



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board

May 5, 2020

Board Members Present: Rebecca Noell, Joe Stockburger, Katrina Kruger, Bret Rutherford, Jim Corson, Jessica Schmidt, Hannah Olson, Shane Noble, Laura Gittings-Carlson

Board Members Excused: Council Member Denise Joy

Staff Present: Brenda Beckett, Dina Harmon, Tam Rodier, Wyeth Friday

Welcome / Introductions / Announcements: The Community Development (CD) Board met in via virtual videoconference as scheduled. Board Chair, Rebecca Noell, called the meeting to order at approximately 3:10pm.

Public Comment: No additional public comment.

Meeting Minutes: Board member, Jim Corson, moved to approve the March meeting minutes and the motion was seconded by Board member, Shane Noble. A vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Staff Reports:

- **Housing Rehabilitation:** Two new applications were received in April. Staff continues to advertise and create new materials to encourage new applicants. One project was finished in April and three are moving toward loan closing.
- **Foreclosure Acquisition / Housing Rehabilitation Program:** Demolition on 930 Steffanich has concluded. Staff re-advertised the Request for Proposals (RFP) for Affordable Housing Development on this property, but no proposals were received by the previous deadline. It will continue to be advertised on the City website and remain open until a contract can be executed.

CD Staff is assembling a work list and cost estimates to prepare requests for repair quotes on the newly acquired property at 817 N 22nd Street. A site visit for CD board members will be arranged for a future meeting in another capacity due to health concerns surrounding COVID-19.

- **First Time Homebuyer Program:** CD Staff has funding available for several more households through the remainder of the fiscal year, the majority being HOME Investment funds.
- **Affordable Housing Development:** Both properties at the Riverfront Pointe development closed at the end of March. Success stories of the homebuyers were shared with the Board via email.

Mary Lou, staff member from NeighborWorks Montana, attended the meeting. The Board reviewed the staff funding recommendations for NeighborWorks Montana's application for infrastructure improvements at C&C Resident Owned Community (ROC).

- **Billings-Metro VISTA Project:** CD Staff is actively recruiting new VISTA members for the next full-year term beginning in July / August.

AmeriCorps VISTA Update: Increasing Healthcare Access for Native Americans: VISTA, Jana Richter, provided a report on her VISTA Project at the Native American Development Corporation (NADC) / Billings Urban Indian Health & Wellness Center (BUIHWC). Jana's objectives are focused on completing a community assessment of health needs in Billings, creating a database to track baseline results of the assessment and outreach efforts, community awareness and engagement activities that promote clinic services and activities, and material development to expand the agency's outreach. Jana has focused on the research aspect and how best to expand healthcare access to various tribes as well as how health issues impact Native Americans differently. So far this

year, Jana has received a grant through the CDC to implement a culturally competent diabetes prevention program at the clinic, planned several events, assisted with recruiting native people to enroll in services, assessed patient referral needs and outcomes, formalized advertising and social media updates, and helped the team create a database for Medicaid/Medicare outreach.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) COVID-19 / CARES Act Fund Update:

Brenda Beckett reported on drafted CDBG-CV requirements. The funding must only be used to respond to COVID-19 and other pandemics or infectious disease outbreaks. Any allocations must be CDBG eligible and will likely be heavily monitored. Due to the low number of COVID-19 cases in our area, CD staff may focus on community efforts that emphasize preventing infection. These could include working to provide masks to individuals that are low-income or supporting creative ways to increase successful hygiene practices. CD Staff is still waiting on additional HUD guidance regarding the allocation of funding received.

The CD Board will be given opportunities to make recommendations regarding a formalized funding allocation plan. The CD Board must also approve the plan before it is presented to City Council for consideration. The public comment period for the Consolidated Plan will end May 11th, but a preliminary public hearing or public meeting could be arranged if recommended by the Board. It would be ideal if recommendations were submitted by the June CD Board Meeting in order to submit to City Council the following month, but the timeline is not finalized. Brenda is hoping to include the recommendations in a community need section of the Consolidated Plan and submit at a later date than usual so that a large amendment is not necessary; however, the development and finalization process will be flexible in order to best assess community readiness and responsiveness.

Board member, Shane Noble, recommended setting up a virtual survey to obtain feedback from community members. Board member, Jim Corson, suggested reaching out to local agencies that serve low-income seniors. Board Chair, Rebecca Noell, asked Brenda to provide the Board a list of questions and considerations about potential funding concepts so that they may be reviewed and discussed amongst the CD Board.

Consolidated Plan / Annual Action Plan & Budget Recommendations Review:

Brenda Beckett presented a review of the Consolidated Plan / Annual Action Plan and budget recommendations for CDBG, HOME, and the Billings Metro VISTA Project. For CDBG and HOME, the budget and funding history has generally declined and began trending downward when loans were prioritized over grants via a City Council policy decision several years ago. A review of core housing programs and funding allowances for CDBG and HOME projects were discussed.

Brenda has submitted the Billings section of the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice for inclusion in the Consolidated Plan. Research shows a significant issue with housing cost burden in Billings. It appears that there are enough units for residents, but individuals in higher income brackets are living in units that are well below what is affordable for that range. All such findings must be addressed through a goal setting process within the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan.

Over the last 20 years, CDBG projects nationwide have been trending towards more public improvement funding such as streets and sewer improvement. Upon review of the application for infrastructure improvements at C&C ROC, there are upward of 3000 units in Billings that are likely in need of similar updates. The Board discussed that infrastructure development is also highly dependent on weather / significant weather events in our area.

The Billings Metro VISTA Project has generated over 9 million dollars in total project value since 2009. More success has been achieved by placing a VISTA in one organization for one year to raise funds rather than allocate small amounts of money every year to various agencies for an extended period of time.

Brenda noted that there will be additional revenue not reflected in the current budget breakdown that will need to be reallocated following the quarter three drawdown.

The Board was reminded that the public can call in to comment on the recommendations at the upcoming City Council meeting on Monday, May 11th.

Consolidated Plan / Annual Action Plan – Final Review & CDBG / Home Funding Recommendations:

Board Chair, Rebecca Noell, called for a vote on funding recommendation for CDBG, HOME, and the NeighborWorks Montana infrastructure improvement at C & C ROC. Board member, Laura Gittings-Carlson, moved to recommend approval of all. The motion was seconded by Board member, Katrina Kruger. A vote was taken and the funding recommendations were approved unanimously.

Due to recusal, Board Chair, Rebecca Noell, asked that Board Co-Chair, Joe Stockburger, request a vote on funding recommendations for the Billings Metro VISTA Project. Board Co-Chair, Joe Stockburger, called for the vote and the funding recommendation for the Billings Metro VISTA project was approved unanimously.

Review Allocation Process: The CD Board suggested the allocation review process be postponed until a future meeting. Brenda asked the Board to share any suggestions on how to improve the process, and the comment period can remain open for now.

Neighborhood Concerns and Happenings: Board member, Jim Corson, urged the Board to review the newly released grant information from Governor Steve Bullock in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Next Meeting: Board Chair, Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:30pm. The next meeting will be held on June 2, 2020.