

**Blair County Housing Trust Fund (Act 137) Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes**

Blair County Courthouse Conference Room 4B

November 13, 2019

Present: Jim Hudack, Melissa Gillin, Sergio Carmona, James Gehret, Brian Durbin, Scott Durbin, Trina Illig, Commissioner Bruce Erb, and Jennifer Kensinger

Jim Hudack welcomed everyone.

Approval of Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

The minutes of August 14, 2019 meeting and the Agenda were emailed to the Advisory Board members prior to today's meeting.

Scott Durbin made the motion to accept the minutes as presented. Jim Gehret seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Jim reported that he was contacted by PA Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) to do a phone survey regarding the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The intent of the survey is to gather information on what the Affordable Housing Trust Fund is used for, as well as, how the money is disbursed across the Commonwealth. Jim will receive a copy of the survey results once completed.

Act 137 Account Balance

- Act 137 Account current balance as of November 2019 is \$500,111.01.

Blight/Demolition Fund Account Balance

- The Blight/Demolition Fund Account Balance as of November 2019 is \$67,003.65.

Program Updates

First Time Home Buyer Program

- Sergio reported that there are 2 individuals who have had their intakes completed through Blair County Community Action Program (BCCAP). Those individuals are actively looking for homes. A third individual is having their intake done November 13, 2019.

Weatherization/Housing Rehab Program

- Sergio reported that the last roofing repair submitted is to be completed within a day or two. At this time, no other repairs are scheduled to be done.
- Sergio stated that a lot of the homes that BCCAP have been going into have severe water penetration or moisture issues in the basement. Those estimated repair costs are in the range of \$10,000. Roofing repairs exceeding \$5,000 are another issue. Sergio stated that the last roofing repair estimate came in at \$8,000. BCCAP was able to get the contractors to give an estimate on doing half the roof and that came in at \$5,000 so half the roof was repaired.
- Sergio asked if the Advisory Board would consider increasing the \$5,000 weatherization cap to be able to address more of the roofing issues in the area.
- Jim Hudack asked Sergio to collect data from the past few months and going forward on any deferred properties needing repairs that exceeded the allotted amount, as well as, the actual repair cost estimate so that data can be shared with the Advisory Board at the February 12, 2020 meeting.

- Jim informed the attendees that one person did complete the First Time Home Buyers Program, but was unable to purchase the home due to the mortgage company advising BCCAP that the individual would not be able to afford the home.

Homeless Shelter

- Brian Durbin reported that Homeless Shelter is moving forward quickly. The building was acquired by Family Services in July 2019. A Federal Home Loan Bank Application in the amount of \$750,000 has been submitted. Updates on the application are happening frequently.
- Brian distributed a booklet on the Blair County Shelter Task Force – Family Shelter.
- Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) representatives were able to commit to Family Services \$250,000 per year for 3 years on tax credits
- A meeting is to be held with a number of banks on Friday, November 15, 2019.
- Brian informed the attendees that 788 individuals looking for housing have been turned away.
- Jim Hudack added that there has not been a major push yet with the Capital Campaign. Jim stated that individuals, businesses or organizations may choose to fund certain areas of the shelter such as the kitchen or elevator.
- Jim read a written request by Lisa Hann, Executive Director of Family Services, asking for approval to use the \$200,000 in committed funds from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Jim stated that the Advisory Board needs to take action to approve the \$200,000 in funds so that he can take it to the Blair County Commissioners for approval so that when Family Services needs to draw down from those funds that invoices will come to Social Services for processing. Jim further explained that the Finance Committee will determine which pot of funds that they will draw down from for the various projects.
- Trina Illig, Grants Coordinator for Community Development, stated that the \$75,000 PHARE Grant is to be used to remove the ramp inside the building and reconstruct the second floor.
- ***Scott Durbin made a motion to approve the expenditure of the \$200,000 for use toward the Shelter from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Jim Gehret seconded the motion. All present were in favor. Motion carried.***
- Jim will keep track of any spending of that \$200,000 and give a report to the Board at the February 2020 meeting.

Other Program Options:

Lead Abatement Program

- Trina reported that one unit is underway in the City of Altoona. At this point, \$20,000 of the allocated \$50,000 has been spent on that one unit.

Blight/Demolition Fund

- Jim informed the attendees that there are 2 new projects up for consideration. All six of the past, approved projects have been completed and paid for. Jim stated that for every \$1 being spent, \$2 is leveraged.
- Jim reported the first project to consider is a property located at 201 North Main Street, Roaring Spring. Roaring Spring Borough is requesting \$7,972.00 from the Demolition Fund. Roaring Spring Borough will match \$3,000 in their funds toward the demolition.

