

**Planning & Development Committee Meeting
Minutes of October 13, 2008
Council Chambers – 7:00 p.m.
Evanston Civic Center**

Aldermen Present: S. Bernstein, A. Hansen, D. Holmes, L. Jean-Baptiste, E. Moran,
A. Rainey, E. Tisdahl, C. Wollin, M. Wynne

Staff Present: J. Chambers, K. Dunkley, D. Marino, B. Newman

Presiding Official: Alderman Wollin

DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chair Wollin called the meeting to order at 7:24 p.m., a quorum being present.

APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 8, 2008 MEETING MINUTES

The Committee voted unanimously, 8-0 to approve the September 22, 2008 minutes.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

(P1) Recommended Allocation of CHDO Operation Funds

The Housing Commission recommends that \$81,830 in HOME funds available for operating grants to Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs) be awarded to Evanston's five CHDOs in the amount of \$16,366.00 each.

Ald. Jean-Baptiste asked Housing Planner Ms. Donna Spicuzza to explain the role of CHDO organizations in the HOME program. Ms. Spicuzza stated that HOME funds are annually allocated federal funds, 15% of which is to be used by Community Housing Development Organizations for the construction or rehabilitation of rental or ownership residences. Referring to the summary information provided, Ms. Spicuzza noted that CHDOs have completed 16-20 rental projects with over 100 rental units, and have completed about 50 ownership units over the years. She said that part of the HOME allocation can be used to pay for the City's administration of the program, and up to 5% can be used to pay CHDO operating costs. Since 2004, the City has divided operating grants equally among the existing CHDOs. Because HOME funds must be committed within 2 years and disbursed within 5 years of their allocation from HUD, she estimated that about \$12,000 of the funds reserved for CHDO operating grants must be used within a year.

Ald. Rainey asked whether the CHDO organizations were represented at the meeting and if so, how they are progressing on sales of recently funded projects. Mr. Keith Banks, Executive Director of Evanston Community Development Association (ECDA) and Ms. Betty Ester of Citizens' Lighthouse Community Land Trust addressed the Committee.

Mr. Banks of ECDA explained that 3 of the 6 condo units of their current project are sold and they are marketing aggressively on Craig's List, an internet email list serve, posting information at local employers such as schools and hospitals, and have run a full page ad in the Evanston Sentinel for the past 3 months to find buyers who live and/or work in Evanston. The condos are

priced at \$165,000 for 3 bedroom, 2 bath units. Realtor Eric Beauchamp, a member of the Housing Commission, has recently listed them on the Multiple Listing Service, at no charge. Many prospective buyers are looking for mortgages. ECDA has worked with Harris and Marquette Bank, who financed prior sales.

Ald. Rainey asked how the company is handling the vacancies, financially. Mr. Banks replied that their budget is exhausted and they have to renew their construction loan every 6 months. Through fund-raising they have acquired \$6,000 and are trying to raise the funds for their October mortgage. The faith based network is considering giving them grants. They have not received tax bills for the 3 vacant condos yet, which he expects to be approximately \$3,000 per unit. Ald. Rainey asked whether he would use these administrative funds for taxes. Mr. Banks replied that he would if need be. She asked about how he spends his time and what expenses the organization has. Aldermen Rainey, Bernstein and Jean-Baptiste requested access to the budgets of the CHDOs which have been provided to Staff. Ms. Spicuzza will provide them.

The Committee discussed the rent-with-option-to-buy alternative, suggested by Ald. Jean-Baptiste. Mr. Banks and Ms. Spicuzza will investigate the possibility of this option. The Committee discussed marketing the units to buyers outside of Evanston. Mr. Banks stressed that although they have opened their marketing to Chicago, they give preference to Evanston workers/residents. Their goal is to sell the units.

Ald. Moran pointed out that many residents of other communities desire to live in Evanston and we should not exclude them entirely from the program. He said the City should support the CHDOs and have confidence in them, and that much larger organizations are struggling in this economic climate. He recommended approving the funding, as they are the closest point of contact with prospective Evanston buyers, adding that it is a minimum amount of money and that it should not be withheld. Ald. Jean-Baptiste agreed that the CHDOs need the funds to continue their marketing and administrative endeavors.

Ald. Bernstein maintained that he would like to see the funds used to help prospective buyers obtain their down payments. Mr. Banks argued that this 5% of the funding is for CHDO operating expenses. Ald. Bernstein asked whether that usage is mandatory, to which Ms. Spicuzza replied that it is not, but it has been committed by the City for that purpose. Ald. Bernstein argued that it may not be the best use of it.

