

MINUTES OF HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING

DATE: June 23, 2015
TIME: 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: Housing and Community Development Department
350 W. 6th Street, Suite 312, Dubuque, IA 52001

Jim Holz, Chairperson, following staff assurance of compliance with Iowa Open Meeting Law, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present:	Jim Holz Sister Dorothy Schwendinger David Wall Amy Eudaley (via telephone)	Lisa Eubanks Anna Fernandes
Commissioners Absent:	Ricardo Woods Bob McDonnell	Patricia Foster Rick Baumhover
Staff Present:	Alvin Nash Kris Neyen Kim Glaser Teresa Bassler	Janet Walker Scott Koch Jerelyn O'Connor
Public Present:	Helen Freiburger Carol Ann Hauber	

Review and Certification of Minutes of May 26, 2015 Commission Meeting

Commissioner Schwendinger proposed changes to the May 26, 2015 minutes. Commissioner Holz motioned to approve the minutes with the proposed changes from Commissioner Schwendinger. Commissioner Wall seconded. All others present in favor. Motion passed.

Correspondence/Public Input

None

Old Business

Rental License & Inspection Fee Update

On May 18, 2015 the City Council approved another modification; they increased the fees on the condition staff found a way to reduce the amount of increase in the fees. Initially fees increased pretty substantially; almost doubled. The City of Dubuque's inspection fees had been next to the lowest in the state out of the 7 largest cities in Iowa. The City is now the third highest in regards to inspection fees. To reduce the increase it was determined 7% of the inspection work was done to single family owner occupied properties. Thus, the City agreed to contribute 7% of the general funds to the inspection program.

Another way to reduce the increase in rental license fees is to allow self-certification in 75% in professionally run property operations. These would be properties that have a pattern of other inspections (IFA, State inspections, etc) and ones that have a maintenance staff. The Housing inspectors are going to spot check these self-certified inspections. In addition, the Housing inspectors will inspect 25% of these properties so this will reduce how much they will pay for inspection fees as the fee will be less on the units that are self-certified. Also, the Fire Department is going to perform the inspections on college dorm rooms so this will reduce the cost significantly also. The Housing Department will be responsible for approximately 10,000 units to be inspected in a 5 year cycle with 2 1/2 inspectors.

The Housing Department is trying to become more efficient and free up inspectors by reducing the number of re-inspections each will complete. One way this will be achieved is to aid in reducing violations by inspectors carrying supplies with them to complete repairs such as taking batteries on inspections to reduce the number of smoke detector re-inspections. The Housing Department will look at other ways to reduce

re-inspections. One example is to allow the landlords through self-certification to confirm that they have made the repairs if they are not repeat problem properties and property owners.

We meet with the landlord association once a month to discuss these changes. Alvin Nash has received a lot of feedback on these changes. He is working with the landlords to make it a win-win situation.

New Business

Non-Licensed Landlords

Many non-licensed rental units have been discovered on Craigslist. In addition, utility billing has assisted in determining if there is an unknown non-licensed property. It is estimated there may be 500 to 1,000 units that are non-licensed. An effort is being made to capture these units and get them licensed. It is the Housing Department's responsibility to make sure those units are safe, healthy, and up to city code. The rental license program will not seek out or enforce on homes that rent to their children in their homes, these family relationship situations will be allowed to remain non-licensed. These property owners will have until August 1st to get them licensed or they will pay \$750.00 infraction fee every month they remain non-licensed.

Reports

Voucher Participant Income Data

A report was submitted listing all sources of income for Voucher participants. This report counts all income sources of income of the household not just the head of the household. The perception of many people is that welfare is the main source of income for many families. The report indicates that in actuality only 8% of families have a source of income from TANF (welfare). The report was categorized by elderly households and disabled and non-disabled households. The report also categorized sources of income by non-elderly households; disabled and non-disabled. This data specifically disproves the perception that most people on welfare do not have jobs. In reality the report shows people working as many as 3 jobs to make ends meet. Sister Dorothy is hopeful this information can get to the newspaper and become public.

Crime Reports

Commissioners were provided a summary of Corporal Koch's crime reports. Another report shared statistics showing crime is not higher in households receiving assistance through the Voucher program. We have not sufficiently gotten this information out to the public.

