

City of Ashland - Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Ashland Housing Committee was held on **Wednesday, July 15, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. via GoTo Meetings.**

Committee Members Present: Sam Ray, Ana Tochtermann, Kathy Beeksma, Eric Lindell, Kaas Baichtal, Liz Franek, and Megan McBride

Committee Members Absent: N/A

Staff Present: Chris Luebben, Mayor Lewis

Visitors Present: Anne Whiting

Mayor Lewis opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m.

Agenda

1) Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Eric Lindell. Seconded by Kathy Beeksma. Passed unanimously.

2) Approve minutes from the June 10th, 2020 Housing Committee meeting

Motion to approve minutes from June 10th, 2020 Housing Committee meeting by Sam Ray, seconded by Liz Franek. Passed unanimously.

3) Citizen Comments

Kaas Baichtal commented that low income housing is still in great demand in the community.

4) Old business

a) Updates on property maintenance, HIP and CDBG

Chris Luebben provided updates on property maintenance, which is still focused on long grass and garbage issues at this time. She also noted that a contracted worker is now cutting grass and eliminating weeds at (mostly vacant) properties which had previously not been mowed yet this year.

Megan McBride explained that the department is still working to secure contractors, as many have been exceptionally busy as a result of people completing projects while at home related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Megan McBride updated the committee that there are currently four (4) preliminarily approved CDBG projects in various stages of inspections to determine needed project activities. All inspection procedures have been adjusted to ensure the safety of the inspector and potential program participants, which has slowed the overall timeline for each project.

- b) Final discussion of RFP for housing development on the City-owned Timeless Timber site.

Liz Franek asked how utilities in the surrounding area will be addressed to correct existing defects and ensure the increased demand that will result from developing the site will not have negative impacts on surrounding property owners.

Megan McBride explained that the Public Works Department is aware that the site will soon be marketed for redevelopment, and this creates opportunities to leverage private investment to make improvements to surrounding public infrastructure. There is grant funding available that can be paired with the commercial redevelopment which will occur on the northern 4.5 acres of the site to assist with public infrastructure improvements to support economic development activities.

Motion to recommend release of the Request for Proposal for residential redevelopment of the Timeless Timber site as presented by Eric Lindell, seconded by Kathy Beeksmas. Passed unanimously.

5) **New business**

- a) Updates on WHEDA Housing Grant Program application

Megan McBride explained that Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) has released their annual Housing Grant Program application. This grant is available for up to \$40,000 to support rehabilitation and construction of affordable housing and limited clientele housing (which serves veterans, victims of domestic abuse, seniors, homeless persons, chronically mentally ill persons, and other special needs populations). The application is due August 21, 2020 and Megan has reached out to the Dave Gallup Foundation (sober/transitional housing) and New Day Shelter (shelter for victims of domestic and sexual abuse) to offer assistance in preparing applications.

Anne Whiting asked if Crossroads had been contacted about their plans to create sober living and if they could benefit from this grant.

Megan McBride said that she had not reached out to them, but would contact Rich Larson after the meeting.

- b) Updates and recommendations on Strategic demolition projects

Megan McBride explained that \$3,500 was budgeted in 2020 to undertake strategic demolition projects. The Public Works Department has the equipment and expertise to demolish homes, so the budgeted funds would cover the cost of dumpsters. She would like input from the committee on if the City should establish guidelines and criteria for identifying and approving projects for strategic demolition.

Questions she would like the committee to consider for future discussion include:

- 1) What should the City do if a property identified for strategic demolition as a health and safety hazard to the community has an existing CDBG loan on it? Should the

loan be written off in order to facilitate demolition of the blighted structure? Should the City not pursue properties which have an outstanding CDBG loan?

2) Should the City place requirements on future use of the land to ensure future housing serves identified community needs (i.e. requirement for affordable housing)?

3) Should the City aim to acquire the land, or simply assist with costs of demolition?

c) Set next meeting date

The next meeting will take place via Go To Meeting on Wednesday, August 12, 2020 at 8:00 am.

6) Announcements

a) Updates on discussion related to housing vouchers.

Health Department and County Administrator stated they don't have a need for vouchers at this time beyond services they already offer.

b) Announcements

Mayor Lewis announced that free masks are available at City Hall for distribution to the community. Anyone interested in obtaining masks to distribute should contact the front desk of City Hall at 715-682-7071.

7) Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Sam Ray, seconded by Megan McBride. Passed unanimously.
--

Meeting was adjourned at 9:13 am. Minutes by Chris Luebben and Megan McBride.