

## **City of Ashland - Housing Committee Meeting Minutes**

A meeting of the Ashland Housing Committee was held on **Wednesday, June 9, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. via GoTo Meetings.**

**Committee Members Present:** Liz Franek, Sam Ray, Kaas Baichtal, Anne Whiting, and Megan McBride

**Committee Members Absent:** Kathy Beeksma

**Staff Present:** Chris Luebben, Mayor Lewis

**Citizens Present:** Millie Rounsville

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

### **Agenda**

**1) Consent Agenda**

Motion to approve the agenda by Sam Ray. Seconded by Kaas Baichtal. Passed unanimously.

**2) a.) Approve minutes from the May 12, 2021 Housing Committee meeting**

Motion to table approval of the minutes from May 12, 2021 Housing Committee meeting by Sam Ray, seconded by Kaas Baichtal. Passed unanimously.

**3) Citizen Comments**

None.

**4) Old business**

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

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) –Megan McBride informed the committee that an updated flyer with the 2021 household income limits has been created, and was sent to a variety of community partners to post. Information will also be provided to realtors to provide to prospective homebuyers. A project totaling approximately \$15,000 in project cost recently was completed, bringing the overall fund balance to approximately \$175,000. Multiple loans are anticipated to be repaid in the near future, so additional efforts will be done to market the variety of project types which CDBG funds can support.

HIP – Chris Luebben said that she recently received two (2) new HIP applications.

Kaas Baichtal inquired if we can start earlier in the year seeking contractors for HIP work. Chris Luebben responded that ads to solicit bids from contractors were released in November of 2020 and again in May of 2021, with no results. Chris explained that she will continue to work to find qualified contractors and/or volunteers to move approved projects forward.

Property Maintenance – Chris Luebben explained that that property maintenance continues to focus on issues involving garbage and long grass in the City.

b) Updates and discussion regarding Task Force to address homelessness

Millie Rounsville with Northwest Wisconsin Community Services Agency explained that the Task Force is working to open a 24 hour shelter in Ashland this fall. An offer was put in on a property contingent upon receipt of a grant to support the project, and the location will be announced if the purchase offer is accepted.

Mayor Deb Lewis noted that a new council member was sworn in the previous evening and expressed concerns that a homeless shelter would draw people from other areas. She asked if there are requirements or restrictions that other communities utilize to limit this.

Millie Rounsville responded that there isn't evidence to suggest that a homeless shelter will draw in people from other areas, but a local need has been identified which the shelter would be designed to serve.

**5) New Business**

a) Review and vote on Resolution to submit a Community Development Block Grant Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) application

Mayor Lewis explained that the proposed resolution is for the City to apply for Community Development Block Grant funding, which is specifically designated for COVID-19 relief. The grant application is to secure funds for acquisition of a suitable building for a homeless shelter, with the remaining grant funding used for necessary renovations. The City would be a pass-through for this grant, and NWCSA would own and operate the shelter.

Millie Rounsville explained that the issue of homelessness was worsened by COVID-19 in many ways, which is why this proposed use is an eligible activity with CDBG-CV funding.

Motion to recommend approval of the Resolution to submit a CDBG-CV grant for acquisition and renovation of a homeless shelter by Liz Franek, seconded by Sam Ray. Passed unanimously.
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b) Discussion about zoning and licensing regulations for rooming houses

Mayor Deb Lewis reviewed the definition of rooming house, which typically has separate living spaces with shared kitchen, restrooms and common spaces. Rooming houses are inspected and licensed.

Millie Rounsville noted that rooming houses can meet the needs of people who need affordable housing and do not need a lot of space, while ensuring that proper licensing and inspections are completed to promote health and safety.

Liz Franek said she feels that the addition of more rooming houses in the community could really help with the homeless situation.

Kaas Baichtal expressed that the definition and regulations should be reviewed and clarified.

Mayor Deb Lewis suggested that this topic be discussed at a future meeting, after examples from other communities are gathered and relevant community partners are contacted for their input in any local policy changes related to rooming houses.

- c) Discussion and recommendations regarding future fundraising strategies and program goals for the Housing Improvement Grant Program

Tabled until the next Housing Committee meeting.

**6) Announcements**

The next meeting is scheduled for July 14, 2021 at 8:00 am via Go To Meetings.

**7) Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn made by Kaas Baichtal, seconded by Anne Whiting. Passed unanimously.
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*Meeting was adjourned at 9:15 am. Minutes by Chris Luebben and Megan McBride.*