

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

Blair County Courthouse Conference Call Only

August 12, 2020

Present: Jim Hudack, Melissa Gillin, Sergio Carmona, James Gehret, Donald Delozier, Scott Durbin, Commissioner Bruce Erb, Buddy Hann, Trina Illig, Christina Stacey, Jean Cupp and Jennifer Kensinger

Board Members Absent: Cheryl Johns

Jim Hudack welcomed everyone. Jim introduced Don Delozier, newly appointed Board Member as of May 2020, to the Advisory Board meeting attendees. Don informed the Advisory Board that he is a Life-time Blair County Resident, Contractor and a Business Owner (U.S. Hotel Tavern and Prime Sirloin), who also serves on the Family Services Board of Trustees. Don replaced Steve Williamson.

Approval of Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the May 13, 2020 meeting and agenda were emailed to the Advisory Board members prior to today's meeting.

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

Jim announced that Jean Cupp, Social Services' Fiscal Officer, will be handling the financial oversights of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and the Demolition Fund.

Act 137 Account Balance

- Act 137 Account current balance as of July 31, 2020 is \$533,541.59.
 - ❖ One (1) current commitment of funds includes:
 - Homeless Shelter: \$201,500

Approximate total of committed funds stands at \$300,000.

Blight/Demolition Fund Account Balance

- The Blight/Demolition Fund Account Balance as of July 2020 is \$94,107.12.
 - Current Commitments stands at \$40,913.90.

Due to COVID-19, there was a drop in deposits to the Demo fund during May and June, but deposits increased in July 2020.

Program Updates

COVID19 Update

- Jim Hudack reminded the Board that an emergency meeting was held in April to approve \$50,000 in emergency funds to house the homeless.
 - ❖ Housing the Homeless Update:
 - Jim reported, to date, that 101 households were served to include 138 total individuals with 107 being adults and 31 being children. Out of those being sheltered, 72 households were moved out of hotels into permanent housing, using other funding streams.

- Jim commended Blair County Community Action Program (BCCAP)'s staff for the success of Housing the Homeless.
- Sergio commented that BCCAP, according to their list, is showing approx. 70 homeless individuals still in the area. BCCAP will use additional funding received to locate the homeless to help move them into a more permanent situation.
- Jim stated that since this project was COVID related that there is a good chance that the \$50,000 will get reimbursed by one of the COVID-19 relief funds. If that happens, the intent is to keep that reimbursement in a reserve to use if negatively impacted again in the latter part of 2020 and into the early part of 2021. If not need for that purpose, it will revert back to Act 137 account.

First Time Home Buyer Program

- Jim Hudack reported that, currently, there are no new applications for the program, but one (1) participant who started the program prior to the COVID-19 restrictions, may resume the process to complete the program.

Weatherization/Housing Rehab Program

- Jim reported that there were two (2) weatherization projects presented to the Commissioners at their August 11, 2020 meeting.

Project Locations & Weatherization needed:

- 2195 Kettle Road, Altoona, PA
 - Roof Replacement in the Amount of \$2,800
- 293 Sunset Drive, Hollidaysburg, PA –
 - Furnace Repair in the amount of \$3,125

Questions:

Trina Illig asked Sergio if BCCAP has Repair/Replace Standards to determine whether the program would repair or replace. Trina clarified that her program requires at least 5 (five) years out of a repair. Sergio responded that the standards of BCCAP's program are set by the State and the Department of Energy.

Don Delozier asked Sergio if BCCAP has to have a number of bids before getting approval for one. Sergio responded that anything to do with HVAC is not required to have a bid process. Each contractor that BCCAP works with submits an annual job price list to BCCAP, which the State also has access to. BCCAP does advertise for contractors, but has difficulty getting new ones due to the various courses and certifications that the Department of Energy and State require of contractors to be able to do this type of work.

Jim Hudack requested the Board make a motion to approve the two (2) weatherization projects named above.

Scott Durbin made a motion to approve the two (2) weatherization projects. Buddy Hann seconded the motion. All present were in favor. Motion carried.

Homeless Shelter

- Jim Hudack reported that meetings are being held every month in regards to the Shelter.
- Current Shelter improvements consist of abatement of asbestos and lead in the building.
- Other funding streams are being sought after.
- COVID-19 hindered fund raising especially with the Capital Campaign.

Other Programs:

Lead Abatement Program (Trina Illig)

- Lead Abatement Program, through the PA Dept of Health, has about \$284,000 in funds.
- 19 units must be completed before February 2023.
- 3 units are currently underway.

