



HOUSING SOLUTIONS NETWORK MEETING

Tuesday, November 8, 2011

9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Members Present

David Dennison
Carol Brito
Kimberly Pontius
Virginia Coulter
Becky Ewing
Jeff Vitton
Jean Derenzy
Cathy Odom
Bob Long
Ron Crummel
Julie Gardner
Emilee Syrewicze
Jim Carruthers
Carol Moorman
Becky Ewing
Nancy Haynes
Pam Doty-Nation

Staff Present

Sarah Lucas
Connor Miller

A. Welcome and Introductions

B. Consideration of Agenda

The agenda was accepted as presented.

C. Consideration of September 13, 2011 Meeting Minutes

Bill Merry and Pam Doty-Nation should be listed as present. The minutes were accepted as modified.

D. County Updates

Bob Long noted that Bayview Apartments in Frankfort has 11 HUD-based subsidies. Referrals are needed for vacancies beginning in January. He added that USDA RD is accepting applications for 502 funding and loan guarantees.

Cindy Eveleigh noted that Goodwill is having their fall food drive at the outlet mall from November 10-13.

Carol Moorman updated that Goodwill is accepting referrals for the new homeless veterans facility.

Cathy Odom updated that NMCAA received 5 housing preservation grants, for Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Wexford, Emmet, and Roscommon counties. The funding can be used for home repairs and is distributed as a deferred loan. \$25,000 was received for each county.

Ron Crummel referred to information from the Michigan Rural Network regarding the amount of funding received per county for new housing units. Julie Gardner will clarify the funding sources.

E. Fair Housing Center

Nancy Haynes of the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan discussed programs and services. The FHC works to eliminate practices of housing discrimination against age, race, gender, familial status, religion, disability status, and marital status. Following the HUD Sustainable Communities Challenge grant received by Grand Traverse County, the FHC has added Grand Traverse County to its service area. She explained that the organization focuses on education and outreach to prevent housing discrimination, but has received a HUD Fair Housing Initiatives grant that will increase funding for enforcement. Last year the center received 200 reports of housing discrimination. Familial status is the number one basis of housing discrimination, due to inconsistencies between "reasonable occupancy standard" for familial status. She provided some examples of cases the center has been involved in, including "steering" by realtors, exclusionary zoning, moratoria on certain types of homes, prohibitions on service animals, etc. In some cases FHC is asked to explain fair housing laws to elected officials when there is NIMBYism for proposed developments, i.e. supportive housing projects. The center tries to work proactively, by reviewing policies on the front end, providing trainings to agency staff, etc. There is no charge for services. When enforcement is necessary, the FHC will investigate fair housing discrimination; if there is evidence of discrimination we will work with the client to determine the course of action, which can include filing with Michigan Civil Rights or HUD, or working with conflict resolution centers. Whenever the FHC considers enforcement, there is consideration as to whether enforcement is the most effective way to further fair housing. Success is building relationships and making sure it doesn't happen again.

The group discussed questions regarding issues covered by the FHC. R. Crummel asked whether there are attorneys available to represent discrimination claims. N. Haynes responded that FHC has a pool of trained fair housing attorneys that work on a contingency fee basis. Attorneys in private practice want these cases because of fee service.

N. Haynes noted that a fair housing workshop will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids on April 18.

F. CDBG Discussion

Julie Gardner provided information on changes to the CDBG guidelines. Under the new guidelines, the first 50% of the county CDBG allocation can be used for the same activities that have been covered in the past, i.e. homeowner rehab, throughout the county. The second half of the county CDBG allocation is targeted toward "placemaking" activities included in a county-adopted housing plan. She stated that MSHDA is in the process of hiring a consultant to put together content for an RFQ and a process schedule for implementing the changes. She noted that the Leelanau grant started in September and will be one of the first counties that will operate under these guidelines.

Members noted that a lot of the work that was done through the Grand Vision lends itself well to placemaking, and asked whether that would be considered for the targeted housing activities. Members asked if there was a way to use existing master plans or put together a regional plan in order to spare individual counties the expense of developing additional plans. J. Gardener a charette process is being planned in order to allow counties to ask these questions and ensure that they are addressed.

G. Advocacy Toolkit

S. Lucas noted that the Advocacy Committee has developed a draft advocacy toolkit that provides background information on housing issues and basic information on getting involved, i.e. local government roles, contacts, resources, etc. Additional information will be provided regarding fair housing. No additional changes were suggested. The toolkit will be posted on the Grand Vision website.

H. Roundtable Discussion and Announcements

S. Lucas stated that the first of several rental/development workshops will be held on January 19 at TAAR. Invitations will go out early next month.

Cheryl Naperala noted that the annual meeting of the Continuum of Care will be held on November 10.

I. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11 a.m.