

City of Ashland - Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Ashland Housing Committee was held on **Wednesday, February 10, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. via GoTo Meetings.**

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

Committee Members Absent: Ana Tochterman

Staff Present: Chris Luebben, Mayor Lewis

Citizens Present: Millie Rounsville, Jody Sigrist

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

Agenda

1) Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Eric Lindell. Seconded by Liz Franek. Passed unanimously.

2) a.) Approve minutes from the January 13, 2021 Housing Committee meeting

Motion to approve minutes from January 13, 2021 Housing Committee meeting. Motion made by Kathy Beeksma, seconded by Sam Ray. Passed unanimously.

3) Citizen Comments

Jody Sigrist brought up the subject of homelessness and a warming shelter. Jody mentioned using city and county buildings for a possible warming shelter. Mayor Deb Lewis noted that she will follow-up with a call to Jody after the housing meeting.

4) Old business

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

CDBG - Megan McBride noted that several projects were paid out at the end of 2020 and there are several on-going projects. One is a down payment assistance project to support affordable homeownership. She noted that the 2021 income limits for the CDBG income qualification have not yet been released, but updated marketing materials will be created once this information is available.

HIP – Megan McBride will submit an application to the Chequamegon Food Co-op’s Chip Up program. If selected, it is anticipated that this could generate between \$800 to \$1,200 for the HIP program. Mayor Deb Lewis mentioned her conversation with Pastor Jim Deters, of the UCC Church. They have talented volunteers who could possibly assist with projects.

Property Maintenance - Chris Luebben reported that she is responding to on-going garbage issues. Also, Chris is currently working on bed bug issues in partnership with the Ashland County Health Department.

b) Updates and discussion regarding Task Force to address homelessness

Mayor Deb Lewis reported that she is working to convene a Task Force soon to address homelessness, and has begun recruiting members. She will continue to update the Housing Committee about their progress as this Task Force moves forward.

c) Review and recommendation of revisions to Housing Strategic Plan

Megan McBride reviewed the changes to page 7 of the City of Ashland Strategic Housing Plan.

- Page 7, heading B. Establish Voluntary Rental Property Inspection Program: Made any amendments to heading B, paragraphs 1, 2, 3 to update timelines and responsible parties for this item. The intent is to work on background research and design of a program in 2021, with pilot program implementation targeted for 2022.
- Page 7, heading C. Continue efforts to engage landlords *and tenants*: Heading C, paragraph 2, will add language to include tenants as a target audience for these education efforts.

Kaas Baichtal noted that for a fee, **petscreening.com** will screen and answer inquiries regarding verifying certification of emotional support pets in rental properties.

Megan McBride reviewed pages 8 and 9 of the City of Ashland Strategic Housing Plan.

- Page 9, heading A. Promote rehabilitation of historic existing buildings for housing purposes. Sub-paragraph 1. Complete a downtown housing study. Kaas Baichtal asked for the "downtown area" to be defined.
- Page 9, heading C. Partner with affordable housing developers
Megan McBride changed the timeline. Move the "Beaser Avenue site" to be an individual sub-paragraph; to be listed under sub-paragraph 1. "ID city owned lots and actively market".
- Address homelessness and adequate housing projects. Language changed to rapid rehousing and permanent rehousing. Millie Rounsville explained the differences between Rapid vs. Transitional Housing.

Megan McBride will make edits according the committee input provided, and will email out the final draft to be taken to City Council for approval.

5) **New business**

a) Updates and discussion on public input related to Timeless Timber site residential development proposal

Megan McBride informed the committee that she mailed out 70 information packets with public input forms included to surrounding property owners of the development, and also posted this information on the City website and social media. The information packets included the Cover Letter and site plans received in the developer's RFP, as well as a form that residents could use to provide comments. Questions on the form asked for feedback related to the compatibility of the proposed project with surrounding uses, and proposed design of the development. She asked the committee for feedback on if the committee would recommend moving forward with the proposed development after considering public feedback, and if so what specific considerations for site design should be included in negotiations.

Mayor Lewis asked when the developer, The Commonwealth Companies, will find out if they were awarded the Housing Tax Credits which they applied for through Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority.

Megan McBride said that the results should be announced by late April, 2021.

Recommendations for the development to be brought into Development Agreement negotiations included:

- 1) Prioritization of pedestrian infrastructure and accessibility;
- 2) Sewer and stormwater infrastructure impacts to the surrounding area should be considered and likely upgraded to support 50 new residential units; and
- 3) Consider improving pedestrian safety and trail connectivity across U.S. Highway 2 with a lighted crossing or other similar traffic control measure.

Megan McBride pointed out to the committee that there were some misunderstandings about what affordable housing is, who is eligible for it, and what it means to have additional affordable housing in our community. She asked for committee feedback regarding the need and possible strategies for public education around this project and affordable housing more broadly.

Kathy Beeksma offered to send Megan some materials the Housing Authority has previously used to educate about services they offer, and provide affordable housing facts.

Motion to recommend that City Council move forward with a Development Agreement with The Commonwealth Companies for residential redevelopment of the Timeless Timber site made by Eric Lindell, seconded by Sam Ray. Passed unanimously.

6) Announcements

The next meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2021 at 8:00 am via Go To Meetings.

7) Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Liz Franek, seconded by Sam Ray. Passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:11 am. Minutes by Chris Luebben and Megan McBride.