

City of Ashland - Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Ashland Housing Committee was held on **Wednesday, May 12, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. via GoTo Meetings.**

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

Committee Members Absent: N/A

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 April 14, 2021 Housing Committee meeting

Motion to approve minutes from April 14, 2021 Housing Committee meeting, after the following changes were made:
Also present at the April 14, 2021 meeting was Liz Franek, B&B clarification, and voucher clarification.
Motion to approve made by Sam Ray, seconded by Liz Franek. Passed unanimously.

3) Citizen Comments

Kaas Baichtal said that the Ashland Business Alliance recently had a discussion regarding housing development at their meeting. They identified the need for housing for new professionals, particularly healthcare professionals, who would like to relocate to Ashland for work but struggle to find quality rental housing. An idea that came out of this discussion was for the City to extend utilities to desirable areas of the community which would be suitable for housing development.

4) Old business

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

CDBG - Megan McBride noted that two projects were completed within the last month, one project which involved extensive basement repairs and the other was the replacement of a roof.

Property Maintenance – Chris Luebben commented that property maintenance violations continue for garbage issues around the City. She included Community Springtime clean-up flyers with letters sent out the past 2 weeks.

The Mayor noted that the Community Springtime clean-up on May 8, 2021 was highly successful. The City Administrator would like to schedule a second clean-up possibly in the Fall.

HIP – Chris Luebben noted that she recently received two (2) new HIP applications, which will be reviewed for program eligibility.

b) Updates and discussion regarding Task Force to address homelessness

The Task Force has identified the need for a 24-hour shelter as a priority. Logistics which are involved in this effort include building a shelter, staffing, coordinating supportive services, and funding. The City is exploring the possibility of applying for Community Development Block Grant funding for COVID-19 relief (CDBG-CV), and has received approval of the Letter of Intent to do so. The full application will be due in July.

Millie Rounsville explained challenges that they are experiencing through their voucher program, which can provide vouchers to homeless individuals for hotel stays. Both funding and the ability to find available hotel rooms are challenges, prompting the need for a more permanent shelter to address these growing community needs. The Task Force has been exploring several different locations for a shelter, and is in negotiation with one property owner.

Liz Franek suggested that public input be gathered related to the location and need for a homeless shelter, particularly once a location is determined.

The Mayor agreed that public outreach and education will be very important during the planning and renovation of a new shelter.

5) New Business

a) Discussion of opportunities and strategies for facilitating additional housing development to meet identified community needs

Megan McBride provided a presentation highlighting language from the Comprehensive Plan and Housing Strategic Plans related to Ashland's housing needs, and in-fill sites which could be amenable to housing development. She explained that Commonwealth will be moving forward in 2022-2023 with their 51-unit affordable housing development, and asked the committee for input regarding priorities and strategies for attracting other types of housing which have been identified as community needs.

Mayor Lewis said that the City's focus needs to be on affordability since these projects are less likely to happen otherwise. She also emphasized the importance of developing underutilized infill lots, which can use existing infrastructure and add vibrancy.

Anne Whiting noted the need for housing for middle income people as well, including both rental and ownership options.

Millie Rounsville said that City of Superior is exploring offering buildable parcels for free to people who can demonstrate approved financing for construction of a new home on the lot as a means of incentivizing infill development.

Mayor Lewis suggested that additional outreach and education about Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) could also help to promote desirable infill development.

Anne Whiting emphasized the need for all types of housing, and that promoting affordable housing does not preclude development of needed market rate housing as well.

Mayor Lewis said that the City's role in facilitating housing development is in connecting opportunities with developers.

Millie Rounsville asked if Ashland allows boarding/rooming houses, and if we currently have any in the City.

Mayor Lewis suggested that the Housing Committee further discuss the topic of boarding and rooming houses to review current regulations.

6) Announcements

None

The next meeting is scheduled for June 9, 2021 at 8:00 am via Go To Meetings.

7) Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Kaas Baichtal, seconded by Anne Whiting. Passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:18 am. Minutes by Chris Luebben and Megan McBride.