Ms. Betty Ester of the Citizens' Lighthouse Community Land Trust stated that her CHDO has a prospective buyer and 2 other interested parties who were referred through homeownership counseling from the Housing Opportunity Development Corporation or CEDA/Neighbors at Work.

The Housing Commission will discuss the concerns raised at their October 16th meeting.

The Committee voted by majority to hold the issue in Committee until the next meeting.

(P2) Additional Condo Workshop in 2008

Request approval of \$1,000 to Lakeside Community Development Corporation to present a third condominium workshop in November to accommodate 60 people from the waiting list.

The Committee voted unanimously, 8-0 to approve the motion.

(P3) Ordinance 99-O-08 – Special Use for Convenience Store – 2536 Ewing Avenue
Consideration of an application for a Special Use for the property at 2536 Ewing Avenue for a convenience store (7-Eleven, formerly White Hen Pantry).

Ald. Moran stated that the Ordinance stipulates: business hours of 6 a.m. to midnight; litter collection in a 250 foot radius of the store to be checked upon every 3 hours; deliveries between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.; no blockage of alley access for other properties and the Fire Department; strict compliance with the anti-idling law of a maximum of 5 minutes of truck idling; removal of the square illuminated sign above the store (the red and green sign may remain); window shades or tinted film applied to hide the interior lights from 9 p.m. to midnight; lights along the length of the façade will have shades to direct the light downward; no exterior and no pole lights lit between midnight and 6 a.m. except those necessary for security; the management will discourage loitering; and signs regarding the no-idling and no loitering laws will be posted.

Mr. Tom Romanello of 7-Eleven thanked the Committee for the opportunity to make the necessary changes adding that one of the signs has already been removed, there are temporary tinted shades on the windows until the shades that have been ordered are delivered, and there are shields on order for the façade lights, half of which have been removed. He asked for 30 days to complete the required work.

Mr. Greg Kuczaj of 7-Eleven stated that he is working with the managers to make sure the trucks comply with the no-idle law. Mr. Greg Kuczaj will be the contact person for neighbors or the City to call and will provide a 24 hour contact number as requested by the Committee.

Ms. Betsy Waller who lives across the street from the 7-Eleven asked on behalf of herself and her neighbors that all the lights are turned off when the store is closed and that the 7-Eleven comply with all the regulations. She said this process started in November of 2007 and except for the lighting issue all of the other issues are already laws and asked why they have not been enforced. She said deliveries are still being made after 7 p.m., as late as 9:15 p.m. She believes there may be a communication/language problem with the manager.

Ms. Cheryl Berg, a neighbor, stated that she appreciates the availability of a 24 hour contact since she has had a problem communicating with the manager about the profusion of litter she had to walk through to get to the store. She asked how the stipulations are being communicated to the manager since he had no idea he was responsible for keeping the area clean.

Ald. Moran alerted the 7-Eleven personnel present that there has been no demonstration of compliance during this ordinance process. The Committee urged the 7-Eleven personnel to comply with the laws and the ordinance, warning that they will be monitored and the ordinance strictly enforced. The business is subject to a \$250/day fine and revocation of their special use permit if not compliant. Ald. Moran wished the 7-Eleven well and advised them to cooperate in order to make their business successful.

The Committee voted unanimously, 8-0 to approve the motion.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

(PD1) Discussion of Foreclosure Issues

The Committee discussed the data in the memo distributed in the meeting packet. Mr. Marino noted that there is a 90% increase in foreclosures in Evanston since last year with a map showing the locations of all the foreclosed properties in Evanston. He said that Evanston will be pursuing its share of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act funds through both Cook County and the State of Illinois. Mr. Marino also alerted the Committee to the Hope for Homeowners program, expected to help 400,000 homeowners nationwide. Since Bank of America acquired Countrywide Bank, they are going to re-finance a number of loans that have been deemed predatory. Ms. Spicuzza will obtain information on the procedure for applying for the available funds from the County or State of Illinois as soon as it is available. Ald. Wollin, who is on the Foreclosure Task Force with Ald. Holmes, added that Ms. Spicuzza has distributed doorknob hangers in strategic areas of Evanston and has put much effort into informing the public about programs and counseling opportunities. Ald. Jean-Baptiste suggested contacting owners of properties in foreclosure or at risk directly, if possible, to which Ms. Spicuzza responded that it is possible, through the Illinois Housing Authority. Mr. Marino added that we would do so in concert with other agencies. Ald. Jean-Baptiste suggested that the Aldermen of the at-risk wards get involved, as foreclosures de-stabilize neighborhoods and communities. The Committee agreed that the foreclosure situation should be updated and discussed every two weeks at the P&D meeting.

The Health and Human Services Department will be presenting a foreclosure seminar on November 5th at the Civic Center from 5:30 – 7:30p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bobbie Newman