Corporal Koch stated April was not a good month as far as number of arrests. He stated there were more arrests such as public intoxication, disorderly conduct, drug possessions, trespassing, etc. This may be partially explained due to the warmer weather but no other specific reason why arrests were at such a high level.

Sister Dorothy inquired if Corporal Koch could do a one paragraph analysis of the crime and the trends giving his perception of what the crime figures signify. Jim Holz suggested graphing the crime reports. Corporal Koch agreed to graph or prepare a summary of the reports to provide a clearer picture of the data.

Nuisance Report

Sixty four properties have made the nuisance report in the last year. The primary issue with the properties trash, garbage, and debris. There have been two municipal infractions issued on properties that are currently in the court system. The Housing Department receives a spreadsheet from the Public Works Department tracking all of these nuisances. This allows a map of these calls to be produced showing the areas that have ongoing problems with these issues. The Housing inspectors are trying to improve are response to these issues.

Rehab Reports

There were 5 loan closings on Friday June 19th. Three were 1st Time Homebuyer loans, 1 Rehabilitation loan, and 1 Water lateral break loan. We just listed 1501/1503 Bluff St with ReMax. In July 1421 Elm St will be closing as will the Habitat for Humanity house at 2300 Washington St. There is an interested buyer for 2073 Jackson St, a CHI property.

The City Rehabilitation Program received notice that the annual IFA allocation will be decreased in the next year. A specific amount of allocation has not been given at this time.

Neighborhood Services

Jerelyn O'Connor distributed copies of the recent Washington Neighborhood Development Corporation newsletter (WNDC). The Washington Neighborhood Development Corp. has a lot of interest in the Washington Tool Library. It has been a neighborhood fixture for the last 42 years and receives funding from the Community Development Block Grant. The Washington Tool library staff met with Megan Star of WNDC and Erica Haugen and realized they had limited the participants to only those that were income eligible. The interpretation from the Community Block Grant is that only the majority have to be income eligible. Thus, you do not have to be income eligible or live in the Washington Neighborhood to utilize the tool library. WNDC prepared a video to expand users of the Tool Library, increase volunteers, and raise additional funds. The Tool Library received a one thousand dollar donation from the North End Neighborhood acknowledging what a valuable resource the library is.

The St Paul's Church is celebrating their 150th Anniversary with a block party.

Downtown Neighborhood for years has planted Grant Park. The City has always provided flowers to them for the plantings. However, due to staff and budget constraints the City cannot supply the flowers. The Downtown Neighborhood is still trying to keep up with the plantings without the City support. The City has a formal agreement prepared to sign for these plantings.

Alvin Nash, added the status of the WNDC is currently uncertain. It has not performed as anticipated for revitalization of small businesses and neighborhoods. However, it has been determined a Community Development Corporation is vital to the community. It may not be just the Washington Neighborhood Development Corporation as it may be combined with other neighborhoods. Each area neighborhood cannot have their own Development Corporation so the City is trying to have one dedicated development corporation for revitalization. The goal is to get the associations off of "life support" and get them doing revitalization of the community as initially intended. This will be a very vital piece to the community once it has been established and working as anticipated.

Information Sharing

Letter to Voucher Participants of Administrative Policy Changes

The letter to the voucher participants was distributed advising program participants of the recent changes reflected in the Administrative Plan. The Housing Voucher staff also sent a letter reporting the minimum rents to be paid by the participants. This was to go into effect July 1st but to be fair staff delayed it to September 1st.

In addition, Teresa Bassler wanted the commission to be aware that three 1st Time Homebuyers are Housing Choice Voucher participants.

Project Concern's Executive Director to Resign

The letter was read informing the Housing Commission that Stacy Martin, Project Concern's Executive Director will resign effective July 2nd to become Community Relations Specialist at Bell Tower. Project Concern is actively looking to fill this position.

Sister Dorothy inquired if the Housing Department was still going to bring recommendations to the City Council on the Ann Michalski's memorial project. Alvin Nash confirmed the department is going to make a recommendation but stated he is unsure what the recommendation will be. Sister Dorothy stated she intends to call officials at Loras College and Clarke University to see if they want to join in the efforts.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Commissioner Wall motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Schwendinger seconded the motion. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 4:47 pm.

Minutes taken by:

Kim Glaser

Kim Glaser
Recording Secretary

Respectfully submitted:

A. Nash

Alvin Nash
Department Director