

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

Blair County Courthouse Commissioners' Suite

May 15, 2019

Present: Jim Hudack, Melissa Gillin, Sergio Carmona, James Gehret, Buddy Hann, Scott Durbin, Cheryl Johns, Helen Schmitt, Commissioner Bruce Erb, Trina Illig, Lisa Hann, Sue Ann Feather, Lisa Peel, Rodney Green, Marty Marasco and Jennifer Kensinger

Jim welcomed everyone. Self-Introductions were made.

Approval of Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

The minutes of February 21, 2019 meeting and the Agenda 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.

Reappointments

Jim congratulated and welcomed back Cheryl Johns and James Gehret for another 2 year term as Board Members of the Blair County Affordable Housing Trust Fund Advisory Board.

Act 137 Account Balance

- Act 137 Account current balance as of April 30, 2019 is \$457,079.75.
 - Commissioner Erb asked if any of the Act 137 Funds are committed or encumbered.
 - In response, Jim stated that currently \$50,000 is set aside for Lead Abatement, as well as, approximately \$14,000 to \$18,000 for the Home Grant.

Blight/Demolition Fund Account Balance

- The Blight/Demolition Fund Account Balance as of April 30, 2019 is \$79,940.96.

Program Updates

First Time Home Buyer Program

- Jim included updates to the First Time Home Buyer Program in the agenda packet.
- Jim reported that 4 families have taken advantage of the First Time Home Buyers Program.
 - Home Locations of First Time Home Buyer Participants include:
 - 1 Tyrone
 - 2 City of Altoona
 - 1 Juniata Section of Altoona
- Sergio stated that new mailings advertising the program are in the works.
- The contact person for the First Time Home Buyers Program is Amy Compton at Blair County Community Action Program (BCCAP).

Weatherization/Housing Rehab Program

- Jim included updates to the Weatherization Program in the agenda packet.
- Jim reported that there has been 1 request submitted to BCCAP for a roof replacement in the amount of \$8,200 which is \$3,200 above the Weatherization Program's threshold. This request is still a work in progress.

Homeless Shelter

- Lisa Hann passed around proposed renderings of the homeless shelter located at 2300 North Branch Avenue, Altoona (former Drenning Building). The drawings depict the shelter, as well as, 6 permanent apartments.
- Family Services has \$235,000 in reserves to purchase the building.
- Secured Funds for the Shelter include:
 - Letter of commitment from the City of Altoona for, at least, \$115,000.
 - \$50,000 commitment from Reliance Bank
 - \$75,000 raised from Capital Campaign
 - \$150,000 commitment from Act 137 (Affordable Housing Trust Fund)
 - \$175,000 commitment from Blair HealthChoices reinvestment dollars
 - \$253,550 from Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement (PHARE) fund.
 - \$1,500 from Affordable Housing Trust Fund to use toward marketing.
 - Lisa reported that an application was made to the Federal Home Loan Bank, but was denied. Once requirements are met, Family Services will reapply.
 - Family Services also applied for HUD Home City Allocation for \$184,000.
- Shelter Task Force Meeting is May 16, 2019.
- Lisa reported WTAJ (TV 10) has offered to do a segment on Homelessness to help educate the Community.

Other Program Options:

Lead Abatement Program

- Tina Illig reported that the Lead Hazard Control Contract with the Department of Health has had a slow start due to the Federal Government shut down earlier in the year.
- Blair and Cambria County are new additions to the Program.
- \$85,000 is allocated for the program which is enough to do 5 units.
- 1 unit is committed.
- Trina reported that the Program states that there must be a pregnant woman or a child under the age of 6 in the residence, who has tested positive for lead poisoning, to receive funding.
- The unit committed has 1 child whose lead poisoning has climbed from Oct 2018 testing of 17 to January 2019 testing of 20. The base number for lead poisoning is 5.
- Cheryl Johns commented about adding Lead Abatement to the November 2019 Annual Landlord Workshop.
- COBRAH is scheduled to inspect the first “project” unit. Work slated to begin in the next month or so.
- Trina is meeting with the Department of Health to discuss getting the funds that are expiring to be moved to October to be able to get a few more units in.
- Through the Head Start Program, 11 families tested positive for lead poisoning, but none of those families have responded back.
- Lead Abatement is the goal of the Program, but may do encapsulation, if possible.

- If weatherization issues are found, BCCAP can come out to audit to see if the residents would qualify for the Weatherization Program.
- Scott Durbin expressed concerns about total cost of lead abatement.
- Trina stated that \$25,000 in funds is allotted for lead abatement in 1 unit.

