

MINUTES OF THE HOUSING, PLANNING, & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
APRIL 21, 2020
HELD REMOTELY
DUE TO COVID-19

Present: Councilmembers Shachner (Chair), Kepple, Rader

Also Present: Mayor George; Mary Leigh, Program Manager; Katelyn Milius, City Planner; Allison Urbanek of Lakewood Alive, Councilmember Neff, Clerk Bach taking minutes

Approval of the minutes of the March 9, 2020 Housing, Planning & Development Committee meeting.

Motion by President O'Malley, seconded by Councilmember Rader to receive and file the minutes of the March 9, 2020 Housing, Planning, & Development Committee.

A roll call vote was taken as follows:

Yeas: Shachner, Kepple, Rader

Nays: none

Motion passed.

Rent Assistance Discussion

Councilmember Shachner kicked off the discussion asking for more information about the estimated size and scope of the community need for rental assistance due to COVID-19. He asked how the City may be able to provide assistance and if so, where that money will come from.

Allison Urbanek of Lakewood Alive shared that Lakewood Alive is hearing from about five callers per week who are in a situation where they are struggling to pay rent due to the crisis. She described the population as low to moderate income individuals. Some have experienced problems applying for unemployment. Some are being forced to choose between paying rent and buying groceries. She has heard from callers that some landlords have been flexible in April but it's unclear if that flexibility will or can continue into May.

Councilmember Shachner asked the administration to update the Committee on possible assistance the City can provide with federal funds.

Mayor George stated that they are currently exploring all options but are waiting on guidance from the federal government.

Ms. Leigh elaborated that there is currently a moratorium on evictions from properties with federally-backed mortgages such as FHA and Fannie Mae. Evictions are also prohibited in Section 8 housing and rentals that receive HOME funds. It is estimated that this protection

benefits approximately 1 in 4 households nationally, but it is difficult to extrapolate exactly how many in Lakewood are protected from eviction

Ms. Leigh discussed in detail how ESG, CDBG, and HOME funds may potentially be used for rental and other assistance such as food and utilities. Each program has its own income caps and different requirements. She spoke about potentially working with Lakewood Community Services Center to administer ESG funds for food and about working with a different non-profit to administer a rental assistance program using CDBG and/or HOME funds. At this time, communities are waiting on HUD to issue guidelines for the CDBG funds.

She discussed potential obstacles for using HOME funds. For example, a visual paint inspection must be conducted and anything determined to be at-risk for lead must be abated. This requirement is currently being negotiated at the federal level between the EPA and HUD.

In response to a question by Councilmember Kepple, Ms. Leigh stated that administering a new program of this size and scope would be labor intensive and that she recommends the City partner with an experienced non-profit to do so. If this were the case, the City would be able to use a portion of federal funds to pay a non-profit for program administration.

Chairman Shachner concluded, stating that he is encouraged to hear the thoughtful preparations the administration has put into this. He also noted that evictions are not being pursued by courts at the moment but that we will have to wait and see how this develops when courts resume. He concluded that for now, the city is in a “holding pattern” while it waits for more guidance from the federal government.

Mayor George recognized the great needs of residents looking for economic relief and stated that her team is trying to be as proactive as possible and move swiftly.

Housing, Planning, & Development Committee adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Move to adjourn at 6:38 p.m.