

**TOWN OF MANCHESTER
HOUSING COMMISSION MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING - THURSDAY, JULY 23, 2009 - 7:00 P.M.
LINCOLN CENTER HEARING ROOM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Geoff King, Susan Holmes, Julian Stoppelman,
Gerald Guay, Peter Mason

ALSO PRESENT: Gary Anderson, Heather Donoghue

Acceptance of minutes from June 22, 2009 meeting

Ms. Holmes moved to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Guay seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Mr. Mason noted that the June 22 minutes indicated the Rebuilding Together program concentrates on cosmetic changes in homes. He said the program also completes other projects such as the installation of furnaces and accessibility.

Discussion of report for presentation to Board of Directors

Mr. Anderson said members should have received a copy of the draft 2009 report to the Board of Directors. He said the report was based on discussions at previous meetings and on written sections he received from Mr. Guay and Ms. Holmes. He outlined the sections of the report which included: the Commission's charge, who the Commission advocates for, the definition of affordable housing currently used by the Commission, information on the importance of affordable housing and the goals and objectives agreed upon by the Commission. He said he did not include the goal of ensuring the quality of affordable housing because it was not discussed at the last meeting. Mr. King suggested including that as an objective under the second goal of rehabilitating and revitalizing Manchester's existing housing stock.

Ms. Holmes said she thought there was an opportunity under the Educate the Public section for more Commission research on the current need for affordable housing in Manchester. She suggested developing a survey for Manchester families who recently had children graduate from Manchester schools asking them if their children had an interest in living in Manchester and if they were planning on or able to do so.

Mr. King noted the Board of Directors recently established a landlord registration program and asked if it was possible to include such questions on the registration form. Mr. Anderson said staff would research the registration process registration and determine if it is possible to include such a survey.

Mr. Mason said he was comfortable with the report, felt it was well-written and reflected the goals of the Commission. Mr. Anderson said he would make the changes recommended by the Commission and investigate getting the report on a Board of Directors' agenda in the Fall.

Other business

Mr. Stoppelman asked staff to report on the progress of the Redevelopment Agency. Mr. Anderson said the Agency has completed a proposed Broad Street Redevelopment Plan which will be posted on the Town website on July 24. He said the Agency is currently discussing this with members of the Board of Directors and staff. The Board of Directors is also considering the possibility of including a referendum question regarding a general obligation bond to be used for the execution of Phase I of the plan. He said Phase I includes the extension of Center Springs Park and associated improvements along Bigelow Brook, possible environmental investigations, streetscape improvements, and possible acquisition and demolition of the Broad Street Parkade and Nichols properties. He said Agency members would be reporting to the Board of Directors in August and any question would need to be submitted by the Town to the State of Connecticut by the beginning of September.

Mr. Stoppelman asked Ms. Donoghue if the General Manager has made a recommendation on the approximately \$95,000 in CDBG contingency funds. Ms. Donoghue said the Manager's recommendation was to include the original \$40,000 allocated to down payment assistance and a similar but revamped program, \$30,000 for new windows for the new Youth Service Bureau building and \$25,000 for sidewalk improvements on Trotter Street. Ms. Donoghue indicated she was unsure what the Board would do, but they will act on the Manager's recommendation at their August meeting.

Mr. King said he thought the Board of Directors was using CDBG money to fund projects that should be funded through the general fund and starving other housing related programs, especially the Housing Rehabilitation program that should be receiving CDBG funding instead.

Ms. Holmes asked how serious many of the issues in Housing Rehab applications are. Ms. Donoghue said many are high-priority projects in older homes in which work was needed to make the home safe for its occupants. She said the current waiting list is over 70 applications.

Mr. Mason asked if there will be coordination between the list of Rebuilding Together projects and Housing Rehabilitation program applications. Ms. Donoghue said she will be overseeing the Rebuilding Together program and will be able to see if anyone has already completed a Housing Rehabilitation Program application. She said these two programs are run differently i.e., Rebuilding Together is for owner-occupants only, and it is possible that people may participate in both programs. The Housing Rehabilitation program addresses lead and property maintenance code violations, but if a family had a roof in disrepair but not immediately dangerous, they could apply to Rebuilding Together.

Mr. Mason asked how much funding was approved for the rehabilitation program this year compared to past years. Ms. Donoghue said during 2007, which is the most recently completed program year, the rehabilitation program received approximately \$300,000, with which the Town rehabilitated 16 units of housing and completed five boiler replacements. This year the Board will be allocating \$180,000 to the Housing Rehabilitation program. Mr. King noted the backlog of applications is up while the funding is down.

Ms. Holmes asked if applicants had to live in a house for a certain amount of time before they could request funding. Ms. Donoghue said there is no such restriction. She said they do, however, have to prove ownership and be up to date with their mortgage and all taxes.

Mr. King said there might be an opportunity for an educational forum on what options there are for people who cannot afford to rehabilitate their homes. He mentioned the LAMPP program, Rebuilding Together, the Housing Rehabilitation program, and CRT as some of the programs available in Manchester. He said he thought if people wanted to find out about these programs there was no single place for them to go for information. Ms. Holmes agreed that the Commission could do more to provide information on these programs and suggested that in order to save money the Town could bid many rehabilitation jobs together instead of sending out each one separately. Ms. Donoghue said that would be a good idea, however the Federal Government requires there be a separate open bidding process for each job.

Mr. Mason said he thought there might be an opportunity to post webcasts on relevant issues on the Town web site.

In response to a question from Mr. Anderson as to what educational issue the Commission wanted to focus on, Mr. King said he thought it was important to provide information to people so that they could both stay and live safely in their homes. He said there is no one place for residents to go in order to see what is available and perhaps help them stay in their homes. Mr. Anderson suggested the Housing Commission's web site would be an appropriate place to collect and post such information.

Mr. King asked staff to check with the human services department and see if they would be interested in having a forum on the issue that could be filmed and placed on the web site.

Mr. Anderson suggested that at the next meeting the Commission brainstorm what information they would like to have available on the Commission's web site. The Commission agreed to think about this and bring their ideas to the next meeting.

Mr. Anderson distributed a flyer on a Connecticut Housing Coalition Members' Forum which is taking place on Thursday, August 5, 2009 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. in New Haven. All Commission members are welcome to attend.

Mr. Stoppelman moved to adjourn. Mr. Mason seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The next meeting of the Manchester Housing Commission will take place on ***Wednesday, September 16, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the Manchester Room of Town Hall.*** Please note the change in location of this meeting.