

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

**Blair County Courthouse Conf Room 4B**

**February 21, 2019**

**Present:** Jim Hudack, Melissa Gillin, Sergio Carmona, James Gehret, Buddy Hann, Helen Schmitt, Steve Williamson (By Phone) and Jennifer Kensinger

Jim welcomed everyone. Minutes were reviewed with no corrections or additions noted.

**Act 137 Account Balance**

- Act 137 Account current balance as of January 1, 2019 is \$459,057.87.
- Jim stated under Act 137 that the Housing Trust Fund can have up to 15% of Administrative Funds. The County takes out 5% which amounted to \$4,684.34. At this time, the Housing Trust Fund has chosen not take out their 10% for operations so that those funds can go back into the Community.
- In 2018, \$93,686.99 was deposited into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

**Blight/Demolition Fund Account Balance**

- The Blight/Demolition Fund Account Balance is \$70,119.88.

**Program Updates**

*First Time Home Buyer Program*

- Jim reported that 2 participants have completed the First Time Home Buyer Program. One participant was under the old program of \$5,000. The 2<sup>nd</sup> participant was under the new program of \$3,000.
- Jim reported that there are additional participants who are looking into the Program.

*Weatherization/Housing Rehab Program*

- Missy included a spreadsheet in the packet showing details of the Weatherization Program Projects/Repairs.
- Jim reported that 2 properties were done in 2018 and 2 additional properties done in 2019.
- Affordable Housing Trust Funds requested for the 4 projects totaled \$16,205.08. Additional Funds leveraged were \$23,181.06.

*2001 Resolution Section 2/Blair County Affordable Housing Fund Board*

- Jim informed the Board that the 2001 Resolution Section 2 states that any applications made to the fund are to be discussed before the Blair County Affordable Housing Fund Board.
- Currently, the First Time Home Buyer Program and Weatherization Program applications are vetted, reviewed and approved through Blair County Community Action, but according to the Resolution all applications need to be reviewed by the Board.
- Helen Schmitt, Chief Clerk, attended the meeting and further explained to the Board, that as the Resolution now stands, all the Program Requests, Funding Requests and Program Dollars must be reviewed by the Board, but the Board could decide to delegate all those

decisions to Jim Hudack. Furthermore, any decisions made by the Board, on changing the current review process, would have to be brought in front of the Commissioners since they adopted the ordinance and current review process.

- Helen discussed some options that the Board could consider to comply with the Ordinance, such as, the Board Meeting more frequently, or having conference calls to review applications submitted to the Programs for draw down of funds. To comply with the Sunshine Laws, since the meetings are Public Meetings, a newspaper ad would need to be placed announcing any or all upcoming meetings.
- Helen reiterated that the Board can also request the Board of Commissioners to consider changing the process for which the requests are approved. She stressed that it is the Advisory Boards' decision to advise the Commissioners what they think would be the best option.
- Jim mentioned that some of these requests are emergency requests that need to be acted upon quickly.
- Jim recapped the options:
  - Board can keep current process of meeting 4 times a year and any projects that come in can be put on hold until they can be reviewed.
  - Board can meet more frequently to review all projects.
  - Board can keep current process of \$3,000 Grant for First Time Home Buyers and up to \$5,000 for Weatherization reviewed and approved through Social Services. Anything over \$5,000 would be reviewed and approved by Board, but again stated to continue that process that it would have to be brought before the Board of Commissioners since the current Ordinance states that the Board must review and approve any requests of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.
  - Jim mentioned electronic voting as an option, but it is not a good option with it being outside of a public meeting.
- Helen reminded the Board if they would decide to go before the Commissioners to change the Ordinance that they would still have the opportunity at future meetings to review who had received the money.
- ***Steve Williamson made a motion to recommend to the Board of Commissioners to revise the Ordinance of the 2001 Resolution Section 2 to delegate the authority of reviewing and approving all applications made to the First Time Home Buyers Program, with a cap of \$3,000 grant, to the Department of Blair County Social Services. Buddy Hann seconded the motion. All present were in favor. Motion carried.***
- ***James Gehret made a motion to recommend to the Board of Commissioners to revise the Ordinance of 2001 Resolution Section 2 to delegate the authority of reviewing and approving all applications made to the Weatherization Program, with a cap of \$5,000, to the Department of Blair County Social Services. Buddy Hann seconded the motion. All present were in favor. Motion Carried.***
- Jim reminded the Board that all other projects such as Lead Abatement, Blight and the Shelter would need to be discussed at future meetings to discuss and decide how to proceed.

### *Homeless Shelter*

- Jim reported that the final stages of acquisition with the Shelter are occurring by the end of March 2019.
- Capital Campaign is at approximately \$52,000.
- TV Channel 10 has agreed to do special news coverage free of charge.
- Individuals/Institutions may sponsor a room at an estimated cost of approximately \$175 a square foot.
- Federal Home Loan Bank turned down loan for Shelter. One of the biggest deficits was not having acquisition of the building.
- Shelter issues include Shelter location in Altoona is considered a rural area by USDA, but forms on USDA classify it as an urban area.
- ABCD Corp. was not recognized as the official entity to certify.
- Currently, over \$700,000 in funds for the Shelter are available.

### **Other Program Options:**

#### *Lead Abatement Program*

- Jim reported that there has been no movement with the Lead Abatement program.

#### *Blight Process Fund*

- Jim included the Blair County Demolition Fund Guidelines in the Agenda packet.
- The Guidelines were approved by the Blair County Commissioners in January 2019.
- The Guidelines state that the Affordable Housing Trust Fund will give up to \$10,000 for a demolition of a building.
- The Municipality has an extensive application to fill out.
- Any applications to the Blight Process Fund would be brought before the Board for review and approval.
- 24 Municipalities and 2 Housing Authorities have received all information, in regards to this Fund, but no applications have been received to this date.
- Jim stated that the Fund is also available for Blair County to use.

#### *Furnace Repair or Replacement Proposal*

- Sergio Carmano, BCCAP, prepared a Furnace Repair or Replacement Proposal that was distributed to all attendees of the meeting.
- BCCAP (Blair County Community Action Program) is proposing to address the issue of maintenance and/or repair of home heating units year round.
- The proposed Furnace Repair or Replacement Program would be available to Homeowners and Landlords who qualify under the HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) income guidelines.
- Jim suggested talking with the Gas & Electric Utility Companies to see if they would be willing to share in the expense of the repair or placement.
- Some concerns were raised in regards to landlord participation in the program since only the income guidelines apply to the tenant.

*Other Discussion Items*

- Helen Schmitt asked the Board if the day of the meeting could be changed to a Wednesday or Friday morning at 8:15 AM so that Commissioner Erb could attend the meetings. Jim is to email all Board Members a survey to see which day would be best for them to meet.
- Melissa Gillin, Quality Assurance & Housing Coordinator, will be facilitating the meetings beginning in August 2019.
- Jim will be talking with members who need to be re-appointed in May of 2019.

**Next Meeting:**

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for **Wednesday, May 15, 2019** at 8:15am at Commissioners' Suite 4<sup>th</sup> Floor.