

Meeting Minutes
City and County Commission on Supportive Housing
July 29, 2008
10:00 a.m.

Attending: Suzanne Breier, Corey Hoze, Paula John, Jim Marks, Anne McDevitt, Jeff Seider, James Tarantino, Rochell Williams, Martha Brown, Steve Falek, Jim Mathy, Jim Hill, Jessica Shriver

Review and approval of April 22, 2008 minutes. Approved as distributed.

Chair Kenyatta Yamel could not make the meeting. Martha Brown chaired the meeting until vice-chair Jim Tarantino arrived.

Supportive Housing Development Project Updates.

Martha Brown provided the following updates. Martha commented that a lot has happened since the inception of the commission on September 28, 2007.

- United House at 25th and Center had its ground breaking in November of 2007. The Grand Opening will be late summer. Occupancy in September.
- Prairie Apartments. 1215 West Highland, Ground breaking in May of 2008. A building that formerly housed a detox center has been torn down to the foundation, and new apartments are under construction. The location was suggested by Alderman Bauman. The project includes a construction job training program providing opportunities to Guest House residents. The job training is a joint venture with Big Step and Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership.
- Johnston Center Residences. 1230 West Grant Street. Mercy Housing did not receive low-income housing tax credits in 2008, but plans to pursue credits in 2009. Housing Authority expects to provide some rent vouchers for the project if tax credits are secured. Lots of support from the Mayor and Common Council on this project.
- Empowerment Village. The project location on 6th and Rosedale was not approved by the Common Council. Cardinal Capital, Our Space and the Red Cross have not abandoned the project. The thought is to break the project into two separate projects, one on west side and one on south side. Developers are meeting with local aldermen regarding possible sites.

Jeff Seider provided this update:

- Red Cross is applying for HUD funding for 11 units for Autumn West, its “half” of the Empowerment Village project. Local support is looking positive.

Jim Hill provided the following updates:

- Red Cross is seeking a special use permit from the Board of Zoning Appeals to allow temporary relocation of the Autumn West supportive housing program to the vacant Hillview Nursing Home at 1615 S. 22nd. It is not too late for commission members to weigh in on this issue.
- St. Ben’s has begun discussion about a supportive housing development with Heartland Alliance. Site possibilities are being discussed.

- Many have expressed interest in developing supportive housing. Many different sizes. A week does not go by without someone expressing interest.

Discussion

Martha Brown commented that we now have examples of a good housing development that we can show elected officials. Jim Mathy commented that we need more examples outside the City of Milwaukee but within Milwaukee County. Jim Hill commented that this is a county issue not just a City of Milwaukee issue. There should be a share of responsibility. Jeff Seider commented that there seems to be an association between sex offenders and people with mental illness; that impression needs to be dispelled within the community. Jim Mathy commented that he has met with the Grand Avenue Club to discuss a possible housing development.

Martha suggested that the Commission may want to sponsor a tour of supportive housing buildings in spring 2009, inviting elected officials and neighborhood association representatives.

Housing Authority Update

- Steve Falek discussed the St. Catherine Residence project. It is being supported with Housing Authority rent vouchers. The project is located on the east side which helps with the preservation of affordable housing in this area.
- The Housing Authority is also providing vouchers for the Mercy Project.
- The Housing Authority has started a demonstration supportive housing project with SDC. Initially, five families will be given vouchers through their transitional living program.
- The Authority has received 77 vouchers to provide housing for homeless veterans. The local Veterans Administration office has hired a case manager who will assist to link qualifying individuals with housing in Southeastern Wisconsin.
- WHEDA has announced some changes in its allocation plan for Low Income Housing Tax Credits in 2009; there will be a special set-aside of credits for supportive housing projects. Jim Hill is now serving on the WHEDA committee that shapes the allocation plan.
- The federal Section 8 Voucher Reform Act is stuck in the senate. It would provide 20,000 new vouchers and an extra 5% for Supportive Housing. Also, an amendment of McKinney Vento is being debated. The HEARTH Act, which would expand the definition of homelessness, is also stalled.
- The federal housing bill passed by Congress in July will provide \$3.9 billion to address foreclosed property problems. Milwaukee does not yet know how much funding will be available for use locally. The bill also made some positive changes in the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, and creates a national housing trust fund.

Discussion

Jim Hill suggested getting involved with WHEDA's criteria plan so they know what is needed on a local level. James Tarantino discussed the need for the Section 8 tenant selection process to be more efficient for qualifying tenants.

Zoning Issues

Martha Brown gave insight into the City of Milwaukee's zoning ordinances. She explained that zoning is the municipal land use law and is used to promote land use and development consistent with the comprehensive plan and regulate use of property. Goal compatibility among multiple uses.

Dept. of City Development staff are working with Milwaukee County to propose a change in the zoning ordinance that would permit housing-with-service arrangements for a household of three unrelated adults; presently, such an arrangement would require approval by the Board of Zoning Appeals. Jim Mathy indicated that the current BOZA approval requirement means that many landlords who might be willing to provide supportive services are choosing not to do so because the BOZA process draws a great deal of neighborhood attention to their properties. Under the proposed change, the providers would have to pass an annual quality assurance inspection conducted by Milwaukee County.

Jeff Seider made the motion to support advocating for a change in zoning of supportive housing. Rochelle Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed. No one opposed.

Report to policymakers

Martha Brown suggested that, as the one-year anniversary of the Commission approaches, it may be a good idea to prepare a report for policymakers in the Milwaukee Common Council and Milwaukee County Board about developments on the supportive housing front, both accomplishments and identified barriers.

Discussion

Bruce Krieger, who attended the meeting as a guest, stated that commission needs to make an appeal for a stronger connection with the provider community. Let everyone know that the commission is not dead. It is alive and active and has definite direction and have solid recommendations.

Web site

Martha Brown introduced the Supportive Housing Commission's new web site, found at www.milwaukeesupportivehousing.org.

NEXT MEETING DATE: October 29 at 10:00 a.m. Hoping to have the meeting at United House at 25th and Center.

Motion to Adjourn by Suzanne Breier. Corey Hoze Seconded the Motion. All in favor. No one opposed.