Blight/Demolition Fund

- Jim reported that there are two (2) properties to be presented to the Board for approval.
- The first property, a church, is located at 1106-1110 7th Avenue, Altoona, PA. The estimated cost of this project is around \$100,000. The City of Altoona is requesting \$10,000 from the Blight/Demolition Fund.
- The second property is located at 521 8th Street, Altoona, PA. The property is in the County Repository. The City of Altoona is matching \$10,000 in funds. Amount requested from the Blight/Demolition Fund is \$8,950.
- Total amount being requested for the 2 (two) projects is \$18,950.00. Matching funds would be approximately \$100,000.
- Jim verified for Buddy Hann that the Blight/Demolition Fund has approximately \$53-\$54,000 in uncommitted funds. The \$40,913.90, in committed funds, does include the two forementioned projects.

Jim Hudack requested the Board make a motion to approve the requests for funds from the Blight/Demolition Fund in the amount of \$10,000 for the property located at 1106-1110 7th Avenue, Altoona, PA and in the amount of \$8,950 for the property located at 521 8th Street, Altoona.

Buddy Hann made a motion to approve the two (2) demolition projects. Scott Durbin seconded the motion. All present were in favor. Motion carried.

Jim reported that completed Blight/Demolition Fund projects include 1420 Washington Street, Altoona, PA. Payment is in process.

4 (Four) projects are outstanding which include:

- 1920 Pine Avenue, Altoona, PA (approved in March 2020)
- 424 West 1st Avenue, Williamsburg, PA (approved in December 2019)
- 1106-1110 7th Avenue, Altoona, PA (newly approved by the Board)
- 521 8th Street, Altoona, PA (newly approved by the Board)

Trina stated that the duplex located at 424 West 1st Avenue, Williamsburg, PA is now structurally sound and that half of the duplex can now be demolished.

Jim reported that since 2019, the Board has committed \$90,000 in demolition funding. To date, the matching funds is \$137,000.

TEAMeffort

- Jim reported that \$10,000 was approved, earlier this year, for TEAMeffort to use toward light construction/repair projects in the Blair County area. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, TEAMeffort did not come to the area this summer. TEAMeffort is making plans to return to our community in the summer of 2021.
- In June 2020, Jim asked for approval from the Commissioners to transfer the funds intended for use by TEAMeffort for the summer of 2020 to the summer of 2021. The Commissioners did approve that request in matching funds, up to \$10,000, by TEAMeffort to complete light construction/repair projects in the Blair County community in the summer of 2021.
- Scott stated that he has talked with Doug Jones, TEAMeffort Executive Director, who inquired as to if the funds would be available next year when they return.
- Jim asked Scott to let Doug Jones know that they funds will be available in 2021.

Next Steps

Furnace Repair or Replacement Proposal

- Sergio reported that BCCAP has received additional CARES funding for Crisis, in regards, to furnace replacement.
- Sergio stated that there has not been a need for furnace replacement since people are not using their heat at this time. Unless extended, Crisis is scheduled through the end of August.
- Sergio asked to place the furnace repair/replacement proposal on hold until the end of the crisis funding.

Rural Impact County Challenge (RICC) Learning Cohort Update

- Missy reported that the next RICC Cohort ended in June 2020. It was a yearlong cohort that 12 rural counties across the United States participated in. Going forward, the 12 counties will continue to share information with each other.

Landlord/Tenant Mediation Program

- Missy reported that The Blair County Dept. of Social Services along with other stakeholders within the county are attempting to develop and implement a Landlord/Tenant mediation program to try to divert potential evictions from the court system. The workgroup consists of staff from Blair County Dept. of Social Services, Blair County Community Action, Family Services, the Central PA Landlords Association, Brian Durbin (Durbin Companies) & Craig Ormsby (retired District Magistrate). The mediation process is a voluntary process between the landlord, tenant and a mediator to establish an agreement for payment that will help to prevent filing an eviction notice & keep the client in their home. Once an eviction notice is filed, it becomes a permanent file on a person's record and can prohibit the client from obtaining future rental housing.
- Next meeting is Monday, August 17, 2020 at 10:00 am.
- Missy also informed the Board that the Housing of Alliance of Pennsylvania is having a Webinar about a \$10,000 grant that would help with new, start-up mediation programs.

Future Projects

- Scott reported that 1500 square feet of one (1) of the buildings at the Shelter site is going to be partitioned off for a Food Bank to rent out. Scott stated that their Committee may be reaching out to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Advisory Board for assistance paying for the Food Bank's utility bill.

Open Forum:

Jim reported that Social Services now has a BlueJeans account to hold virtual meetings. If an in-person meeting cannot take place in November, it will be a BlueJeans virtual meeting.

Jim stated that if anyone has any questions or has any project ideas to contact him before the next meeting.

Jim thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, November 12, 2020** at 8:15am at Conference Room 4B. If COVID-19 restrictions are in place, the meeting may be held via Social Services' BlueJeans Account. *(Due to the Courthouse being closed to observe Veterans' Day on Wednesday, November 11, 2020, the meeting will be held on Thursday, November 12, 2020.)*