

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

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

I. Call to Order, Approve Minutes of February 19, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm. The February 19, 2009 minutes were not available for approval.

II. Communications

- Members reviewed the Affordable Housing Fund Report
- Susan Munro reported on the March Affordable Housing Task Force meeting and plans for the April meeting.
- Staff updated members on Planning and Development Committee review of the Commission's funding recommendations:
 - Over the Rainbow's Hill Arboretum proposal was held in Committee on March 9 and will be on the March 23, 2009 agenda,
 - Connections for the Homeless' FIT application was approved March 9
 - Connections for the Homeless' HMIS application will be on the March 23, 2009 agenda
 - The rental proposal for **Econ Development's 241 Callan condo rehab development** will be on the March 23, 2009 agenda. The Housing Commission's January recommendation for temporary rental with approval from HUD to allow one affordable unit rather than two was not approved by HUD as it relates to a statutory rather than a regulatory requirement. Staff is proposing that \$60,000 in Affordable Housing Funds be substituted for \$60,000 of the \$250,000 HOME funds spent to allow for only one affordable rental unit. The additional market rate rents will provide more income for debt service on the conventional loan. After discussion, it was agreed that the Commission should make a specific recommendation on the proposal. Tim Angell made a motion to support the substitution of \$60,000 in HOME funds for Affordable Housing Funds and it was seconded by Susan Munro. **The motion passed 7-0.**

III. Consideration of Condominium Workshop Proposal

Ms. Spicuzza discussed the proposal to offer three condominium workshops for Evanston condo owners and boards, through Lakeside Community Development Corporation. Two workshop topics will be offered: Basic Condo Management workshop and Dealing with Collections and Foreclosures. The cost will be \$3,000 for three workshops and funding would come from the Affordable Housing Fund as well as a \$15 per association participation fee. She said that Lakeside CDC held three workshops in Evanston last year after the Council approved funding and they were attended by around 150 people and well received. Joanne Zolomij said she attended one and it showed there is a need for these educational workshops. Members asked if this needed to be approved by the Council and Ms. Spicuzza said it might not because the amount was low enough.

A motion was made to recommend spending \$3,000 for three condominium workshops to be provided by Lakeside Community Development Corporation. **The motion passed 7-0.**

IV. Foreclosure Prevention Report and New Federal Programs

Staff provided information on the City's foreclosure response plan and on new federal programs. Homeowners or renters with foreclosure questions can contact either Donna Spicuzza, the Housing Planner, or Evonda Thomas, the Director of Health and Human Services, at the City.

The City's website contains information about the foreclosure process and foreclosure prevention counseling, with a link on the home page. It is updated with news of educational events and recent federal programs. This includes the HOME Affordable Program announced by the U.S. Treasury Department on March 4, which provides guidelines for loan modifications and refinancing opportunities for loans owned by FannieMae or FreddieMac.

Other efforts include submitting applications for Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds through the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008. Community Development staff is working on an application to the State of Illinois which is due on May 4. The funds must be used to turn around foreclosed or vacant and abandoned properties. The County, which was also allocated funds, has not yet identified how it will allocate them, but Evanston may apply for those as well.

Tim Angell asked if a news release discussing the City's foreclosure assistance efforts had gone out. Ms. Spicuzza said it had not yet because she had to meet a deadline to get the information in the City's "Highlights" quarterly newsletter, but would see that a news release went out soon. Mr. Angell expressed disapproval that this had not been done.

Commissioners asked how NSP funds would be used and Ms. Spicuzza said that while details were still being discussed, the plan is to apply for about \$2 million to acquire eligible properties and then determine the best action on a case by case basis. She said some properties might be demolished, while others could be rehabbed and then rented or sold to income eligible persons. The City would probably put out request for proposals to for-profit and non-profit developers or organizations. Ms. Spicuzza said the state application was targeting a few blocks in the Fifth Ward in order to help stabilize the hardest hit area of the City, and the City might "land bank" and manage some potential ownership properties for a period of time to allow time to implement successful marketing and financing plans. She said that staff has talked informally with local developers and organizations about their interest in working in partnership and will get more input in the coming weeks.

Members discussed the foreclosure activity in the City and said that other areas were also experiencing problems, noting three neighboring properties on one block in the Eighth Ward. Susan Munro wondered if it would be better to spread the funds around other areas of the City. Members agreed they would like to discuss the proposed application and Ms. Spicuzza said she could have a written description for their consideration at the April meeting although the application wouldn't be complete.

V. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m. The next scheduled meeting is Thursday, April 16, 2009.