

**Planning & Development Committee Meeting  
Minutes of August 11, 2008  
Council Chambers – 7:30 p.m.  
Evanston Civic Center**

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

Staff Present: K. Cox, B. Dunkley, D. Marino, B. Newman, D. Spicuzza

Aldermen Absent: L. Jean-Baptiste

Presiding Official: Alderman Wollin

**DECLARATION OF QUORUM**

Chair Wollin called the meeting to order at 7:45 p.m., a quorum being present.

**APPROVAL OF THE JULY 28, 2008 MEETING MINUTES**

**The Committee voted unanimously 8-0 to approve the July 28, 2008 minutes.**

**ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

(P1) Ordinance 95-O-08 – Major Variation to Allow Open Parking in Front Yard – 1317 Livingston

Consideration of a major variation to allow open parking in the front yard of 1317 Livingston. This case is sent from the Zoning Board of Appeals with a 3 in favor, 2 against, vote and recommended for approval by the Site Plan and Appearance Committee.

Ald. Tisdahl left the Council Chambers while voting took place because of a conflict of interest in this case.

Ald. Wollin stated that the applicant is asking for the pre-existing driveway, which is slightly narrower than is required to remain as it has been since 1922.

Mr. Marino added that a unique feature that distinguishes this case is that a ramp has been added to the property to make the house handicap accessible, and the parking space in this driveway in front of the house provides access to it, which is why SPAARC recommended approval.

**The Committee voted 7-0 to approve the ordinance.**

(P2) Motion for Approval of a Community Housing Development Organization  
Consideration of an Application by Evanston Community Development Agency (ECDA) to become a City Designated Community Housing Development Organization.

Mr. Marino explained that a City Designated Community Housing Development is a CHDO, which is a designation under the HUD Home Program, the federally affordable housing assistance program, and that this organization has already been active and productive in the City.

Bishop Williams, the Vice President of ECDA, introduced himself, explaining that he has been asked to attend the hearing by Keith Banks, the Director of ECDA, while he is out of town. He asked if there were any questions about the documentation that had been submitted to the Committee. He said that affordable housing has been very important to him. He has worked with Habitat for Humanity and three or four houses they built in Evanston, he worked on the Committee for Family Selection, and he is a lifelong resident of Evanston. His father came here in 1926 and established the God in Christ Church, at which he now Pastors. He does not normally get involved in City matters but this is important to him.

Ald. Wollin thanked him for his involvement. She said that this would be the 5<sup>th</sup> CHDO that would be recognized in the City of Evanston.

**Ald. Bernstein moved approval of the motion.**

Ald. Bernstein commented that Habitat for Humanity did not have a favorable experience in Evanston.

Bishop Williams stated that he left Habitat for Humanity. At Ald. Bernstein's request Bishop Williams said he would not model the CHDO after Habitat for Humanity.

Ald. Rainey said she has requested a report on why the City discontinued its relationship with Habitat for Humanity. She believes the organization has changed over the years and is currently doing fabulous work. She would like to give them another chance. She asked Bishop Williams what he learned from the project at 736-738 Dobson.

Bishop Williams responded that they are learning how to market homes in a fair way so that all can qualify who meet the standards and they are learning to watch their budget when remodeling complete apartments, as was done in this building. They are monitoring their monies very closely now. They sold the 3 bedroom, 2 bath, condos for \$100,000 each. 1719 McDaniel, their first project, was in deplorable condition and they had to invest quite a bit of money. They

have the thirst for affordable housing and fairness to people and need to continue this work in Evanston. With the help of the City they will continue to do so. He added that Keith Banks is an excellent Director and he is doing a first class job for them. He is an easy man to deal with. Attorneys, architects and the City have donated much to help the organization do their work. They are there to be of service and help people.

Ald. Rainey asked whether all the units in the Dobson building were sold.

Bishop Williams replied that 3 are closed and asked that if she had any candidates, to please send them. One of the applications fell through.

Ald. Holmes suggested renting units not only on Dobson, but in other locations, that have not been sold, as affordable rental units, until they can find appropriate purchasers. Ald. Tisdahl agreed with the idea of renting with options to buy, since she is concerned about unoccupied housing.

Bishop Williams said they would consider that.

