

Meeting Minutes
City and County Commission on Supportive Housing
April 22, 2008
8:30 a.m.

Attending: Rochelle Williams, Anne M. Devitt, Kenyatta Yamel, Robert Hill, Jim Hill, Jennifer Meden, Joan Lawrence, Jeff Seider, Quinton Cotton, Sue Breier, Jessica Shriver, Corey Hoze, Jim Marks, Sandra White, Martha Rasmus, Paula John, Steve Falek, Tony Perez, Martha Brown, Jamanee Chetham, Jim Mathy.

Review and approval of January 15, 2008 minutes.

Martha Rasmus made the motion to approve the minutes with the following correction: The reference to United House on page 3 of the minutes should indicate that the project is being developed by Cardinal Capital with United Christian Church (not Our Space). All voted in favor, no opposition.

Supportive housing development project updates

Martha Brown provided the following updates:

- *United House* at 25th and Center. The project is hoping to be occupied in August. The application list at United House filled up within twelve hours.
- *Guest House/Heartland Project*. The project closed on financing yesterday and will begin construction this summer.
- *Empowerment Village*. The project requires a zoning change. There will be a hearing at City Hall regarding a zoning change of the 6th/Rosedale site on Tuesday, May 13th at 9:00 a.m. There have been environmental reasons given by the opposition for not wanting Empowerment Village on that location.
- *Mercy Housing* applied for tax credits through WHEDA for the Johnston Center Apartments and was not successful. Mercy Housing applied in a tough category and did not score high enough. Mercy has stated they are not going to abandon the project but the project will be delayed.

Jim Hill provided these updates:

- *Red Cross Safe Haven*. The Council for the Spanish Speaking agreed to locate the Safe Haven in the former Hillview Nursing Center. Alderman Donovan called a community meeting over the matter, and has stated his opposition to the project. The issue of the Safe Haven became confused with a potential AODA treatment center that wished to open in the neighborhood. The clearing of West Samaria is dependent upon finding an alternate location for the Safe Haven.
- *West Samaria*. Sixty former residents of West Samaria have been relocated to appropriate housing. The special use permit of the Red Cross Safe Haven will expire on June 30, 2008 so time is of the essence in finding a new location.

Discussion

Kenyatta Yamel asked if the local alderman suggested any alternative locations for Empowerment Village. Jim Hill indicated that Ald. Zielinski suggested the West Samaria building, once it's vacant. Jeff Seider stated that Ald. Bauman is informed of the situation and has been responsive of the concerns and has given alternatives.

Steve Falek asked of any neighborhood opposition to the housing projects. Jim Hill stated he has received information asking for specific names of people in the neighborhood with AODA or mental health issues. Joan Lawrence stated that Lincoln Village has been in support of Empowerment Village. Jim Marks brought up the idea of this group advocating around these issues.

Review of research report

Katie Pritchard of the Planning Council for Health and Human Services gave a presentation of research related to Affordable Housing for Person with Behavioral Health Disorders. The report looked at the perceptions and understanding of the issue and what evidence based research says. The Planning Council also conducted several interviews with individuals relating to the issues of affordable housing for individual with behavioral health disorders.

Quinton Cotton from the Planning Council discussed his findings of the lack of available, affordable housing.

Discussion

Staff from local housing agencies provided information about the number of units and housing vouchers available. Jim Mathy discussed the Housing Providers Networks that Milwaukee County has started. There is still a need on this list for available apartments for the population.

Jim Hill stated that section 8 vouchers are under funded for the individuals living under 80% of the county median income level. The demand and needs exceeds what is available.

Steve Falek stated that the Housing Authority has authorized funding for 5200 vouchers. Families get 30 days to find housing and can possibly have an extension. The voucher positions must be filled promptly. Rochelle Williams asked if the family could lose the voucher. Steve Falek replied yes. Jim Hill discussed the regulation of housing vouchers are very strict. Tony Perez stated that a voucher does not guarantee a landlord will rent to a tenant. Rochelle Williams asked how large is the pool of landlords. Steve Falek stated that the City of Milwaukee has vouchers with over 2500 landlords. Martha Rasmus discussed families losing their vouchers if a child or children was placed in foster care. Steve Falek stated that the family does not lose the voucher.

Martha Rasmus asked if the county was planning on developing a website. Jim Hill stated that it is in the vision. Jim Mathy stated that Housing Provider list is available by e-mail. Quintin Cotton brought up the issue of some landlords fear being labeled as mental health providers if their name is easily available. Martha Rasmus talked about training and partnerships to help alleviate some of the stigma. Jim Mathy stated that the biggest problem with developing housing is NIMBY issues and zoning issues. Martha Brown stated she will bring more information to the next meeting

Strategies for advocacy

Martha Brown presented a motion to the group (See Attachment). The motion provided a strategy for having the Commission's voice heard in public forms that consider regulations, funding and entitlements for supportive housing projects.

Steve Mahan, who is representing Sharon Robinson on the Commission, stated that the motion is in line with what the Mayor wants. Jim Marks stated he was in favor of the motion and suggested inviting a representative from WHEDA to discuss the Mercy Housing Project and tax credit situation. Jeff Seider agrees with motions, discussed political process of the city and the potential problems at the Rosedale location for the Safe Haven. Paula John was in favor of the motion. Jim Hill discussed the dilemma with housing developments being located in already struggling neighborhoods, and putting a focus on putting housing developments in untraditional locations. Quentin Cotton discussed changing people perceptions. Martha Brown commented that United House may be able to spur growth in a neighborhood.

Jeff Seider moved for approval. Steve Mahan seconded. All in favor, no abstentions, no one opposed.

Martha Brown asked for three volunteers for the Executive Committee. Martha Rasmus, Joan Lawrence and Steve Mahan were suggested as volunteers. Chair Yamel will convene the committee as required.

Next meeting date

The next meeting is scheduled for July 29th at 10:00. If possible, the meeting will be held at United House.

Local housing agency updates

In an email following the meeting, Steve Falek gave an update of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act currently in the Senate. It would make 20,000 more vouchers available. He recommended that Commission members send an e-mail to Sen. Kohl and Sen. Feingold to express Support. Also pending in Congress is a renewal of the McKinney Vento legislation that supplies federal funding for programs that support homeless individuals. One provision of the bill would expand the definition of homelessness. An e-mail link will be mailed out to the group.

Meeting minutes taken by Jessica Shriver