

**Lincoln Housing Commission
Virtual Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 30, 2020 7:00 p.m.**

Members Present on Zoom Teleconference: Keith Gilbert, Chair; Diana Chirita; Allen Vander Meulen

Members Not Present: Victoria Benalfew, Evan Gorman

Also present: Abigail Butt, COA Director; Pam Gallup, Housing Commission Consultant; and Elaine Carroll, Adm. Assistant

Minutes:

COA Application for CPA Funds (Abigail Butt, Director)

Allen summarized the situation, that the Housing Commission had sponsored the COA when it first applied for funds from the CPA two years ago for the new Emergency Rental Assistance Program, and will be doing so again this year. Allen then invited Abigail to make her presentation.

Abigail started by saying that Last year, when the previous application was being readied for presentation to the CPC, there were 10 applicants to the program. This year there are 8 people in the program and a waiting list of 12 to 15 people. And, there are more people Abigail knows should be on the list. Part of the purpose program is to help people with a more wholistic approach: food security, counseling on achieving financial stability, etc. It is not a simple handout, but a more extensive effort to help them attain and maintain a stable home. So, people will be in the program, receiving monthly assistance for quite some time. The current wait list is over 3 years long. The program was originally intended to be a “bridge” to help people until they could get into affordable housing – which also has a three year waiting list at present. Given all this, the COA feels they should expand the program.

There are some challenges to doing so. First of all, the town’s social worker is heavily involved in helping those in the program, which takes a lot of time. But, they only work 20 hours per week – not enough time to do all of the triage, counselling, coordinating, research, recertifications, followup, and etc. needed, as well as all of her other duties. So, expanding the program will overtax the available staff hours .

In response to a question from Allen, Abigail said that none of those currently in the program are in the program because of financial difficulties related to COVID-19. She also mentioned that since the money is paid directly to the Landlord, the Landlord has the option of not participating in the program. So far, 5 applicant’s Landlords have refused to participate. This is understandable, especially a small Landlords, they just don’t have the bandwidth, or a lawyer on retainer, to deal with the extra complexity and requirements.

Pam pointed out that many of the challenges faced by Landlords being asked to participate in the Rental Assistance program will also be faced by Landlords in the HC’s AAA program. At this

point, there was much discussion as to ways to simplify the program to encourage more Landlord participation.

Allen stopped the discussion at this point, as the meeting needs to be short this evening, pointing out that there will be at least a couple of months of discussion with the CPC (and HC) before it is approved by the CPC.

The discussion then turned to how much money should the COA seek for funding of this program in the coming year. Last year's request – a partial year – was \$16,000. The Housing Commission had previously suggested to Abigail that it would support a request of \$60,000 for the coming year. Abigail noted that to fully fund the program for all current applicants would be about \$100,000. A big challenge is the administrative cost, as noted at the beginning of the discussion. Abigail has asked Metrowest if they can help with that (for an additional fee).

Diana asked whether there is money available to the Housing Commission for this purpose. Allen said that 10% of all CPA funds each year are dedicated to supporting affordable housing – roughly \$100,000 per year in the case of Lincoln. He knows that we have not been spending all of that money each year, but does not know the current balance. Pam pointed out that there are two funding issues here: the rental assistance – which can be paid out of CPC funds, and the administrative costs, which must be paid in some other way, possibly out of the Housing Commission's revolving fund.

Allen pointed out that the Revolving Fund is fairly healthy at present, with a balance of about \$115,000 right now. Pam pointed out it is supposed to be limited to a maximum of \$90,000. There was concern expressed as to whether funding a portion of the administrative expenses with Housing Commission funds would be legal. Pam said that as long as the funds were used only Rental-related issues, and not other things like mental health counseling, then it would probably be acceptable. Abigail said that the administrative fee for the \$30,000 program last year was \$3,500 to Metrowest. The Commission informally agreed that supporting the program's administrative costs out of the Revolving Fund program was feasible, but would require more discussion to determine exactly how, and how much support should be offered.

Keith moved that the Housing Commission support a CPC request of \$60,000. Diana seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote. It was also agreed that the commission would discuss the issue of support for administrative costs at another meeting in the near future.

Planning for Diversity Roundtable

The Commission discussed what is to be done with regards to the upcoming Diversity Roundtable presentation next week. It appears Allen is the only Commission member available to do the presentation, although Diana, Pam and Keith all said they would be willing to help in the preparation. It was decided to meet the next day (October 1) to work on the presentation.

Approval September 9th Public Meeting and Executive Session Minutes

Diana moved that the minutes for both the Public and Executive Session meetings on September 9th be approved without change. Keith seconded. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Vote to extend contract for Gerry O'Doherty

Allen reported that it turns out an RFP for a new contract is not necessary at this time, as a new three year contract was signed in June of 2017. But, the first one year extension to that contract needs to be approved at this time. There will need to be a vote for the second extension next year.

Diana moved that we approve the extension of Gerry O'Doherty's contract for another year, Evan seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously via a roll call vote.

Schedule next full HC meeting

The commission agreed to meet again to further discuss the COA CPC proposal at 7:00pm on Wednesday, October 21st.

Junk Cars at Sunnyside

The commission members expressed concern over the presence of two vehicles without license plates that have been parked in the Sunnyside parking lot without moving, for quite some time. One of the vehicles appears in terrible shape, apparently inoperable, and is being used for storage.

Diana Chirita left the meeting at this point.

The commission agreed that these vehicles need to be moved – or at least licensed – before winter, as they will interfere with plowing, and also is impacting the usability of the lot for other tenants. It was agreed that a letter will be drafted. It was decided that as a first step we would inform the tenant that the vehicles are a problem – unsightly and in the way for snow removal, and ask when they can get the vehicles either licensed and operable or removed – but not set a deadline for doing so.

Keith Moved for the meeting be adjourned. Evan seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by Allen Vander Meulen