

Workforce Housing Steering Committee Minutes

March 24th, 2021 4:00pm - 5:30pm

Meeting Purpose: Monthly workforce housing steering committee meeting to discuss and take action on Committee mission and goals.

Attendees: Eric Allen, Kristen Hobson, Jenn Capp, Robin Adams, Martha Brown, Angie Hazelswart

Minutes:

1. **Introduction of Guests (2 minutes)**
2. **2022 Housing Needs Assessment Draft Presentation (20-25 minutes)**
 - a. See recording and attached slides
 - b. Discussion and feedback:
 - i. Utility disclaimer on housing cost question
 - ii. Merge short-term and vacation rental data for presenting
 - iii. How does needs assessment data compare to other cities? Put in framework of what's going on in the rest of the nation.
3. **Owner-Built Housing Status Update (5 minutes)**
 - a. First group still not closed, waiting on a final letter from the Spires HOA attorney approved filing RHT Homeowner's Association Declarations.
 - b. 3 homes interiors all painted, started putting flooring in Amanda's house this week.
 - c. Beartooth Electric Cooperative will be hosting tours of the "Beartooth House" during the following times:
 - i. April 30: 10 AM – 3 PM
 - ii. May 7: 12:30 PM – 3 PM
 - iii. May 14: 10 AM – 3 PM
 - d. Robin said that there are two solid households for the next cycle, but we still need to select two more. The next two will likely come from new applicants, which will require additional outreach. Some discussion on barriers to qualifying/applying and strategies to get the word out.
 - i. Eric shared info about program to Roberts school, Robin has shared with local superintendent/principals, with Beartooth Billings Clinic and other local employers. Robin will reach out to RLM and the mine as well.
 - ii. Barriers discussed – Kristen says she runs into a lot of people that think that the program is for single women with children. Other potential issue is earning above income, but still can't afford the current market when there are two earners in a household.
 - iii. Robin asked about connecting with realtors to get client referrals to people that can't afford what's on the market but still have a stable income. Every other week on Wednesday there's an ML tour, Marcella would know if they're still doing that. Robin will ask.

4. CDBG Funded Projects Update (10 minutes)

- a. CDBG CARES – Environment Assessment underway, likely completion date in May provided there are no abnormalities found on site. RLACF, Trust Montana, and Habitat are meeting monthly and as needed to implement. City Council passed 3 resolutions at the meeting on Tuesday 3/22, and will be taking action on an additional 2 resolutions on 4/12 (designating the City’s engineering firm as the environmental certifying officer and amending the budget to include CDBG CARES funds).
- b. CDBG Planning – checking off start-up requirements in order to begin contract with Cushing Terrell. Robin said a learning experience has been the length of time needed to overcome these administrative hurdles and recommends incorporating more time for this initial work in future CDBG grants. Workforce Housing Study / PAR expected to begin in early April.

5. Altana Construction Loan (Chris Lorash, 10-15 minutes) – tabled to next meeting

6. Other News/Updates (5-10 minutes)

- a. Robin brought up a client case for discussion regarding an applicant that was living in Red Lodge in a rental when their landlord sold. They were unable to find another suitable rental locally so they moved to Billings, but are interested in applying for the Owner-Built Housing program in order to have a home in Red Lodge again.
 - i. Under our current requirements, the client would not qualify due to not living and/or working in Carbon County.
 - ii. General consensus with those present that an extenuating circumstance could be extended to this applicant provided they were able to prove their previous residency in Carbon County and circumstances described. Robin will reach out to the client for more information, and will allow them to apply if the evidence provided is satisfactory.
- b. RCDI Grant Program
 - i. RLACF and Beartooth RCD are applying for a Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) Grant to fund capacity-building activities in the areas of housing and financial literacy/homebuyer education. This could fund existing Workforce Housing activities over the next three years as well as expand the programming to research feasibility of establishing a regional housing authority / nonprofit entity. Contact Robin for more info (406) 426-1983.
- c. April 16th community build day!!
 - i. 8:30am – 4pm, volunteers can work a half day if necessary
 - ii. RSVP required: <https://forms.gle/K6Cx72kYaJvLz4N7>
 - iii. Aiming for 18 people total, Eric working on food donation for lunch.
 - iv. Kristen will talk to people at the hospital as well since their merit increases are contingent on volunteering in the community. Kristen will keep in touch with Eric about maybe doing a Beartooth Billings Clinic Saturday separately if there is enough interest.

7. Meeting Summary (5 minutes)