

City of Ashland - Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Ashland Housing Committee was held on **Wednesday, August 12, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. via GoTo Meetings**).

Committee Members Present: Sam Ray, Ana Tochterman, Kathy Beeksma, Liz Franek, and Megan McBride

Committee Members Absent: Eric Lindell, Kaas Baichtal

Staff Present: Chris Luebben, Mayor Lewis

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

Agenda

1) Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Liz Franek. Seconded by Sam Ray. Passed unanimously.

2) a.) Approve minutes from the May 13th, 2020 Housing Committee meeting

Motion to approve minutes from July 15, 2020 Housing Committee meeting. Motion made by Kathy Beeksma, seconded by Ana Tochterman. Passed unanimously.

3) Citizen Comments

None

4) Old business

- a) Updates on property maintenance, HIP and CDBG
Chris Luebben provided updates on the process of property maintenance, still focusing on long grass and garbage issues at this time.

Chris Luebben reported that a contractor is moving into the area that is interested in the HIP program and has turned in a couple of proposals. She will continue working to get quotes from contractors, who are especially busy this year.

Megan McBride provided updates on the City's CDBG Housing Revolving Loan Fund (RLF), stating that an additional sizable loan had recently been repaid for a current balance of approximately \$200,000. Megan was recently informed by the Department of Administration who oversees the CDBG program that a new eligible activity is acquisition and demolition of blighted structures, for the purpose of reconstruction for affordable housing.

5) New business

- a) Discussion and recommendations on use of CDBG RLF funds for strategic acquisition, demolition and reconstruction activities.

Megan McBride explained to the committee that a new eligible activity under the City's CDBG Housing RLF program is acquisition and demolition of blighted structures, for the purpose of reconstruction for affordable housing. Therefore, the City could use a portion of the \$200,000 CDBG RLF balance to support the acquisition and demolition of blighted homes. The City could then use funding to rebuild new housing, or could donate the land at no cost to a non-profit who can build and manage affordable housing, or housing for special needs populations (senior housing, transitional housing, supportive housing, etc.).

Megan McBride emphasized some key limitations and requirements related to utilizing CDBG RLF funds for this purpose, including that:

- Funds *cannot* be used for new construction, only demolition and reconstruction;
- The density and size cannot be changed through reconstruction, i.e. a single-family home that is demolished must be replaced by a new single-family home of the same size; and
- The City is able to donate land to eligible non-profits who will construct affordable housing, and/or can construct housing which can then be sold to create affordable homeownership opportunities.

Megan McBride stated that the primary purpose for this discussion with the Housing Committee was to obtain feedback from the committee on:

- If they think acquisition/demolition/reconstruction is a good use of a portion of the City's CDBG RLF balance; and if so,
- If the City should prioritize donating properties for reconstruction of rental housing, focus on encouraging rebuilt housing be used to promote affordable homeownership, or a combination thereof.

Overall, the Committee expressed support for utilizing a portion of the City's CDBG RLF balance for this purpose, and for City staff to work with the County, non-profits focused on affordable housing, and other partners to discuss how a strategic demolition/reconstruction program could function. City staff will also work to create a rough inventory of possible lots for this purpose, and bring to the next meeting for more thorough discussion.

Ana Tochtermann asked if the City can utilize a Community Land Trust model where the City or a non-profit could continue to own the land, but sell the structure on it to further promote affordable homeownership.

Megan said she would contact the Department of Administration to obtain more information on this.

6) Announcements

- a) Lucas Phillips, formerly the Planning and Development Intern, has been hired as the City's new Main Street Manager/Assistant Planner.
- b) Kathy Beeksma noted that the Housing Authority is working to establish a voucher program targeted towards supporting youth in our community.

- c) Megan McBride updated the committee that the ADU ordinance amendments were adopted by City Council, and the Center on WI Strategies (COWS) and League of WI Municipalities have expressed interest in covering these updates in a future issue.
- d) Mayor Deb Lewis informed the committee of her efforts on collaborating with other regional communities to submit a proposal for the WHEDA Workforce Housing Pilot program. Only three applicants in the state will be awarded, with the focus on technical assistance, planning and implementation of a workforce housing project that meets community needs.

7) Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Liz Franek. Seconded by Megan McBride. Passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 am. Minutes by Chris Luebben and Megan McBride