

City of Ashland - Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Ashland Housing Committee was held on **Wednesday, November 18, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. via GoTo Meetings.**

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

Committee Members Absent: Eric Lindell

Staff Present: Chris Luebben, Mayor Lewis, Lucas Phillips

Citizens Present: None

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

Agenda

1) Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Liz Franek. Seconded by Kaas Baichtal. Passed unanimously.

2) a.) Approve minutes from the October 21, 2020 Housing Committee meeting

Motion to approve minutes from September 16, 2020 Housing Committee meeting by Kaas Baichtal, seconded by Kathy Beeksma. Passed unanimously.

3) Citizen Comments

Sam Ray noted that the Federal CARES Act Eviction Moratorium is scheduled to end on November 24, 2020, and expressed her concerns about how this will impact homelessness in our community.

4) Old business

a) Updates on property maintenance, HIP and CDBG

CDBG

Megan McBride explained that one long-standing loan had recently been paid off, and that Wayne Larson should be closing on the 718 4th Street East home (which the Housing Committee took action related to at their previous meeting) in the next month.

HIP

Chris Luebben reported that she is currently working with a contractor to obtain a bid to place new roofing on an applicant's home. This is an emergency situation, and we are trying to assist with the HIP program if possible.

Property Maintenance

Chris Luebben provided updates on the progress of property maintenance. Instructions are provided for snow shoveling, and proper garbage disposal protocols when property maintenance violation letters are sent.

Kaas Baichtal said that she has physically demonstrated and taught tenants of her properties and properties she manages how to shovel, including different uses for various types of shovels, for properties who chronically were not shoveling in a timely manner. She did see some success with this, and suggested it may be something for the City to consider in the future.

- b) Review and revision of City Housing Strategic Plan: Improve Safety and Quality of Housing Stock

Revisions discussed by the committee included:

- 1) The committee supported revisiting and drafting a pilot program for Voluntary Rental Inspections. Part of this process will include receiving feedback from existing landlords about proposed requirements and benefits of the program to make sure there is buy-in. The Planning Department will also develop a draft marketing plan for the program, as this will be helpful to help landlords assess if the program would benefit them.
- 2) The committee was in favor of continuing efforts to engage landlords, and amended that tenants also be included.
- 3) Include tenants in item around assessing information needs and making resources readily available online. They also recommended that the Planning Department send out a reminder about the existing resource page on the City website to landlords they have emails for.
- 4) The Planning and Development Intern will assist in developing a more robust marketing plan for the CDBG Revolving Loan Fund to maximize use of those funds.

5) New business

- a) Discussion of possible education strategies around housing types (affordable, workforce, market rate, etc.) and community needs

Megan McBride requested to have an initial discussion related to education and outreach needs and strategies around housing needs and types. Prompting this discussion has been questions and feedback she has received around the proposed residential development on the Timeless Timber site, with misinformation around affordable and workforce housing definitions and income limits as well as a belief that there is no need for additional housing in the City coming through in many of the responses.

Mayor Lewis said that she does not feel it is so much an issue of getting additional information out, but is rooted in fears around property maintenance issues and property value decline if affordable housing is constructed nearby. She pointed out that the company proposing to build 50 units on the Timeless Timber site has their own property management company who will manage the development, with an on-site office located in the proposed Club House.

6) Announcements

- a) Update of WHEDA pilot housing project
Mayor Deb Lewis noted that there was a meeting on November 12, 2020 to discuss next steps. A regional housing survey was sent out to identify housing needs.
- b) Update on development process for Timeless Timber residential development
Megan McBride announced that public information packets and input forms had been sent out to about 70 neighboring residents for input on the proposed commercial and residential developments of the Timeless Timber site. This was also posted on social media, the City website, and an article was published in the Ashland Daily Press. She requested that responses be returned in early December, and this feedback will be compiled and shared with the committee.
- c) General
Liz Franek emphasized the importance of thinking about warming shelters, and more broadly what the community can do to support homeless people as it gets colder. She asked how many homeless people we have in our area. Sam Ray said that according to information they have through The BRICK, about 100 families identify as homeless.

Kathy Beeksma announced that the program she has been collaborating to develop which provides housing vouchers to youth aging out of the foster care system has officially been approved.

7) Adjournment

The next meeting is scheduled for December 9, 2020 at 8:00 am.

Motion to adjourn by Ana Tochtermann. Seconded by Megan McBride. Passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:29 am. Minutes by Chris Luebben.