- *Jim Gehret made a motion to approve the Roaring Spring Borough's request for \$7,972.00 from the Demolition Fund to demolish the home located at 201 North Main Street, Roaring Spring, PA. Scott Durbin seconded the motion. All present were in favor. Motion carried.*
- Jim asked Trina to detail the second project located at 424-426 West First Street, Williamsburg. The property is a duplex in which Williamsburg Borough owns the one side (424) while the other side is owner-occupied (426). Trina distributed photos of the property. Trina explained that Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) spent \$34,000 to clean out the 424 (right side) of the property. Williamsburg Borough is requesting \$10,000 from the Demolition Fund to demolish the right side of the property located at 424 West First Street, Williamsburg. Williamsburg Borough will contribute \$5,000 to the demolition. Trina stated that CDBG will use \$125,000 in funds to rehabilitate the owner-occupied 426 side.
- *Scott Durbin made the motion to approve the request for \$10,000 from the Blight/Demolition Fund to demolish the right side (424) only of the property located at 424-426 West First Street, Williamsburg, PA. Jim Gehret seconded the motion. All present were in favor. Motion carried.*

Next Steps

Furnace Repair or Replacement Proposal

- Tabled to the February 2020 meeting.

Home Grant

- Jim reported that the Home Grant will become available sometime in the Spring of 2020.
- Jim, Missy and Trina have had discussions of asking for a smaller grant that would match the Weatherization and the 1st Time Home Buyers Programs.
- Trina added that the aforementioned programs would need to be expanded to qualify for the Home Grant.

TEAMeffort

Jim Hudack distributed a hand-out on TEAMeffort Youth Mission Camp. Scott Durbin presented details about TEAMeffort. TEAMeffort comes to Blair County for eight weeks in the summer to do basic property maintenance. TEAMeffort spends approximately \$10,000 in funds doing these light construction area projects. Scott said that team leaders and area church members determine what homes need work done months prior to coming here in the summer. Trina stated that she has some homeowners who are in need of repairs on their home, but are on the bottom of a waiting list and asked if they could benefit from this program. That possibility will be explored. Jim will have a more detailed budget and description of the projects that TEAMeffort is planning on doing in Blair County to present at the February 2020 meeting. To be able to do more projects, Jim would like to match the amount of money TEAMeffort spends in the County.

Jim mentioned that the Point In Time Count for the Homeless is January 22, 2020 beginning at 5:00 pm. This effort involves volunteers going into the Community looking for homeless individuals and providing them with a backpack of essential items. If interested in participating, contact Sergio.

Tabled Items Revisited: Jim discussed going to the Commissioners and requesting an increase in the fee for the recording of deeds and mortgages from \$7.50 to \$15.00. Some discussion followed advising that the request probably would not get approved at this time. Jim is going to explore the possibility of asking for the increase after compiling supportive data to show the need for the increase to help build the funds in the Demolition program. Jim is also going to discuss the matter with Nathan Karn, County Solicitor. Jim should have information to present to the Board at the February 2020 meeting.

Rural Impact County Challenge (RICC) Learning Cohort Update

- Missy reported that there have been 2 webinars and 1 on-site visit to Lake Placid.
- Missy and the other members of the Blair County team were given a survey that they need to take. The team will collectively meet to review and submit the survey to the Cohort.
- Missy stated that a common theme with all counties participating in the Cohort is affordable and adequate housing.

Other Discussion Topics

Jim informed the attendees that the 2020 Affordable Housing Trust Fund meeting schedule was included in the agenda packet. Due to Veteran's Day following on Wednesday, November 11, 2020, the November 2020 meeting will be held Thursday, November 12.

Trina informed the remaining attendees of the meeting that Blair County was awarded a HOME Grant. The County is starting off small with 10 units for rehabilitation in the City of Altoona and Logan Township. This first grant is dedicated for non-entitlements. Trina stated that a future goal is to combine the CDBG programs by having the City of Altoona and Logan Township on board to incorporate the Lead and Healthy Home programs to do more work in 1 unit to make it a Healthy Home. Trina explained that it is a conditional grant. There would be a 5 to 8 year lien on the mortgage, but if you stay in the home, there is no payback.

Sergio asked the Board if there was any possibility of creating a Winter Emergency Hotel Stay Fund. Sergio explained that the Homeless Assistance Program (HAP) has restrictions. Other issues are that there is not enough affordable housing in the area, as well as, a backlog of clients in need of assistance. Sergio stated that individual hotel stays need to be increased from 1 week to 2 or 3 week stays.

- In response to Sergio's request, Trina stated that there is no limit on assistance through PHARE funds, but funds are not to be used long term. Trina added that 2019 Emergency Solution Grant (ESG) does not have homeless prevention so in turn BCCAP received twice as much in PHARE funds. Trina advised Sergio that PHARE funds could be used how they could best benefit their clients.
- Missy added that at the last Housing Roundtable that someone suggested using AirBNB, which is a website that lists short term rental properties, as housing since those rentals may be less expensive than hotels.
- In the standpoint of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, Jim stated that it may be looked at as transitional housing since it would be 2 to 3 weeks stays. Jim said that temporary housing is a topic that should be further explored.

Jim closed the meeting and wished everyone a good holiday.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, February 12, 2020** at 8:15am at Conference Room 4B.