



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

2825 3rd Avenue North, Billings, MT 59101 Phone: 406.657.8281 Fax: 406.294.7595 Relay: 711 www.CityofBillings.net/ComDev

Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board February 1, 2022

Board Members Present: Rebecca Noell, Jim Corson, Bret Rutherford, Shane Noble, Joe Stockburger, Hannah Olson, Councilperson Denise Joy

Board Members Excused: Katrina Kruger, Jessica Schmidt

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

Welcome / Introductions / Announcements: 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 3:00pm.

Public Comment: None.

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

AmeriCorps VISTA Update – Expanding & Diversifying Youth Mentorship Opportunities: AmeriCorps VISTA, Samantha Buchanan, presented information on her individual VISTA project at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Yellowstone County. Highlights included: Samantha's service work to increase partnerships with local businesses for the Big Benefits program; outreach activities including tabling events and a television segment on "Hello Montana"; extensive research on expanding services into Big Horn and Carbon County for the Community Program; planning fundraising events; and grant writing. Samantha's efforts resulted in \$2,500 of grant funding so far. Samantha has also been researching and developing a proposal for a workplace mentoring program, "Beyond School Walls," which matches middle and high school students with employees in professional companies / roles. Samantha agreed to share information with the Board about an upcoming pub crawl fundraising event that she has helped plan as well.

Staff Reports:

- **First Time Home Buyer Program (FTHB):** Staff has funding available to assist several more households. There are three closings scheduled for this month.
- **Affordable Housing Development:** Staff did not have any new updates about the Off The Streets project at this time.
- **Housing Rehabilitation:** The program remains on hold while staff works through processes for additional funding allocated to the City. No new applications were received in January.
- **Foreclosure Acquisition / Housing Rehabilitation Program:** No proposals were received prior to the January 28 deadline for the modular RFP option at 930 Steffanich. Staff will revise the RFP to remain open until a contract can be executed. Staff continues to assess foreclosure properties on the market for purchase.
- **CDBG-CV:** The Salvation Army submitted their first quarterly report and reimbursement request last month. The first reimbursement payment has been processed. Staff assisted with the procurement / eligibility process for the DBA-BID handwashing station and bathroom, and the project is moving forward accordingly. The environmental and historic reviews for the Parks improvement projects are nearly complete. The Heritage Trail draft agreement is being routed and the project should begin at Pioneer Park soon. Seven proposals were received for the Parks Wi-Fi project. Shane Noble agreed to be the CD Board representative on the review committee. Following the committee decision, a contract will be negotiated.

Seven applications were submitted for CDBG-CV Fast -Track Public Services grants. Four applications were received for the regular CDBG-CV program. Site visits will need to be scheduled and arranged.

- **HOME-ARP:** No updates at this time.
- **Billings-Metro VISTA Project (B-MVP):** Staff reported that the VISTA application has been submitted. Staff received new Host Site Proposals from agencies including HomeFront, Billings Police Department Domestic Violence Investigation program, and Billings TrailNet. Staff will be updating VISTA Assignment Descriptions and advertising new positions to prepare for recruitment. Current members plan to attend a Serve Symposium in Helena in March.

Preliminary Revenues: Brenda Beckett reported on current revenue amounts for the CD Division's programs. The Division continues to receive repayments each week. The HOME program has significant repayment revenue to be committed, however there is no commitment expenditure deadline for this funding. Beckett reviewed the current quarterly balances for VISTA, FTHB, CDBG and HOME programs. Moving forward, staff is recommending funding CDBG and HOME at maximum admin caps. As of now, there have been no changes to CHDO regulations for HOME funding; and the Division does not have any programs or applications to meet HUD's CHDO requirements at this time. Staff discussed that HOME funding could be dedicated to affordable housing development in the future, but there would be several steps to develop this kind project. Remaining funding could also be used for a foreclosure property purchase. Board member, Jim Corson, also proposed increasing the original funding allocation of \$150,000 for CDBG-CV Fast -Track Public Services grants applications. Staff will continue to assess the Board's funding recommendations.

Review Applications Received: Due to a later program application deadline this year, staff will need additional time to compile application information. Staff agreed to send information to the Board following the meeting. Staff provided application backup documentation for the budget and revenue review. Staff is recommending closing the Housing Rehab program for several reasons including a historically low number of applications, a lack of available contractors, and other effects of the coronavirus pandemic such as high building supply costs and delivery delays. The integrity of the program is also compromised by the \$25,000 project funding limit. No changes to FTHB application funding were proposed as there are not enough homes on the market to justify increasing the amount at this time. The Board determined which members would complete site visits and application reviews for each of the regular CDBG-CV applications received. These reviews and site visits will need to be completed by the end of March.

Neighborhood Concerns & Happenings: Wyeth Friday reported that staff has been doing new City Council visits and department overviews and they have been going well. Wyeth and Councilperson Denise Joy also discussed that City Council approved a new housing policy initiative. Future plans include developing a housing needs assessment and a strategic plan to address housing challenges in the community such as types, cost, and availability of housing. HomeFront will be taking a lead role in this; they did submit a VISTA Host Site proposal for assistance on a community assessment. Going forward, City involvement may include providing and assessing baseline information for the current housing situation as well as VISTA contributions. There are upcoming meetings to discuss the issues and compile information from housing professionals including from Big Sky EDA, local realtors, HomeFront, HRDC, etc. CD will provide info on current programs and priorities as well as what could realistically be contributed to the initiative.

Next Meeting: Board Chair Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:20pm. The next regular meeting will be held on March 1, 2022.