

APPROVED

**EVANSTON HOUSING COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
August 16, 2007**

**Present:** Susan Munro, Chair, Carol Balkcom, Bruce Nelson, Joanne Zolomij

**Absent:** Eric Beauchamp, Sara Ashmore Diggs

**Staff:** Donna Spicuzza, Housing Planner, Stan Janusz, Assistant Director, Community Development

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**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. without a quorum present.

**II. Communications**

Members were updated on funding requests they had reviewed: Connections for the Homeless was awarded \$11,035 in matching funds from the Affordable Housing Fund for the HUD funded Homeless Management Information System for the Evanston Alliance on Homelessness; HODC was awarded \$84,760 in Affordable Housing Funds for repairs and maintenance on the interior and exterior of the 2-flat 1930 Jackson; the Downpayment Assistance pilot program was approved; and more information was requested on the Vacant Building proposal. Ms. Spicuzza also distributed a list of voluntary housing fund contributions and the payment status. She said that the fees were usually due when the certificate of occupancy is issued, and most of the developers who hadn't paid yet were just starting construction.

**III. Consideration of a request for HOME funds from Housing Opportunity**

**Development Corporation for rehab and condo conversion of 1929 Jackson.**

Mary Ellen Tamasy of HODC presented more information as requested by the Commission regarding their request for \$195,000 in HOME funds for the rehab and remodeling of the 2-unit condo conversion. She presented one contractor's bid which was just a general estimate, but was slightly lower than her original estimates. She also presented a revised development budget and revised sources and uses which showed a request for \$60,000 in IHDA funds.

The four members present supported the proposal and suggested that the information be sent to the two absent members for their comments since they previously raised concerns about the budget. Ms. Spicuzza said staff would review the revisions and most likely bring it to Planning and Development Committee on September 10.

**IV. Discussion of Vacant Buildings Status and Programs to Address Vacant Buildings and Foreclosures**

Stan Janusz, Community Development Assistant Director, presented a current list of vacant buildings, which were mostly 1 – 3 unit buildings. He discussed the history of some of the properties and reasons for vacant properties, which are due to foreclosures, absentee owners, or the death of an owner. He also discussed the Property Standards Division's efforts to enforce the Vacant Building Ordinance.

Mr. Janusz also said that they recently subscribed to a foreclosure data service which lists all the filings, so they will have information on properties likely to go into foreclosure. He noted that one of the properties he researched was owned by a bank that since went bankrupt, so the ownership of that property is unknown.

Members discussed the challenges of reducing the number of vacant buildings and asked if the Planning and Development Committee gave any reasons for not acting on the staff's vacant building proposal presented in the summer. Ms. Spicuzza said there were no specifics about the proposal but they had asked for more analysis of the vacant buildings including the amount owed. Members encouraged staff to continue to research the issue and develop a proposal to assist non-profit developers to purchase vacant buildings and turn them into affordable housing.

**V, Status of Downpayment Program Proposal**

Members received a copy of the approved program guidelines. Ms. Spicuzza said she was scheduling a meeting for lenders to enroll participants, and that the program would probably not be implemented before late September or early October.

There was no public comment. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m. The next scheduled Housing Commission meeting is 7 p.m. Thursday, September 20, 2007.

**The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Spicuzza