

CITY OF URBANA
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Tuesday, August 22, 2000, City Council Chambers

Commission Members Present: Fred Cobb, Chris Diana, Robert Lewis, Gigi Paquin, Anne Heinze Silvis, Dennis Vidoni

Commission Members Absent: Jon Liebman

Others Present: April Getchius, Michael Loschen, Randy Burgett, and Connie Eldridge, Grants Management Division; Jerry White, Champaign County Advocacy and Mentoring Resources (CCAMR); Lester Pritchard, Citizens for HOMES; Barbara Pritchard, Terry Burnett, and Alejandra Coronel, PACE, Inc.; Betty Harris; Cleveland Harris; Robert O. Keller; Judy Mullen; Ruth Wyman, Urbana City Council; Bob Leach, United Citizens and Neighbors.

Call to Order: Chairperson Cobb called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m. A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes: *Chairperson Cobb asked for approval or corrections to the July 25, 2000 minutes. Commissioner Lewis moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Diana seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Staff Report: Ms. Getchius distributed a revised draft of the Visitability Ordinance.

Two candidates for the vacant Grants Management Division manager position were interviewed.

Mr. Loschen announced the Village of Rantoul would no longer be a member of the Urbana HOME Consortium. All consortium members must have the same program year, and Rantoul's program year does not match other consortium members. Rantoul will not change its program just to permit HOME funding, and HUD is unwilling to issue a waiver allowing Rantoul to continue its present course. A separate issue is that HUD guidelines require all members of local government sign the HOME agreement including the individual townships located in unincorporated Champaign County. City staff had interpreted Champaign County Regional Planning Commission as having jurisdiction over unincorporated areas of Champaign County. However, HUD has determined each individual township must be an equal member of the Consortium. Without the individual townships as members of the Consortium, the Village of Rantoul is not a contiguous unit of local government. Staff is working with HUD on this matter.

In response to Chairperson Cobb, Mr. Loschen explained staff is already working on recertification of the HOME Consortium. Mayors of Urbana and Champaign and the County Board Chairman have signed letters acknowledging the Village of Rantoul will not be a part of the HOME Consortium at this time. The Village of Rantoul agreed to this. Once the county/township issue is resolved, staff will amend the HOME Consortium agreement to return Rantoul to the Consortium. Chairperson Cobb asked about the financial impact. Mr. Loschen replied the HUD representative is working on that issue. Commissioner Vidoni asked if staff had

anticipated these problems. Mr. Loschen answered that staff has been working with HUD on the county/township issue for over a year. HUD's denial of Rantoul's waiver was unexpected.

Mr. Loschen stated that HUD has approved the Urbana HOME Consortium and the City of Urbana's Consolidated Plan for Program Years 2000-2004 and the Annual Action Plan for FY2000-2001.

Petitions and Communications: None.

Old Business: **Visitability Ordinance** – Ms. Getchius summarized the changes to the Visitability Ordinance. The original language referred to single-family, duplex and triplex. However, the most effective way to incorporate this ordinance was into the single and two-family dwelling code. A paragraph from the original proposal will be added to Section F-102, Applicability. After much discussion it was decided to model the waiver process after the Zoning Board of Appeals procedure for major variances. Visitability waivers will go through the Building Code Board of Appeals. If the Building Code Board of Appeals supports the request for a waiver, the request is forwarded to City Council for affirmation. If the Board does not support it, the request stops there. Ms. Getchius supports this process since it involves both City Council and a board used to dealing with code issues. Section 2 changes the effective date of the ordinance to allow for permits in process. The on-going Request for Proposal for the property at Kinch Street and Florida Avenue would also be excluded from the Visitability Ordinance. Ms. Getchius explained any future projects, such as redevelopment of Lakeside Terrace, would be visitable. Mr. Severns has not yet provided an estimate of the additional costs.

Commissioner Diana inquired about the width of corridors. Ms. Getchius replied that a section would be added to the ordinance stating corridors must be at least 36 inches in width. Commissioner Diana clarified that electrical outlets shall be “no less than” 15 inches above the finished floor. In response to Commissioner Lewis, Ms. Getchius stated door openings shall not be less than 32 inches.

Noting that the Community Development Commission has supported visitability since it was first presented to the commission, Chairperson Cobb invited members of the audience to speak about visitability.

Judy Mullen, a resident of Myra Ridge subdivision in Urbana, supported the Visitability Ordinance and applauded Illinois Center for Citizen Involvement (ICfCI) and Habitat for Humanity for incorporating it.

Bob Leach, President of United Citizens and Neighbors (UCAN), distributed a letter in support of the Visitability Ordinance. Although the ordinance does not require housing rehabilitation projects to be made visitable, UCAN is looking at ways to make their housing rehabilitation project visitable. He noted as the population ages, visitable houses will have more value.

