

Minutes: WFH Steering Committee

March 18th, 2021 4:00pm

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

Attendees: Russ Born, Val Smith, Tesla Palmatier, Jacob Kuntz, Hermina Harold, Robin Adams, Jo Ann Eder, Morgan Marks, Hope Azzaratta-Rubyhawk, Myrna Lastusky, Sandy Conlee, Steve Simonson, Chris Lorash, Kristen Hobson, Theresa Whistler, Marcella Manuel

Minutes:

February Open Forum Debrief, Identify Next Steps

- ☐ Forum Summary: Heard a big push for long term rentals for workers, had many business, economic development, and county/city perspectives represented and it was a positive discussion. Will
- ☐ Next steps discussed:
 - a. There may be appetite for partnerships and collaboration between businesses, the school, the hospital, and other large employers in the area.
 - b. Beartooth RCD may be able to propose an Economic and Development housing coordinator staff position, like they are in Bighorn County. They are pursuing this in Bighorn County per county commissioners' request. Robin will share this grant proposal with the group for our future reference.
 - c. Beartooth RCD is holding a Community Development Block Grant hearing at the Carbon County commissioner's meeting on April 20. Steve will share information with Robin to pass to the committee and forum attendees.
 - d. Hermina voiced that the housing situation is also rough in Missoula. Currently do not have long-term rentals in their CLT portfolio. Northern Missoula has 54 units of homeownership, Trust Montana has 6 for homeownership.
 - i. Housing Trust Fund is an also option. Department of Commerce is getting \$11 million for the HOME program shortly.
 - ii. Carbon County received 590,869 of CARES act funds, City of Red Lodge had \$284,000. \$5 million of stimulus money for SPA, businesses, agriculture, schools, etc...
 - iii. These funds must be used on items related to COVID, which can include infrastructure which housing fits into. City is looking into applying for water and sewer now.
 - e. City of Helena funded a 'housing navigator' position and placed with a local nonprofit, focused on getting people into rentals. Homeward in Missoula also

funds a full time 'Landlord Liason' position to connect renters with landlords and provide financial education.

- f. Steve Simonson recommended we invite the City of Billings to the next meeting to explore how to form a Housing Authority.
- ☐ The Committee at the next meeting will need to discuss:
 - a. Funding for another year full time WFH coordinator
 - b. Funding for a VISTA position

Status and Timeline of Owner-Built Housing Program

- ☐ 3 spots - 2 likely picks, couple of options for third spots. Collecting income verification documents, Morgan is visiting RL in late April to have in person meetings with potentials for next round. The Beartooth Electric house will be wrapped into the next round, rather than sold as a spec house.
- ☐ Committee does not need to do home visits or be involved with selections unless we have over 5 qualified applicants.
- ☐ Volunteers: for now we are holding off on launching a full volunteer campaign, groups will be the first to tap into, starting in May or June. If there are individuals who are semi-experienced and can volunteer consistently at the build site, we may be able to allow them on a case-by-case basis. More info to come at next meeting.
- ☐ There have been dramatic increases in material costs, so the single-family home price for this next round will be roughly \$25,000 higher. There is capacity for 10 additional units. Covenants in Spires neighborhood have some build requirements, but the lot across the street is multi-family so it would be possible to build a multi-plex. Habitat has courtyard plans, could possibly accommodate plans for covered parking and storage on the lot. Height restriction is in the process of being changed.

Fun Run 2021 Workforce Housing Participation

- ☐ General consensus that Workforce Housing will apply to participate this year, applications is due by March 31. Chris Lorash is the primary contact, Jo Ann is the secondary contact and will apply once Robin sends them the info. Funds could be raised for the WFH Solar Fund (\$12k), the next Full time WFH Coordinator, or the VISTA position (\$5k).
- ☐ Robin will be leaving the WFH Coordinator position in mid-late August for grad school, so it's important to think about funding for extension of this staff position now.

Americorps VISTA for Workforce Housing

- ☐ In early March, a host site application was submitted to Rural Dynamics for RLACF to host a VISTA member. Scope of work includes a housing needs assessment, volunteer

coordination/management/recruitment for MSH site, updated county-wide strategic plan, long-term rental research and development.

- ☐ Depending on how soon we can recruit a member, they will start sometime June – August 2021.
- ☐ Robin will send the VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) via email to the Workforce Housing Committee for approval before submitting during or before the second week of April.

Committee Updates

- ☐ HOME Fund Committee update (*Sandy Conlee, Chris Lorash, Marcella Manuel*)
 - a. The City is planning on partnering with Dina Harmon, the City of Billings' HOME program coordinator for our program administration since she has experience managing applications and compliance with the State.
 - b. Waiting to receive guidance from Montana Department of Commerce on:
 - i. How the City can create its own purchase price limits, since the existing HUD limits are very low for our area
 - ii. Partnering with an outside entity for administration.
 - c. The next round of HOME grants are due the middle of September, with an additional round of CDBG available in June. For the City to qualify to receive additional HOME funds, they must spend the recaptured funds first, so the program should be set up by summer.
- ☐ ADU Committee (*Val Smith, Kristen Hobson, Gretchen Nolan, Don Redfoot*)
 - a. Val:
 - i. Zoning board is updating zoning regs. Setbacks
 - ii. We're reaching out to construction people who have experience with smaller units. Adam Quick and Russ Born were contacted. Underlying cost is higher with the water, sewer, and utility info. Russ has put feelers out and is waiting for feedback.
 - iii. Looking into applying for AARP grant

Beartooth Front Community Forum Housing Webinar – May 13th

- ☐ Planning meeting Friday, March 19th at 12. The webinar will include a panel of experts giving short presentations with time for Q&A from attendees.
- ☐ Speakers/topic ideas
 - a. Hermina Harold: CLT
 - b. Jacob Kuntz: Habitat

- c. CLDI in Billings has a phased housing program, have rental units that they move into homeownership
 - i. Eric Basey just announced senior housing / tiny homes project. Val and Jo Ann are familiar with their program, they did a site visit there years ago.
- d. Revisit the BFCF 2018 forum housing and compare it to progress made to show the movement.
- e. How to fund/incentivize affordable housing development
- f. Matt Goebel of Clarion Associates: Planning and Zoning tools at City/County level
- g. Other topics discussed: ADU development and education, Homeward and NeighborWorks as models, Big Sky Community Housing Trust's new rental development announced earlier this year.

City of Red Lodge Planning Board 2016 Zoning Regulation Updates

- The City of Red Lodge is updating its zoning regulations, there was a general consensus that the Workforce Housing Steering Committee will submit a letter to the board with specific recommendations of zoning policy tools that could incentivize affordable housing development.
- Robin and Tesla will draft a letter and submit for approval by the WFH Committee in mid-April, then clear with the Executive Director before formally submitting to the Planning Board. We'll aim to have this letter approved and ready for submission at the April 28th Planning Board meeting.

Workforce Housing Strategic Plan

- Decided to postpone this discussion until after the May 13th BFCF Housing Webinar.

5:34 pm: Adjourn

Next meeting is Thursday, April 22nd at 4pm