Webster (HomeFront); Heather McMilin (Homeword; remote); VISTA Leader, Daniel Sidle

Welcome / Introductions: The Community Development (CD) Board met in the 6th Floor Conference Room of the Miller Building. Board Vice Chair Joe Stockburger called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Announcements: Brenda Beckett noted that staff member Dina Harmon is on vacation.

Public Comment: None

Homeword & HomeFront Presentation / "Pods Project"

Patti Webster, HomeFront CEO, said they originally submitted an "acquisition" application to the Community Development Division. However, after the City's Building Division said the project was "new construction," they pulled their application. They are now partnering with Homeword on a new application. Today's presentation is to share information about the project and answer questions from board members.

Patti said it is very hard to develop an affordable housing project these days. However, this "Pre-manufactured Overhauled Dwelling Solution" provides a unique opportunity. Homefront purchased 202 "PODS" from the Bakken in North Dakota (1 bed/1 bath units with 2"x6" walls) and the local firm of High Plains Architects is designing the project.

Patti said her predecessor purchased an entire subdivision in the 1990s. HomeFront has completed several projects within the subdivision including Whitetail Run with an adjacent community garden, Pheasant Home, Falcon Run, and Red Fox. This project will place 101 units of affordable rental housing on the last remaining parcel in the subdivision.

Heather McMilin, Homeword Project Development Director, shared a PowerPoint presentation detailing project plans. She said HomeFront already owned the land, so that was a big plus. They will be leveraging 9% housing tax credits to access 4% housing tax credits to create 101 homes. Each building will include a central core that will include upper floor access, and living rooms, kitchens, laundry areas for each housing unit and they will be attached on the outside to provide bedrooms and bathrooms for each unit. They foresee constructing either 5-plex or 6-plex buildings with accessible units on the ground floor. They anticipate "project-based vouchers" for the project.

They plan to submit an application to the Montana Board of Housing in late August. The new application to the City Community Development Division for funding will be submitted after that. The project will be "shovel ready" as soon as all the funding is in place.

Patti said they are also planning to begin construction on the City's first 3D printed home in August (totally separate project).

Meeting Minutes: Board member Kathleen Candelaria made a motion to approve the May 7, 2024, minutes as written and distributed. Board member Hans Abbey seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. A vote was taken, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

VISTA Leader Presentation: Dan Sidle said a recent BMVP Resource Assessment indicates the top three issues of concern for VISTAs are:

- **HOUSING:** The VISTA stipend is not enough to cover the current average rent in Billings.
- **FOOD:** VISTAs are finding it hard to apply for SNAP benefits before they are sworn into service. He is contemplating creating a SNAP guide with detailed instructions.
- **HEALTHCARE:** VISTAs need access to assistance. He is considering creating a contact list for various services.

Hans asked how people could donate to VISTAs.

Denise volunteered to show VISTAs how to process and store food to extend its life (dehydrate, freeze, etc.)

Allocation Process Review: Board members discussed City Council comments and suggestions made during the April 22, 2024, City Council meeting when approving the Annual Action Plan:

- Ali suggested creating a “passion” project list and asking for feedback and/or Council members’ top project areas to be addressed.
- Brenda said staff could prepare an online City Council survey. This might ask them if they prefer to offer loans vs. grants. Might also ask them to rank top two focus areas.

Denise said she is not sure we would get many completed surveys back (based on the Council recent strategic planning survey results). She also suggested we consider piggy-backing with the City Council’s discussion of subdivision regulations and a possible tie-in with lighting (safety).

- Education regarding the allocation process and federal red tape. This could include process details from an actual project as an example (process / timeline details for a specific project Council mentioned).

Brenda said the CD Division will be before the City Council as follows and ***CD Board members should attend and speak!***

- August 19, 2024 – City Council Work Session
- September 9 or 23, 2024 – CAPER public hearing

Staff Reports:

- **First Time Home Buyer Program (FTHB):** Brenda said Dina has commitments for four (4) homes and closing dates are pending.
- **Affordable Housing Development (AHD):** Brenda said the draft Mitchell Court legal documents are still being reviewed by the City Attorney’s Office.
- **Foreclosure Acquisition / Housing Rehabilitation Program:** Tam shared the following updates:

Updated Resolution and Contract Limits

- She publicly thanked Erica, Rebecca, and Ali for providing public comments in support of the Resolution.
- The City Council approved the Resolution at their May 13, 2024, meeting.

Steffanich Property

- A Buy-Sell Agreement has been executed and the property is scheduled to close June 25, 2024.

Foreclosure Acquisition / Rehabilitation Program Survey

Tam said she is working on a Foreclosure Program survey that will be mailed to purchasers of past Foreclosure Program homes. Survey results will be shared with the CD Board and with the City Council.

1709 St. Johns Avenue

- The City Council approved the Construction Agreement for the rehab project at their May 13 meeting. The contractor started work there yesterday.
- The NCCC team has made significant progress installing the xeriscaping; work should be completed by the end of this week.
- Board members are welcome to stop by to see the team in action, or to see the finished xeriscaping.
- **CDBG / CDBG-CV Projects:**
 - North Park: A grand re-opening is scheduled for Saturday, June 22.
- **Billings Metro VISTA Project (BMVP):** Carly Collins reported the following:
 - Recruitment has been slow, but they are doing the best they can. Six candidates applied recently.
 - The current VISTAs will participate in In-Service Training this Friday in Livingston.
 - On Tuesday, June 12, National AmeriCorps staff from Washington D.C. will be in town touring local projects sites and speaking with VISTA members and Host Site Supervisors.
- **HOME-ARP:** Carly said she is:
 - Finishing up the legal agreements for each applicant and will transmit them to the City Attorney's office for review this week.
 - Will send **Conflict of Interest** forms to each applicant to sign and return.
 - Will schedule grant award recommendations with the City Council as soon as possible.

July Meeting Discussion:

Board members discussed the pros and cons of having a July meeting. Board member Joe Stockburger made a motion to cancel the July meeting. Board member Ali Pistora seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. A vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Neighborhood Concerns & Happenings: None

Next Meeting: Board Vice Chair Joe Stockburger adjourned the meeting at approximately 5:00 p.m. The next regular in-person meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m. on August 6, 2024.