

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

Blair County Courthouse Conference Call Only

May 13, 2020

Present: Jim Hudack, Melissa Gillin, Sergio Carmona, James Gehret, Scott Durbin, Commissioner Bruce Erb, Buddy Hann and Jennifer Kensinger

Board Members Absent: Cheryl Johns and Donald Delozier

Jim Hudack welcomed everyone, read a statement about how the public meeting would be conducted and asked for roll call of all teleconference participants.

Approval of Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

The minutes of February 12, 2020 and Emergency April 1, 2020 meetings, the Agenda and an updated Advisory Board list were emailed to the Advisory Board members prior to today's meeting.

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

Jim announced that Donald Delozier was appointed as a Board Member to the Affordable Trust Fund Advisory Board on May 1, 2020. Mr. Delozier replaced Scott Williamson, whose term expired on May 1, 2020.

Jim thanked Scott Durbin and Buddy Hann for accepting to serve another two (2) year term on the Advisory Board through May 1, 2022.

Act 137 Account Balance

- Act 137 Account current balance as of May 2020 is \$515,694.88.
 - ❖ Commitment of current funds include:
 - Homeless Shelter: \$201,500
 - COVID-19: \$50,000
 - Lead Abatement: \$30,000 (approximately)
 - Team Effort: \$10,000

Remaining balance between: \$210,000-\$220,000

Blight/Demolition Fund Account Balance

- The Blight/Demolition Fund Account Balance as of May 2020 is \$91,183.01.
 - Current Commitments in the amount of \$10,000 each to the City of Altoona and to Williamsburg Borough.

Status of accounts for April:

Act 137 approximately \$2,000 short of the average

The Blight/Demolition Fund approximately \$1,000 short of the average

Program Updates

COVID19 Update

- Jim Hudack stated that approximately 80% of his time and focus has been related to COVID-19.
 - ❖ Housing for Homeless Update
 - Sergio Carmona, Blair County Community Action Program (BCCAP) Executive Director, reported that assistance was requested from Blair County to assist the Homeless. \$50,000 was awarded in assistance.
 - Over 50 households were moved into hotels due to the funds. Through other funding streams, some of those households were able to be moved into permanent housing.
 - Currently, there are 35 households being housed in 1 of 3 different hotels. Early on, BCCAP canvassed area hotels and found a total of 4 that would offer housing for under \$1000 a month.
 - On May 8th, 2020 the 9 households that were placed at the Altoona Grand Hotel had to be relocated. Out of those 9 households, 4 were placed in permanent housing and 5 were relocated to other hotels.
 - Sergio stated that those households will continue to be housed in hotels until May 30, 2020 using the \$50,000 from County funds. From now until then, BCCAP will continue to move those households into permanent housing using one of their other funding streams.
 - Funds are being reserved in case an individual(s) would need housing to self-quarantine or while they are awaiting results back from a COVID19 test.
 - BCCAP is distributing meals/boxed foods to those households in need.
 - BCCAP staff is in constant communication with the households.
 - Jim Hudack commented that final approval has not been received from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) for the \$50,000 in reallocated funds. Additional funds may be available if need to extend beyond the end of May 2020.
 - Jim also commended BCCAP on their tremendous efforts implementing and sustaining this program.
 - Jim addressed the moratorium on rental evictions in effect until July 10, 2020.

Landlord Survey Results

- Melissa Gillin shared results from a survey created by her and “Housing the Homeless” group that was sent to Blair County landlords.
- To date, Missy received 66 landlord responses. Questions included eviction reasons, rent reduction requests, lapse in rental payments, rental vacancies, eviction workgroup.

Eviction Reasons:

1. 14 responses indicated eviction due to employment changes in the past 60 days
2. 22 responses indicated habitual non-payment
3. 7 responses indicated illegal drug or criminal activity

As of now, the 66 landlords who responded indicated a total number of 72 pending evictions.

Rent Reduction Requests:

1. 17 responses indicated requests have been made
2. 49 responses indicated requests have not been made

Lapse in Rental Payments:

1. 30 responses indicated yes to lapse in rental payments
2. 36 responses indicated no to lapse in rental payments

Rental Vacancies:

1. 28 responses indicated they had rental vacancies

Eviction Workgroup

1. 38 responses indicated that they would be willing to participate in a workgroup to discuss eviction issues.

Mediation Program (Evictions):

- Missy discussed a “mediation program” that would involve a mediator (3rd party individual) who would help the landlord and tenant work out a compromise to help prevent the situation to going to Court. Judge Doyle is willing to participate in the workgroup.

First Time Home Buyer Program

- Sergio stated due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the First Time Home Buyer Program is on hold.

Weatherization/Housing Rehab Program

- Sergio stated due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Weatherization/Housing Rehab Program is on hold. Sergio stated the program will not be resume until Blair County goes into the “Green Phase” of the reopening plan of the County.

Homeless Shelter

- Jim Hudack reported that meetings are being held in regards to the Shelter.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, things are basically at a standstill.
- In regards to some funding streams, contract deadlines will be extended.
- Architects and developers continue to work on final set of plans for the Shelter.
- Sergio commented that work has resumed on the “new” BCCAP building.
- Scott Durbin detailed the progress of the BCCAP building with tentative July 1, 2020 completion date.

Other Programs:

Lead Abatement Program

- Jim Hudack reported that the program has been approved and expanded, but County has not received the final executed contract from the Department of Health to move forward on it.

Blight/Demolition Fund

- Jim reported the last approved project was for a property located at 1106-1100 7th Avenue, Altoona. Once the County “reopens”, the City of Altoona will take further action to get the building torn down. The property will have approximately a \$100,000 lien on it.

Next Steps

Furnace Repair or Replacement Proposal

- On Hold

HOME Grant

- On Hold

Winter Emergency Hotel Stay

- On Hold

Future Projects

- Sewer Line proposal to be presented by Trina Illig at August 2020 meeting.

TEAMeffort

- Scott Durbin stated that TEAMeffort is planning on being in Blair County beginning July 1, 2020 to start light construction work.
- Jim asked Scott to have someone from TEAMeffort contact him to set-up the invoice and data gathering process.

Rural Impact County Challenge (RICC) Learning Cohort Update

- Missy reported that the next RICC Web meeting is May 14, 2020. The last RICC Web meeting is June 11, 2020. Missy will have an update for the Board during the November 2020 meeting.

Open Forum:

Scott made the suggestion of looking into helping individuals being placed into permanent housing with bedding (mattresses/box springs/frames). Scott has been working with Bob Saylor (Bob’s Beds). Jim to follow-up with Scott on this over the next couple of weeks.

Buddy stated that Reliance Bank was crushed with refinancing loan applications. He is optimistic that there will be an uptick in revenue in the next couple of weeks.

Jim thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, August 12, 2020** at 8:15am at Conference Room 4B. If COVID-19 restrictions are in place, the meeting may be held via teleconference.