Ald. Rainey said she does not agree because the projects were supported as owner-occupied projects and she has many problems in the 700 block of Dobson with rentals. The agreement was to convert to condominiums from rentals. The City provided money so that they could take a decent building off the market and they gave Reba Place Development Corporation money to take another decent rental building off the market at 602 Mulford. She said that in order to be a CHDO they have to have the foresight to know where the best projects are. She does not support making that building back into a rental. She added that you must have the wherewithal to sustain vacancies in this business.

Bishop Williams said he will consider both opinions and that ECDA does not want to do anything contrary to what the City wants.

Mr. David Jansen, Recording Secretary for ECDA, and the Executive Director of Reba Place Development Corporation, introduced himself and stated that he works literally side by side with Keith Banks so they can collaborate. He stated that Keith Banks has become an expert at this work. He highly recommends his work and ECDA's work. Turning these properties into rental would perhaps solve some short range problems but they would have to get permission from all of their funders to do that because that was not the condition of the Home Funds, the Illinois Housing Development Authority and Federal Home Loan Bank, that brought subsidies to these projects, so they are not actively pursuing that at this point.

**The Committee voted 8-0 to approve the motion.**

(P3) Motion for a One Year Extension of Planned Development Approval for 959 Dobson Street

Consideration of a one year retroactive extension of Approved Planned Development, 959 Dobson Street, to March 1, 2009

**Ald. Rainey moved that the motion be approved.**

**The Committee voted 8-0 to approve.**

### **ITEM FOR DISCUSSION**

(PD1) Federal Legislative and Funding Initiatives to Address Foreclosures and other Housing Issues (Passed 7-26-08)

Ald. Wollin referred to a memo to the P&D Committee (in the packet materials) from Ms. Donna Spicuzza, the Housing Planner, in which she reported that the newly formed Foreclosure Task Force (primarily made up of not-for-profit agencies) has begun discussing many ways of assisting homeowners near foreclosure. These ideas are to be explored in the coming months, as they establish formulas and regulations for how the federal funding will be allocated.

Ms. Spicuzza emphasized that there are still many unknowns but there is a good chance that the City will get a fair amount of funds based on the target requirements because of the number of sub prime loans, foreclosures and at-risk loans in the area. The Foreclosure Task Force wants to be ready with ways to spend the funding wisely, using existing resources in the area. The \$3.9 billion currently available appears to be just for the purchase, rehab and resale of buildings. It is not addressing homeowners at risk of foreclosure. The Foreclosure Task Force discussed other ways to address the problems the market is facing, such as lease purchase. She will be reporting back to the Committee with more concrete ideas.

There is also funding available for foreclosure prevention counseling and legal assistance. Information about the funding will be disclosed at a later date.

Ald. Wollin added that it is recommended that 70% of the money be given to local governments and only 30% to state. The task force discussed a foreclosure flier that could be attached to doorknobs for distribution, which affords homeowners privacy, as opposed to coming to a public meeting to obtain information. The fliers could also be posted in community centers. After 60 days, the government has 18 months to disperse the money. In relation to the 18 month requirement, Ms. Spicuzza added that the advocacy groups have discussed trying to get the funds committed to specific projects, rather than drawn. This will be discussed further. The National Affordable Housing Trust Fund that was also established in this legislation will be available within a few years to provide additional funds after this funding runs out. The goal right now is mainly to develop rental housing for extremely low income people.

Mr. Marino added that this legislation also provides lenders with some incentives and risk reduction techniques to be able to re-finance people that are in danger of foreclosure, estimated nationwide to be about 400,000 households. He commended Donna on her summarization of many of the items in the 700-page bill. He called to the attention of the Committee, on the last page of the memo from Ms. Spicuzza, a tax credit for first time home buyers up to 10% of purchase price, which is capped at \$7,500, as an incentive to encourage purchasers in this marketplace.

Ald. Wollin commented on statistics offered by Interfaith Housing of the North Shore, showing that in 2007 Evanston had 179 filings for foreclosure; in 2005, there were 96, saying it is definitely a problem that we need to address locally as well as nationally.

Mr. Marino also noted in the memo, related to the housing market, Ms. Spicuzza states that the jumbo loan definition has changed. There have been problems with jumbo loans in terms of liquidity issues because the secondary market had dried up. This act states that the maximum cost of a loan in order for it to be considered jumbo is raised from \$417,000 to \$625,000. It also corrects many of the problems and re-capitalizes Fannie May and Freddie Mac, who are the major entities that service the secondary mortgage market for single family loans in this country.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Bobbie Newman