

City of Ashland - Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Ashland Housing Committee was held on **Wednesday, August 11th, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. via GoTo Meetings.**

Committee Members Present: Liz Franek, Kaas Baichtal, Anne Whiting, Eric Lindell and Megan McBride

Committee Members Absent: Kathy Beeksmma

Staff Present: Mayor Lewis

Citizens Present: Millie Brownsville, Elizabeth Seefeldt

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

Agenda

1) Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Eric Lindell . Seconded by Kaas Baichtal. Passed unanimously.

2) a.) Approve minutes from the May 12, 2021 and June 9, 2021 Housing Committee meeting

Motion to table approval of the minutes from May 12, 2021 and June 9, 2021 Housing Committee meeting by Liz Franek, seconded by Kaas Baichtal. Passed unanimously.

3) Citizen Comments

Kaas Baichtal said that there will be an article published by Rick Olivo in the Ashland Daily Press regarding the upcoming eviction moratorium lift.

Deb said that the moratorium will likely be extended and there is assistance available to people who are behind on rent and utilities.

4) Old business

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

Megan explained that the CDBG has been repaid and that another will be issued soon, there are also new materials for marketing the program. She continued and mentioned that Chris Lubben is no longer with the city, the position description is being updated, and the job posting will be made next week. There will be an update to the property maintenance violation procedure with the addition of a resource letter instead of a violation letter to integrate CDBG and HIP. Also there will be more emphasis on commercial buildings.

Kaas Baichtal asked if the position will continue to be full-time.

Megan explained that it will be a full-time, year-round position. The only changes will be some adjustments to the process to lead with resources and help promote HIP and CDBG funds available.

b) Updates and discussion regarding Task Force to address homelessness

Millie gave a brief summary from the Homeless Task Force meeting that occurred the day before. The meeting primarily focused on presenting the homeless shelter to the public, including what questions might come up including the length of time people can stay. There were also conversations about who should be contacted about this facility.

Deb Lewis mentioned Sara Adams will help with a public meeting before the conditional use permit hearing and that these things could take place in early September at the library.

Anne Whiting wanted clarification on the process regarding two hearings before the public.

Deb answered that because of the site's zoning, a conditional use permit will be needed. The public hearing is meant for the public to learn more about the facility and to ask questions. Sara has decided to help organize this meeting to help inform the public. These dates have not been set.

Liz Franek asked how many people the motel facility will be able to house.

Mille answered that it will theoretically house 34 households at a time, however the inspection will confirm that.

Deb Lewis mentioned that there are some people who will not be able to use the facility.

Millie elaborated that registered sex offenders and people with active warrants won't be housed. Individuals that are under 17 and those with recent violence convictions on their records will also not be allowed. However, accompanied minors under 17 can be housed.

Deb also mentioned that there will be rules that prohibit drug use in the facility.

Kaas asked if there will be mental health and other resources on site or if it is just housing.

Millie said that there will be case management, meals, housing navigation, referrals to other agencies. The shelter is still determining what other services would want to come on site.

Deb clarified that this is not a detox or drug treatment center.

Kaas asked if those resources can be provided.

Deb said that they are working to get resources for shelter residents on site.

5) New Business

a) Discussion and recommendation regarding priorities, approval structure and criteria for the Housing Improvement Program (HIP).

Mayor Lewis said that the HIP program has been around for about 6 years and explains the start of the funding was an anonymous donor who wanted to help people maintain their properties.

Megan McBride provided additional background about the program funding structure and typical projects. When the program was established, the Planning Director and an appointed liaison of the anonymous donor were placed in charge of vetting and approving projects based on eligibility criteria. With staff turnover and the fact that the original donor funding was expended several years ago, projects are currently reviewed and approved solely by Megan McBride (Planning Director). She said she would likely feedback from the committee on this review structure.

Eric Lindell said he did not feel every application would need to come to the Housing Committee for review, but said that adding income qualifications may be beneficial. He asked for details on how income limits would be set and administered.

Megan said that the same income guidelines used for the CDBG program would be utilized for the HIP program. This would increase administrative demands on Planning Department staff to review and collect required documentation for income limits of applicants.

Mayor Lewis said that the original intent of the program was to be accessible by having as little bureaucracy and hassle for the applicant as possible.

Anne Whiting said that she felt not having income requirements is fine since it isn't large grant amounts, and helps projects move forward faster. Eric agreed.

Mayor Lewis asked for a consensus from the group on if there should be changes to the existing HIP project approval process. The committee agreed that the process will remain as is, and projects will not come forward to the Housing Committee for review.

Megan McBride said that she is also looking for feedback from the committee regarding future funding and contractor solicitation strategies. She explained that one of the largest barriers for the program right now is contractor availability, as many of the projects are too small in cost to be attractive to contractors but are too technical to be completed by volunteer labor.

Mayor Lewis suggested this be discussed again at a future meeting to plan for the 2022 construction season.

b) Discussion and recommendations regarding priorities and timeline for marketing Beaser Avenue Redevelopment site.

Megan McBride explained that the last Request for Proposals (RFP) used to solicit development proposals for the Beaser Avenue Redevelopment Site was intentionally very broad in identifying development goals to allow for a variety of housing types. Megan would like feedback from the committee on having more specified development goals now that the City knows what type of residential use the Timeless Timber site will be used for.

Deb Lewis mentioned that the committee should look at the regional housing study that was done in 2021. This could be included to make better choices for our community.

Eric mentioned the long term financial impacts of this housing area and that we need a diverse housing market, so he recommended the City be very intentional about the type of development we want to see on this property.

Liz Franek said that she supports housing development that will provide for a variety of backgrounds and income levels, and would not want the goals to be so specific that it excludes quality proposals.

Megan asked for input regarding an appropriate timeline to begin updating the RFP and soliciting new proposals.

The committee agreed that there is no rush to develop this site, so the City should be patient and make sure the future use of the site diversifies housing options and is compatible with the current neighborhood. Neighborhood listening sessions could be held in the next year at the new Police Station to start getting input on what types of uses surrounding property owners think would make a good neighbor.

- c) Discussion and vote on future committee meeting format (virtual or in-person).

The committee agreed to continue to meet virtually in light of recent increases in COVID-19 cases. Meetings will continue to be held virtually, and this can be discussed again at a future meeting.

6) **Announcements**

- a.) Updates on residential development on the Timeless Timber Site

Megan McBride said that the developer, Commonwealth Companies, has been working on their site design plans and other required approvals related to their tax credit award. A Development Agreement will be coming forward to City Council this winter, and construction is anticipated to begin in spring 2022.

7) **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn made by Eric Lindell, seconded by Megan McBride. Passed unanimously.
--

Meeting was adjourned at 9:15 am. Minutes by Mandelyn Lyons and Megan McBride.