



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION Community Development Board - Meeting Minutes

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Regular Meeting of the Community Development Board June 2, 2020

Board Members Present: Rebecca Noell, Joe Stockburger, Katrina Kruger, Jim Corson, Jessica Schmidt, Hannah Olson, Shane Noble, Council Member Denise Joy

Board Members Excused: Bret Rutherford, Laura Gittings-Carlson

Staff Present: Brenda Beckett, Dina Harmon, Tam Rodier, Carly Collins, 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 3:00pm.

Public Comment: No additional public comment.

Meeting Minutes: Board member, Jim Corson, moved to approve the May meeting minutes and Board Co-Chair, Joe Stockburger, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Staff Reports:

- **Billings-Metro VISTA Project:** CD Staff continues to recruit new VISTA members for full-year service terms beginning July / August 2020. Several candidates are confirmed already. Nationally, there has been an uptick in the number of applications received, which may be related to employment rates. Staff discussed there is still a demand for Host Sites and even though poverty rates have decreased, there will likely be a resurgence in need for capacity building during and after the pandemic. VISTA members were granted limited time to engage in direct service activities related to COVID-19. The B-MVP solicited donations, used sewing machines from the Library to create masks, and will assemble / distribute up to 200 hygiene kits for agencies that serve people in low-income situations.
- **First Time Homebuyer Program:** CD Staff reported that the program has been busy. Additional CDBG funding was allocated for households to continue receiving services through July. There are several pending closings for the remainder of the month.
- **Foreclosure Acquisition / Housing Rehabilitation Program:** The Request for Proposals on the 930 Steffanich property continue to be advertised on the City website and remain open until a contract can be executed.

CD Staff finished the work list and cost estimates for the property at 817 N 22nd Street. A video tour of the property was presented to the Board. Board member, Katrina Kruger, mentioned that CD Staff may need to check on legality / permit of the converted third bedroom on the property. There are both rental and single family homes in the area.

- **Housing Rehabilitation:** No new applications were submitted in May. One project is currently under construction, and three are moving toward closing. CD Staff will run a new "Seeking General Contractors" ad in Tidbits this month as well as perform outreach in order to reactivate previous contractors. CD Staff will also share a link that will be shared via department social media pages.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) COVID-19 / CARES Act Fund Update: Brenda presented additional updates (see attached presentation). Brenda attended a webinar with HUD and learned that it will be acceptable to submit an amendment to the Annual Action Plan to include CDBG-CV updates. HUD currently recommends waiting to make funding allocations until there are more distinct guidelines including monitoring expectations and best practices for avoiding duplication. Brenda proposed that any funding recommendations wait until HUD

provides more direction. Funds need to be allocated by 2022. Once a community assessment is complete, the results will be presented to the CD Board followed by City Council. Activities may begin following approval, then monitoring and reporting will commence. Expenditure deadlines are several years post the two-year allocation deadline.

Board member, Jim Corson, asked that Brenda share information and updates from local health officials and HUD about the ongoing needs in our community. Brenda agreed, noting that what we have from local health officials is guidance to be able to ramp up quarantine and isolation response efforts quickly, and then reduce them when the level of need decreases.

Brenda shared that several organizations already provide some type of response assistance, while other community agencies are considering more long-term response efforts. In order to support allocations made, CD Staff must ensure products / services are effective, the primary use for the facility is for COVID-19 or infectious disease response, and there must be equal opportunity for all organizations as it is federally awarded money. Organizations must be able to demonstrate the need, which could include infrastructure, businesses (these are often difficult to monitor), and / or public services. It was recommended that CD Staff move forward with a formalized needs assessment process. Brenda will share a complete list of potential community partners involved in response efforts (that could also be included in assessment process), and asked the Board to please share any others that should be included.

Brenda recommended that even though this is a non-housing Community Development need, CD Staff need to ensure that needs assessment / responses are HUD compliant. The CD Board inquired about how to go forth with a needs assessment. CD Staff and Board members shared ideas such as online surveys, paper cards, using an application (on smart devices), mailing questionnaires, etc. The CD Board will be involved in the assessment development and outreach process to ensure quality and consistency.

Review Allocation Process: The CD Board suggested the allocation review process be postponed until the next meeting.

Neighborhood Concerns and Happenings: Wyeth Friday made note of the Planning and Community Services Department's (PCSD) response to Phase II of the Governor's plan to re-open the state. The fourth floor of PCSD will be open to the public later this month once final counter shields and supplies are in place. The sixth floor will remain closed to the public, but will continue serving the public via appointment, drop-box, and online. All PCSD divisions are still encouraging online application submission to reduce in-person contact when possible.

Board member, Shane Noble, inquired about whether COVID-19 is affecting real estate and rental prices. CD Staff mentioned that they have not seen any major changes yet, but it could be too early to tell. Wyeth reported that new home, other project permit applications, and the amount of land use requests have been steady.

Next Meeting: Board Chair, Rebecca Noell adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:15pm. The next meeting will be held on July 7, 2020.