

**EVANSTON HOUSING COMMISSION
MINUTES
February 19, 2009**

Present: Eric Beauchamp, Chair, Tim Angell, Carol Balkcom, Yolanda Bender, Brooks Harding, Richard Mosley, Susan Munro, Bruce Nelson
Absent: Joanne Zolomij
Staff: Donna Spicuzza, Housing Planner

I. Call to Order, Approve Minutes of December 18, 2008

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. It was moved to approve minutes of the January 15, 2009. **The motion passed 8-0.**

II. Communications

Members reviewed the Affordable Housing Fund Report and said the new format was much better. Bruce Nelson asked for information on the Developer Contributions and Ms. Spicuzza said she would add that to the report next month.

Members reviewed the memo on Foreclosure Prevention activities that would be discussed at the February 23 Planning and Development Committee. They discussed ways to get the word out about foreclosure prevention counseling and suggested providing letters or flyers to churches and community sites. They also recommended that the City issue a press release on the issue. Eric Beauchamp suggested another foreclosure listing service that might be helpful. Members felt that individual meetings were better than large workshops, and wondered whether there were enough counselors available.

III. Request for Rehab funds for Hill Arboretum

Over the Rainbow Association requests a HOME fund grant for rehab work at its 33 unit rental building for adults with physical disabilities. The building was converted from a vacant hospital building into residential units and offices in the 1990's.

Ms. Spicuzza clarified that the grant amount is \$366,254. She said Over the Rainbow originally applied for CDBG funds for the project because they received them in the past. The original HUD financing HUD did not allow junior mortgages. However, the organization recently refinanced the HUD mortgage to a conventional loan, so HOME funds, which require affordable housing restrictions and documents such as junior mortgages, can be used. Ms. Spicuzza said that tenants still receive project based rental subsidy through HUD but the operating cash flow does not support sufficient reserves for large repairs. Therefore, she said, the funds would be in the form of a grant with a five year affordability period and would not have to be paid back as long as the units remained affordable. .

Tracy Reader and Leo Kirwin from Over the Rainbow were introduced. Commission members asked about administrative costs and whether they would use local workers on the job. They said that Over the Rainbow would bear the administrative project costs rather than include them in the grant amount since the funds would not be paid back, and they would make best efforts to hire Evanston workers.

Ms. Spicuzza said that a separate issue arose since they started working on the HOME application, regarding access to the public alley between Gray and Brown streets from the Hill Arboretum parking lot. The access was cut off when the City installed a gate after someone was hit in the parking lot. She said it is not related to the funding or the rehab activity some neighbors oppose funding the project because they were not consulted when the access to the alley was cut off. She said City staff has met with the alderman and representatives from Over the Rainbow to discuss the issue and a neighborhood meeting is planned.

Commissioners asked if people in the audience wanted to comment at this time. Lynne Greene, Marilyn Brauer McCarthy and Brenda Foster Dunbar discussed their dissatisfaction with the gating of the alley and asked that funds not be approved until the issue was resolved.

Ms. Green said that the former Community Hospital was built by Dr. Elizabeth Hill to serve the black members of the community who were denied admittance to other hospitals, and is considered a historic landmark for the community. She said the conversion into the apartment complex was seen as a violation of the community trust and an insult to Dr. Hill. She said that Over the Rainbow Association made concessions to the community at the time. These included allowing access to the parking lot due to limited street parking and allowing access to the easement from the property to the connecting alley. She said over the years Over the Rainbow Association kept most of the promised made and advised the community of changes. She also said the community was always a good neighbor to the Hill Arboretum Apartments, but within the last few years the management has treated the neighborhood with disrespect. She said neighbors do not feel that their tax dollars should be given to an organization that does not respect the integrity of their neighborhood.

Marilyn Brauer McCarthy said she used to work at the Hill Arboretum Apartments. She said the problem with the gate is that there have been a few times that the homeowners' garbage was not picked up by the City trucks because of the gate at the alley. She felt that neighbors should have access to the alley from the lot. Brenda Foster Dunbar said that she feels that having two ways to exit the alley is a safety issue, and she has felt trapped when she was followed into the narrow alley by another car. She said that they needed a compromise.

Members thanked the speakers for their comments. Eric Beauchamp noted that there were multiple issues involved and Commission members agreed that the neighborhood and community issues need to be addressed. They all agreed that the access issue was not in their purview, however, while the distribution of HOME funds was. They stated that the proposed application messes with the HOME goals and guidelines and was a good use of funds.

Tim Angell moved that the Commission recommend to the Planning and Development Committee that they approve \$366,353.80 in HOME funds, and it was seconded by Carol Balkcom. **The motion passed 8-0.**

IV. Request from Connections for the Homeless for HMIS funds for the Evanston Alliance on Homelessness

Paul Seldon of Connections for the Homeless noted that his agency is the administrator of the Alliance's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and they are requesting \$11,035 from the Affordable Housing Fund to meet the HUD required match.

Richard Mosley made a motion to recommend approval of \$11,035 in Affordable Housing Funds and it was seconded by Bruce Nelson. **The motion passed 8-0.**

V. Request from Connections for the Homeless for FIT funds

Sarah Manager of Connections for the Homeless said that the agency is requesting a rent subsidy from the Affordable Housing Fund Families in Transitions' program. The family they wish to sponsor graduated from their New Beginnings Transitional program then moved back with family members and paid off student loans. She said they continue to work on and meet goals established in the transitional program.

Commission members said they liked the FIT program because of the help it offers families and this family is in ideal candidate. Susan Munro moved to recommend approval of up to \$6,180 in FIT funds for one year and it was seconded by Tim Angell. **The motion passed 8-0.**

VI. Report on Comprehensive Affordable Housing Plan Task Force

Richard Mosley presented a report on the Task Force's second meeting.

VII. Public Comment

There was no public comment other than comments made during Agenda Item III.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m. The next scheduled meeting is Thursday, March 19, 2009.

Respectfully submitted, Donna Spicuzza