

MINUTES FOR HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING

DATE: Tuesday, October 27, 2020
TIME: 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: Housing and Community Development Department
350 West 6th Street, Room 250; Dubuque, IA 52001

Chairperson Rick Baumhover called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. following staff assurance of compliance with Iowa Open Meeting Law.

Commissioners Present: Rick Baumhover
Michelle Becwar
Amy Eudaley
Gail Weitz

Janice Craddieth (*arrival 4:15 p.m.*)
Suzanne Stroud (*arrival 4:15 p.m.*)
Sam Wooden (*departure 4:44 p.m.*)

Commissioners Absent: Hilary Dalton Coralita Shumaker David Wall

Staff Present: Alexis Steger
Gina Hodgson

Tonya England
Cate Richter

Kris Neyen

Public Present: Lynn Sutton

Oath of Office – Janice Craddieth

Janice Craddieth read the Oath of Office.

Certification of Minutes – September 22, 2020 Housing Commission Meeting

Commissioner Amy Eudaley moved to approve the Minutes for the September 22, 2020 Housing Commission Meeting. Commissioner Sam Wooden seconded. Roll call. Six (6) in favor; one (1) abstain. Motion passed.

Commissioner Suzanne Stroud abstained for she was not at the meeting held on September 22, 2020.

Correspondence/Public Input

None

New Business

a. Hotline for Eviction Prevention

Alexis Steger, Department Director, summarized plans for a hotline for eviction prevention. Under this plan, the City would fund a position to field telephone calls from landlords and tenants regarding evictions. The position would provide data on questions about the eviction process, type of evictions, illegal evictions, and the number of landlords needing assistance the eviction process. It is not intended for the position to provide legal assistance.

b. Fair Housing Testing

Steger presented the idea of funding a program for staff who work for the City Dubuque who would be trained to administer fair housing testing. Initially, the City would pay for the training of City employees on testing and continually train additional staff, as needed, when staff leave employment with the City.

There was discussion about hiring an independent group to conduct the fair housing testing for an unbiased opinion or possibly having a mixture of staff and an independent group perform the testing.

c. Landlord Incentive Program for Housing Choice Voucher

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Steger presented an option offered by a Minneapolis program—Housing & Community Development would choose units in different areas within Dubuque to serve different types of housing situations. The landlords would hold a unit for a voucher holder and, if the unit was vacant, funding would be provided to pay for rent for the time period the unit is held.

Action: Alexis will send a copy of the ordinance or policy for the Minneapolis program to the Housing Commissioners.

d. Review Changes to Background Check Process for Housing Choice Voucher

Steger stated Illinois was becoming challenging with processing background checks in a timely manner for the Housing Choice Voucher program; if a person has a similar name as someone else, fingerprinting must be completed. It costs \$10, \$20, or, sometimes, more if fingerprints are needed for the background check.

The Department was considering contracting with RSI, the vendor who currently completes background checks for landlords. The background checks would be run before clients were considered eligible for the program and the background checks would be run again at clients' first annual exam. RSI charges \$5 per background check.

As of October 22, 2020, arrest records will no longer be provided to landlords with the background checks to prevent confusion between arrests and charges going through the courts.

Reports

a. Community Development Advisory Commission Report

Steger reported the Community Development Advisory Commission had a presentation on Fair Housing and they approved a window replacement program for emergency rescue and escape openings. The window replacement program will be for homeowners with a low to moderate income and landlords who rent units to tenants with a low to moderate income.

b. Rehab Report

The Rehabilitation Programs Supervisor, Kris Neyen, reported 2320 Jackson Street; will be closing soon. The closing on 445 Loras Boulevard was delayed due to it being next door to where the explosion occurred.

c. Neighborhood Services

Steger announced Jerelyn O'Connor, Neighborhood Development Specialist, will be retiring as of November 4, 2020.

Action: Commissioner Baumhover asked for a letter of appreciation be written on behalf of the Housing Commission.

d. Assisted Housing Waiting List Statistical Summary

Cate Richter, Assisted Housing Coordinator, stated one hundred (100) applicants are continuing to be pulled from the Housing Choice Voucher Waiting List. There are applicants on the Waiting List from the Family Unification Program.

e. Housing Choice Voucher Participant Statistical Summary

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Richter explained the Housing Choice Voucher Participant Statistical Summary reflects the total number of participants was down to 774. Assisted Housing is concentrating on issuing vouchers issued and getting units leased up for the participants.

f. Denial/Termination Meeting Results

No additional information was reported.

Information Sharing

- a. Gina Hodgson, Assisted Housing Supervisor, reported Housing Commissioner Coralita Shumaker submitted her resignation from the Housing Commission to the City Clerk's Office.
- b. Iowa Concern provide free legal assistance; they may be contacted at (800) 447-1985.
- c. Salvation Army sign up is available online for food and/or toys for Christmas.
- d. Dubuque Food Pantry on Jackson Street will be offering 500 baskets on November 23 and 24, 2020 for Thanksgiving. Information may be picked up and turned in to the Dubuque Food Pantry now.
- e. Commissioner Baumhover wished Kevin Firnstahl, City Clerk, a happy retirement.
- f. Steger provided an update on properties surrounding the unit on Loras Boulevard, which exploded a few weeks ago. The 2 properties located next to it remain vacant. The gas utility has been restored to the nearby homes. Most of the tenants have been moved back into their units. Temporary measures are being taken in regards to windows that may not be boarded up because they are located in sleeping rooms.

Adjournment

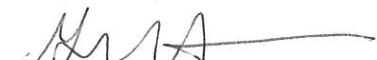
There being no further business to come before the Commission, Commissioner Eudaley moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Janice Craddieth seconded. Motion passed by voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

Minutes taken by:



Tonya England
Recording Secretary

Respectfully Submitted:



Gina Hodgson
Assisted Housing Supervisor