

Meeting Minutes  
City and County Commission on Supportive Housing  
October 22, 2008  
10:00 a.m.  
United House, 2500 W. Center St.

**Attending:** Jessica Shriver, Martha Brown, Sue Breier, Joan Lawrence, Paula John, Jim Mathy, Jim Tarantino, Jim Hill, Carol Keen, Erich Schwenker

**Review and Approval of July 29, 2008 meeting minutes.** Suzanne Breier moved approval of the minutes of the July 29, 2008 meeting. Jim Hill seconded. All voted in favor, no opposition.

**Tour of United House:** Erich Schwenker and Carol Keen conducted a tour of the facility, which opened in late August 2008.

**Presentation by Erich Schwenker, Cardinal Capital.** Erich Schwenker discussed his firm's recent development experience regarding supportive housing. He opined that the executive branches in City and County Governments have worked hard for special needs housing, but that the Common Council and County Board are much less engaged in this process. He noted that a few negative voices have had the power to derail projects, and indicated that opponents tend to focus on the service provider at a supportive housing development, rather than the physical improvement the development will bring to a neighborhood. He recommended that proponents emphasize the construction jobs, increase in property tax base, and reduction in mental health recovery costs when promoting supportive housing.

Erich noted that the current financial crisis exacerbates the need to develop decent alternatives to house homeless individuals and persons with mental illness.

*Tax Credits:* Erich noted that Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) are the primary financing tool for supportive housing developments. The major challenge is that LIHTC was originally designed for moderate income housing, not housing for people with very low incomes. He indicated that locating buildings in "qualified census tracts" with a high level of distress allows developers to capture more tax credits for a project. This increases the economic power of a project within a low-income neighborhood.

Because Wisconsin is receiving additional credits in 2009 and 2010, there is an excellent opportunity to use this tool for supportive housing projects. However, at this point, there are few buyers for the credits. Erich believes one solution to this issue is to expand the purchasers of tax credits beyond banks to a broader range of corporations and persons.

*Discussion:* The group responded to Erich's presentation with discussion regarding the political environment in which supportive housing projects are approved. Sue Breier pointed that local aldermen and alderwomen are in the "front lines" of decision-making on matters that affect development like property sales and zoning. Jim Hill discussed the new LIHTC set-aside for supportive housing that has been adopted by the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority. There was also discussion of the federal funding that has come to the City of Milwaukee to mitigate the impact of high rates of residential foreclosure, and how it might present opportunities for supportive housing development.

**Supportive Housing Development Project Updates.**

Martha Brown provided the following updates.

- United House at 25<sup>th</sup> and Center had its grand opening August 28, 2008.
- Prairie Apartments, 1218 West Highland held a ground breaking in May of 2008. Occupancy is expected in early 2009.

- Johnston Center Residences. 1230 West Grant Street. Received Tax Credit allocations for half of the project last week. They are now working on a shortened deadline for completion. The thought is that they didn't receive the other half of the tax credits because they did not have site control of the property on which they hope to build an addition to the existing building.
- Empowerment Village. The new location is at 525 West Lincoln. Some concern that a local merchant will oppose the new location.
- The Autumn West Project is now temporarily located at the former Hillview Nursing home. Still searching for a permanent site. The Red Cross is transferring responsibility of the programs for homelessness to Community Advocates at the beginning of 2009. They are working with Cardinal Capital on finding a permanent site, with hopes of applying for LIHTC in 2009. Unfortunately, change in program operator from Red Cross to Community Advocates resulted in some local business opposition to a proposed location at 26<sup>th</sup> and Clybourn, and Ald. Bauman withdrew his support for the site.
- Center for Veterans Issues is seeking a zoning change to allow development of 80 supportive housing units for homeless veterans at 1<sup>st</sup> and Lincoln. This project also will apply for LIHTC in 2009.

**10 Year Plan to End Homelessness:** Jan Wilberg and Joe Volk, representing the Milwaukee Continuum of Care, presented information about Milwaukee County's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. The Milwaukee Continuum of Care is working with the Technical Assistance Collaborative out of Boston to develop a ten-year plan to eradicate homelessness. We are one of the last major cities to do a plan. The plan will look at best practices to reduce homelessness and look at the individual needs of our own community. Work groups will develop various aspects of the plan over the next 7 to 9 months. Jim Mathy, of the Commission staff, will chair the permanent housing work group. The Continuum of Care is looking for an endorsement from the Commission.

**Other Business:** Jim Hill suggested that the agenda in January should include information about 2009 LIHTC applications for supportive housing projects, so the Commission can provide letters of support for projects. Martha agreed to draft criteria the Commission can use to determine which projects it supports. Jim Mathy discussed the MANDI awards and recommended nominating United House. *Jim Hill made a motion to support UNITED HOUSE for the MANDI award. Suzanne Brier seconded. All in favor no one opposed.* Martha agreed to write the nomination. Martha mentioned that the Commission must provide an annual report to the Common Council and County Board. She will draft a report for consideration by the commission at the January 2009 meeting. Martha asked for a volunteer to help plan a spring tour of supportive housing buildings; Paula agreed to assist.

***THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMISSION ON SUPPORTIVE HOUSING WILL BE JANUARY 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. at Cherry Court housing development, 1525 N. 24<sup>th</sup> St.***

Meeting minutes taken by Jessica Shriver