

City of Ashland - Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Ashland Housing Committee was held on **Wednesday, April 14, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. via GoTo Meetings.**

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

Committee Members Absent: Ana Tochterman, Liz Franek

Staff Present: Chris Luebben, Mayor Lewis

Citizens Present: Millie Rounsville

Mayor Lewis opened the meeting at 8:02 a.m.

Agenda

1) Consent Agenda

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

2) a.) Approve minutes from the February 10, 2021 Housing Committee meeting

Motion to approve minutes from February 10, 2021 Housing Committee meeting by Kathy Beeksma. Seconded by Eric Lindell. Passed unanimously.

3) Citizen Comments

Eric informed the members that he will no longer be on the City of Ashland Housing Committee, as he has been elected to the City council and will be focusing his attention there. He thanked the committee for their service.

Kathy Beeksma noted a trend occurring where landlords are selling their properties because the market is so favorable at this time, and the homes are largely being converted into single-family homes. This will potentially increase homelessness in our community as a result of the loss of rental housing.

4) Old business

a) Updates on progress with CDBG, HIP, and property maintenance

CDBG - Megan McBride noted that partial payment was made on a CDBG project, with \$6,000 remaining to be paid. Two big projects were closed: a roofing project (\$11,000) and a basement repair project.

Property Maintenance – Chris Luebben was unable to do her presentation due to internet issues. Megan McBride updated the committee that the house at 1319 Willis Avenue has changed ownership and the house has been recently demolished. The new owner will be building on that site. Also, the fire damaged house at 312 11th Avenue W will be demolished. The owner has secured a contractor and the structure should be

demolished in the near future. A free community clean-up event is scheduled for May 8, 2021 at various sites around the City of Ashland.

HIP – Megan McBride noted that the HIP program will contribute towards the cost of a dumpster at 312 11th Avenue W during the demolition project.

b) Updates and discussion regarding Task Force to address homelessness

Mayor Deb Lewis reported that the Task Force committee has identified four (4) major areas of recommendations:

1. Create a 24-hour emergency shelter. They will apply for state and federal funding for operations, rehab, etc. NWCSA would be the non-profit to operate the shelter, and the City would be the applicant for the CDBG grant;
2. Improve communication through the service provider(s) to the homeless;
3. Navigation and Assessment; and
4. Education. Educating the community and improving public relations.

Millie Rounsville provided details around the current process for creating an emergency shelter, and reasoning that the 24-hour shelter model was selected. She explained the great financial strain that providing hotel vouchers has put on their program. Additionally, due to bad experiences with clients breaking hotel rules (smoking, guests in the room, etc.), organizations are having a harder time even finding hotels/motels to work with for a voucher program. These factors make the existing hotel resources an unsustainable solution to addressing homelessness, which is why a 24-hour shelter was identified as a need. She explained that some funding does exist to support staffing of such programs, and the CDBG grant the City would apply for would go towards property acquisition and renovation into a shelter. .

Kaas Baichtal commented that she too is seeing trends of rental homes being sold and converted into single-family homes, further impacting the already very tight rental market. A part of this is related to negative experiences around property damage and/or drug use, prompting some landlords to sell property while the market is favorable.

Mayor Lewis noted that the Task Force committee will write a Letter of Intent to the Wisconsin Department of Administration to request submission of a full CDBG grant application. If the letter of intent is approved, a full CDBG application will be submitted later in the spring/summer.

5) New Business

a) Updates and discussion on public input process related to waterfront zoning districts and standards as they relate to housing

Megan McBride explained that the City is currently working with consultants to update the City's waterfront zoning and design standards to better reflect the Comprehensive Plan, Waterfront Development Plan, and other stated community goals. She showed the committee the public input platform used to gain feedback from residents regarding uses and aesthetics of future waterfront developments. Major factors for consideration related to housing include the desired density, how to incorporate without obstructing

public access or views, and how to create design standards that ensure future developments are compatible with the existing residential neighborhood. She encouraged committee members to take a look at the website on their own time, and she will bring back updates to the committee regarding any recommended housing related changes.

b) Discussion about timeline and logistics for a residential community clean-up day

Community clean-up day is scheduled for May 8, 2021. The clean-up flyer noted locations and time, and asks for proof of residency or a water bill. Megan McBride noted that residents without a water or utility bill can bring another form of identification. By having a community clean-up day, we hope to have an impact on the current garbage issues in the City of Ashland.

6) Announcements

Kathy Beeksma noted that the Housing Authority has vouchers available still due to the lack of rental housing and being under-leased.

Megan McBride will let the Housing Committee members know when the housing tax credits for the Timeless Timber site are available.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2021 at 8:00 am via Go To Meetings.

7) Adjournment

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

Meeting was adjourned at 9:01 am. Minutes by Chris Luebben and Megan McBride.