



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board

October 1, 2024

Board Members Present: Rebecca Noell, James Allen, Erica Doornek, Hans Abbey, Kathleen Candelaria,

Board Members Excused: Ali Pistora, Joe Stockburger

Board Members Absent: None

City Council Representative: Denise Joy

Staff Present: Brenda Beckett, Carly Collins, Tam Rodier, Wyeth Friday (via phone)

Guests: Gene Leuwer, GL Development; Beki Brandborg, GL Development (via Zoom)

Welcome / Introductions: The Community Development (CD) Board met in the Large Conference Room of the Billings Public Library, 510 N Broadway. Board Chair Rebecca Noell called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Announcements:

Brenda Beckett said two applications were received for the open CD program coordinator position; both appear to be good applicants and interviews would be scheduled soon. CD Board member(s) may participate on the interviews.

Brenda also noted that NeighborWorks Montana contacted her asking if the City might be able to provide assistance in the acquisition of Meadowlark mobile home park (?) to transition it into a Resident-Owned Community (ROC). There was discussion regarding the location and if it was located in the City or County. If it is outside the city limits, assistance would have to come from the State.

Tam Rodier thanked Rebecca for attending the September 23 City Council meeting and speaking in support of the HOME-ARP agreements, the CAPER, and CD staff. Spoken testimony carries great weight with the City Council and staff was touched by her kind words.

Public Comment: None.

Skyview Apartments Project / Jackson Street & King Avenue East: Gene Leuwer answered questions from Board members and discussed / explained project specifics including:

- South Billings Urban Renewal Association (SBURA) assistance.
- County "island" in the center of the parcel not currently under contract.
- Deed restrictions.
- Potential ditch issues.
- Montana Board of Housing (MBOH) meeting October 22, 2024, at which time a decision will be made on their Low-Income Housing Tax Credits application.
- Project approval process: Gene said if MBOH approves tax credits, and the Billings City Council approves the allocation of HOME funds, other funding would fall into place and the project would likely move forward.

- Nearby employment opportunities for residents.
- Monitoring by the State, City, tax credit folks, lenders, etc.
- Insurance and bonding.
- Replacement reserves.
- Space for community garden and dog park.

Rebecca said she noted in the staff recommendation memo that the \$1 million HOME allocation included about \$78,000 in future loan repayment revenue; she asked if this might become an issue. Brenda responded that while repayments have slowed recently, she is not at all concerned that the funds would be available before it is needed.

Board member Erica Doornek made a motion to recommend the City Council approve the application and the allocation of \$1,000,000 in HOME funds, contingent upon the State awarding tax credits and favorable environmental review results. Board member James Allen seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. A vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Meeting Minutes: Board member Erica Doornek made a motion to approve the September 3, 2024, minutes as written and distributed. Board member James Allen seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. A vote was taken, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Staff Reports:

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

1709 St. Johns Avenue: Tam said the interior work seems to be nearing completion and it looks fabulous—especially the refurbished hardwood floors on the main level. The basement looks great too with the new sheet rocked walls and ceilings, floors, doors and windows. The new waterproof basement flooring was installed in a beautiful herringbone pattern. She said she is not sure when it will be completed, but it may be as soon as this fall. An open house will be scheduled and we hope CD Board members, City Council members, and neighbors will attend.

1302 Parkhill Drive: Inspections have been completed. The next step will be to abate the asbestos and lead-based paint. As soon as abatement work has been completed, she will finalize the Invitation for Bids and Final Work List and will start advertising for bids.

Tam said she reached out Public Works and MET Transit staff to see what can be done to make the bus bench and sidewalk in front of the house accessible.

Tam shared a copy of the draft door hanger and related draft online survey. She said her plan is to walk the neighborhood and knock on doors to discuss the project with neighbors. The door hangers would be left at each house within about a 1-block radius. The door hangers will include a QR code to the short online survey.

Tam said she would be happy to give any interested CD Board members a tour of the property so they can see it in its current state; perhaps after the November 12 CD Board meeting.

- **North Park CDBG / CDBG-CV Projects:** Tam said the contractor is still working to complete final punch list items.
- **HOME-ARP:** Carly stated that:
 - She held subrecipient training sessions September 12 and 13 to go over monitoring and reporting requirements, policies and procedures, etc.
 - HomeFront decided they would not sign the Grant Agreement, so they will not participate.

- The City Council approved written Grant Agreements at their September 23 meeting (after pulling it from the Consent Agenda).
- So far, Alternatives and HRDC have signed agreements, and they may start providing services as of October 1. Pending insurance documentation, Native American Development Corporation (NADC), the agreement contract will be routed for signature. Two other organizations have yet to sign including United Way / Continuum of Care and RiverStone Health.
- Received comments that the Agreements / requirements were too cumbersome. Brenda noted, however, that the verbiage was pulled directly from the HOME-ARP regulations and could not be simplified.
- **Billings Metro VISTA Project (BMVP):** Carly Collins reported the following:
 - Eight (8) positions will be posted soon; one is the Leader position.
 - There will only be a February start date this winter (no January start date).
 - There are three (3) new host sites: Billings Parks, Recreation & Public Lands is advertising for a VISTA to assist with the development of a youth engagement project; Billings Police Department (Domestic Violence Investigations Program) is seeking a VISTA to assess family violence intervention and prevention strategies with community partners; and Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains will be looking for VISTAs to bridge service gaps for refugees in Billings in order to increase economic opportunities. She will bring position descriptions to the November Board meeting.
- **First Time Home Buyer Program (FTHB):** Tam reported she is trying to keep things moving forward. If all goes well, one family will close on the purchase of their home October 21. One new application was received, and she is processing.
- **Affordable Housing Development (AHD):** Brenda noted the City signed the Mitchell Court Agreements and GL Development “closed” with their lenders last week. Gene said construction will begin within the next few weeks.

Comprehensive Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER): Brenda Beckett went through the same PowerPoint presentation she gave to the City Council on September 23 and answered CD Board questions.

Neighborhood Concerns & Happenings:

Rebecca said she was happy to hear the City acquired 802 Yellowstone Ave and that it would be demolished. Wyeth said the Phase I Environmental is done. Asbestos and lead-based paint will have to be abated prior to demolition. The Phase II Environmental will then be completed. The good news is that it qualifies for EPA’s Brownfields Program (grants and technical assistance to assess and safely clean up). He noted however, that we may not see progress as quickly as we would like to see.

Denise Joy noted the Downtown Public Restroom (Portland Loo) needs to be moved due to the pending sale of the property next to it. An environmental review of the proposed new site must first be completed.

Erica said a Renaissance Fair will be held in North Park this Saturday and Sunday. It will encompass the entire park this year, not just the west side. She heard 4,500 people attended last year! There will be an entrance fee.

Rebecca said the Monster Drawing Rally at the YAM is this Friday, October 4, starting at 5:00pm. It will be part live art-making performance, part art bazaar, and part live auction.

Tam noted the first Tuesday in November falls on **Election Day**, so the meeting has been moved back a week.

Next Meeting: Board Chair Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 5:10 p.m. The next regular in-person meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m. on **November 12, 2024**, in the Large Conference Room at the Library.