Blight/Demolition Fund

- Jim included a copy of the County of Blair Demolition Fund Application submitted by Roaring Spring Borough in the agenda packet.
- Jim informed meeting attendees that Roaring Spring is the first municipality to submit an application to the Blight/Demolition Fund for the demolition of 2 (two) residential homes located at 215 and 223 Main Street, Roaring Spring, PA.
- Lisa Peel, Sue Ann Feather and Rodney Green attended the meeting on behalf of the Roaring Spring Borough.
- Marty Marasco, Keller Engineers, gave a detailed presentation to the attendees describing Roaring Spring Borough's plans to demolish two homes along North Main Street. An aerial photo of North Main Street was shown to inform all of the extent of the blight, as well as to describe, any future plans to correct the issues if all properties are acquired by the Borough.
- Cheryl Johns asked in relation to federal funds what the median income was for the properties being discussed.
 - To answer Cheryl's question, Marty stated that a study has been done and that the median income is low to moderate which would make the properties eligible for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Jim stated a few more details on the criteria for submitting an application to receive federal funds.
- The Roaring Spring Borough is requesting from the Blair County Demolition Fund \$10,000 for the demolition of the property located at 215 Main Street and \$10,000 for the demolition of the property located at 223 Main Street.
- Cheryl Johns reported that there is a new Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant program called Neighborhood Stabilization Blight Grant Program.
- Jim Hudack informed the Roaring Spring Borough representatives of the next steps that would be taken if the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Advisory Board approved their application requests.
- Lisa Peel, Roaring Spring Borough, reported that due to the deterioration of the aforementioned properties and the collapsed/unstable retaining stone wall the Borough has closed the lane of the road exiting (North) Main Street.
- Roaring Spring Borough representatives and Marty Marasco exited the meeting once the presentation ended.
- Jim clarified for attendees that Roaring Spring Borough is asking for a total of \$20,000 from the Demolition fund to demolish two properties.
- Jim asked for a motion from the Advisory Board to approve the Roaring Spring Borough Project requesting a total of \$20,000 from the Demolition Fund to demolish two properties.
- ***Cheryl Johns made a motion to approve the Roaring Spring Borough's request for \$20,000 from the Demolition Fund to demolish two homes. Buddy Hann seconded the motion. All present were in favor. Motion carried.***

- Helen Schmitt, County Administrator, reported that the County acquired a property at 1530-32 18th Street, Altoona, through repository on June 20, 2018. The City of Altoona put a “Blight” designation on the property on November 6, 2018. Helen furthered explained the County took ownership of the property through non-payment of taxes. The County received notification from the City of Altoona to raise or restore the property. The County did not want to put money into restoring the property to correct violations. In turn, Helen worked with Mary Johnson, (City of Altoona), who was able to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to demolish the property. The total cost of the demolition was \$13,421.66. The County’s portion of that is \$7,171.18.
- Helen Schmitt requested approval from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Advisory Board to acquire funds from the Blight/Demolition Fund in the amount of \$7,171.18 to cover Blair County’s portion of the cost for the demolition of a property that was located at 1530-1532 18th Street, Altoona, PA. A letter and an invoice from the City of Altoona, as well as a picture, was included in the Agenda packet.
- ***Cheryl Johns made the motion to approve County Administrator Helen Schmitts’s request for \$7,171.18 from the Blight/Demolition Fund to cover Blair County’s portion of the demolition of the property located at 1530-1532 18th Street, Altoona, PA. Scott Durbin seconded the motion. All present were in favor. Motion carried.***
- Discussion was made about the possibility of building another structure on the lot such as a mini home.
- Sergio commented that mini home construction should be researched due to the fact that many low to moderate income individuals/families cannot afford rent in the area.
- After a few Blight/Demolition Projects are completed, the Advisory Board will revisit discussing making a recommendation to the County Commissioners to increase filing rates from \$7.50 to as high as \$15.00.

Next Steps

Furnace Repair or Replacement Proposal

- Sergio Carmano, BCCAP, is currently working on updates.

Home Grant

- Jim reported that the Home Grant has come out. First application is in June 2019. Second application is in November 2019.
- Two components in the Home Grant are: Deferred Weatherization and First Time Homebuyers Program.
- The Home Grant is being looked at to perhaps write a small grant covering the two aforementioned areas that would allow the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to leverage additional money. Since this is a Federal Home Grant, a lien would be put on the home for a period of five to ten years. Home Grant would also have to be a partnership between the City of Altoona and Logan Township.

Other Discussion Topics

Scott Durbin informed the meeting attendees of a church-based group, referred to as Team Effort, who come to the area once a year on June 1st and stay eight weeks and do light construction and maintenance on homes. Scott suggested the Advisory Board may be interested in partnering with the group. Jim stated that he would like to sit down and talk with the group's leaders about that program to see if a partnership would be possible for next year.

Jim closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, August 14, 2019** at 8:15am at Conference Room 4B.