

Board Members Present: Jim Hartung, Kamber Kelly, Thomas Mahlen, Emily Shaffer, Patt Leikam

Board Members Excused: Thomas Grimm, Kathleen Candelaria, David Goodridge

Staff Present: Brenda Beckett, Lynda Woods, Dina Billington, and Denise Bohlman

Welcome / Introduction / Announcements: The Community Development Board met in its regular monthly meeting location in the 4th Floor Large Conference Room, Parmlly Billings Library, 510 N. Broadway, Billings, Montana. The meeting was called to order by Jim Hartung, and introductions were made with special acknowledgement of the new Administrative Support for Community Development Division, Denise Bohlman.

Public Comment: None.

Meeting Minutes: Kamber Kelly, Vice Chair, moved that the minutes for June 7, 2011 be approved as presented. Emily Shaffer seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

Staff Reports / Neighborhood Stabilization Program Review: Beckett reiterated that due to budget cuts for Fiscal Year 2011-2012, the following programs have been either discontinued or greatly reduced:

- Tree Planting & Removal Program – discontinued.
- Paint Program -- discontinued.
- Minor Home Repair – greatly reduced.

Minor Home Repair funds will be used for emergencies only (example: for households who do not have heat or water) for this coming year. There is some funding from previous years that will be utilized now.

NSP (Neighborhood Stabilization Program) / FTHB (First Time Home Buyers Program): Lynda Woods, Rehabilitation Coordinator, reported that rehabilitation/construction phase has been completed and competitive appraisals are being obtained.

Dina Billington stated First Time Home Buyers Program has enough funds for 3 more applicants and then program funding has been committed. The State wants to see all the information and criteria being used to make selections for NSP households. There are approximately 20 to 25 households that have updated their information. Three or four of them have come in with buy-sells for other properties. There are only 2 of those households under the 50% AMI that qualify to market to for the NSP properties. It is desirable to get the selection process finalized and to the City Council by the end of August so the NSP properties can be transferred.

Affordable Housing Development Program: Dina Billington, Community Development Coordinator, is working on the Infrastructure for Kings Green.

Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP): Beckett stated the FHIP grant report is due on July 31st and she will need to devote as much of their time and efforts into completing this complex report and meeting this deadline.

Task forces members were sent a brochure on the Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) for distribution via email. The Fair Housing brochures are to target low income communities. By distributing them through some of the task force newsletters it may help the task forces with a source of funding from the FHIP grant. For those households receiving their newsletters via email, the FHIP brochure can simply be sent as an attachment, quarterly, at no cost. Beckett stated by sending the FHIP brochures, quarterly, through the task force newsletters, she may be able to reach 4,600 households during the year. Since the newsletters reach about 1,100 to 1,200 households per quarter.

Another outreach idea is to forward the printed FHIP articles to Head Start. Head Start sends packets home every week with their students and they serve over 200 children. There will be 4 different Fair Housing articles. The children reside all over the City and fair housing is an issue all over the City.

VISTA update: Beckett stated the AmeriCorps*VISTA final report is due on August 15th. Beckett provided a copy for viewing of the finalized application. Beckett will give a full report on VISTA and group work in a cumulative report for CAPER in September. Special recognition was given by Chairperson Hartung concerning the recent video he viewed on The Billings Gazette website of VOA - Independence Hall's garden, featuring VISTA Hannah Noel. There are approximately 19-20 people living at VOA - Independence Hall and the garden will provide them with some much-needed fresh produce. It is anticipated that in September the statewide Commissioners from the Corporation for National Community Services will be in Billings. The Independence Hall garden and the Salvation Army's orchard will be showcased for them to see.

Beckett stated all 7 of the summer VISTAs will be finished on the 12th of August. She reported the Summer VISTAs and all VISTAs coming in have to do a pre-service orientation. The pre-service orientation for the new VISTAs began on the 19th of July in Helena. The Helena training lasted 3 days, with a swearing in ceremony on the 4th day. VISTAs are typically sworn in by the Governor or Lieutenant Governor, but this year both were unavailable and the honors were done by Anna Whiting-Sorrell, Director of DPHHS. Immediately following this training, Community Development is required to provide a 5-day onsite orientation and training. During onsite VISTA orientation, training is opened up to all VISTAs in the area. All of the VISTAs serving in the Billings area are invited to all events and happenings. Billings currently has 5 VISTAs.

Board Member Patt Leikam stated there are 12 other AmeriCorps*VISTAs around the State and her volunteer is through the AmeriCorps* Direct program. She stated her AmeriCorps* Direct volunteer's last day is also August 12th and there is a 6-week hiatus before a new volunteer is brought on. The AmeriCorps* Direct volunteers are managed through Montana Legal Services and the Court Administration through the Supreme Court. Patt requested a master contact list of all of the AmeriCorps*VISTAs and AmeriCorps* Directs which would indicate who they are working for, etc., because they are all working with the same people and together at some point.

Brenda has done an analysis of the amount of funding Community Development is working with and it breaks down as follows: 54-55% is CDBG, 45-46% is a combination of AmeriCorps*VISTA, FHIP, and NSP. This has changed from past years wherein funding used to be only from CDBG and HOME programs, but now the division is working with so many other programs.

Due to governmental cutbacks, the future funding for the various AmeriCorps*VISTA programs continues to be a concern.

Neighborhood Concerns: Patt Leikam mentioned she is concerned about the preparation and distribution changes of the task force newsletters and unresolved computer software incompatibility issues.

Tentative Schedule: Next Board meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, September 6th, 2011 at 3:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 3:46 p.m.