Alejandra Coronel distributed a letter in support of the Visitability Ordinance. She believed it is better to make new houses visitable rather than waiting until disability strikes.

Ruth Wyman, Urbana City Council, briefly summarized her interest in visitability. She preferred the concept of visitability be in ordinance form rather than a program policy. Ms. Wyman noted that these houses would be visitable for all future homeowners. Noting that one in ten persons will become disabled at some point in his/her life, a visitable house will help with adapting to this condition.

Chairperson Cobb asked if the concept of visitability was being promoted with real estate and contractor associations. Ms. Wyman replied there is an ad campaign presently running. Lester Pritchard, Citizens for HOMES, added that two contractors are building visitable spec homes. Barbara Pritchard, PACE, remarked that the Illinois Affordable Accessible Housing Task Force is working on a statewide visitability ordinance. Commissioner Vidoni asked if there was any opposition to the visitability ordinance. Ms. Getchius was not aware of any opposition and noted that Carl Hill has built a visitable home in Southridge. She believed ICfCI's earlier concerns have been resolved. Ms. Wyman added Mr. Pritchard has done a good job reaching out to concerned parties and has made compromises. She read a letter from the ICfCI endorsing visitability standards and urging commissioners to approve the visitability ordinance.

Ms. Getchius said the original terms and structure of the ordinance probably caused more construction problems and less clarity. The changes that were incorporated actually make the ordinance easier.

Commissioner Diana moved to recommend to City Council adoption of the Visitability Ordinance as amended. Commissioner Lewis seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

New Business: Approval of Agreement with Owner of Property at 1211 West Eureka Street – Mr. Burgett briefly reviewed two memos: his memo summarizing a meeting with Mr. Holz, April Getchius, Robert Keller (the Harris's attorney), and one from Steve Holz, Assistant City Attorney. The memos addressed concerns raised by the CD Commission at the last meeting. Mr. Burgett supported approval of the agreement.

Mr. Burgett discussed problems with monitoring properties on which the City has mortgages. Unless a property's title is transferred through a financial institution, there is no way for staff to know a sale had occurred and the mortgage become due. Mr. Burgett does visually inspect those properties that he had rehabilitated. Noting the City reduced rehabilitation staff a few years ago, Ms. Getchius affirmed the problems with monitoring these properties. She felt this agreement was an opportunity to capture some of the funds and to bring the property up to code.

Chairperson Cobb felt the agreement would benefit both the City and the property. Commissioner Diana appreciated staff's response to his earlier questions and felt this was the best solution to this particular problem. He stated there was a definite need to investigate methods of tracking property transfers. Mr. Burgett responded that staff currently requests a title certificate on property to be rehabilitated. It is not cost-efficient to request monthly title certificates, nor is there enough staff to do this review. Ms. Getchius added many valid transfers are not ever recorded. In response to Commissioner Vidoni, Ms. Getchius estimated there are probably a couple hundred mortgages for all the different programs.

Commissioner Silvis moved to approve the agreement with the owner of the property at 1211 West Eureka Street. Commissioner Lewis seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Disposition of Property at 1107 West Fairview Avenue – Mr. Loschen reviewed the acquisition of this property, which is located across the street from King School. The lot will be donated at no cost to ICfCI to meet the City’s contractual obligation to the HomeBuild Program. Demolition is completed, and the property will be put into escrow until completion. The house must be completed before March 31, 2001. Chairperson Cobb noted this action would positively impact the tax roles and improve the neighborhood. Commissioner Diana inquired about a potential problem with the nonstandard lot size and ICfCI’s standard plans regarding visitability. Mr. Loschen answered no; the lot is flat and he does not anticipate any visitability issues. Due to the age of the subdivision, the lots are legally non-conforming. The City has donated other 59-foot wide lots to ICfCI.

Commissioner Vidoni moved to recommend to City Council the donation of the property at 1107 West Fairview Avenue to the Illinois Center for Citizen Involvement. Commissioner Paquin seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Agreement with Homestead Corporation for Single-Family Rental Rehabilitation Program

– Mr. Loschen explained that the City’s FY1999-2000 budget had allocated \$40,000 of HOME CHDO funds to Homestead Corporation. The funds would be used to acquire and rehabilitate two single-family residences and then rent these properties to low-income families. Homestead will provide \$10,000 match. HUD establishes the annual rents minus a utility allowance. This project is very similar to past Homestead projects.

Noting the fiscal year, Commissioner Vidoni asked why the funds had not been requested earlier. Mr. Loschen replied Homestead had problems with the contractor completing the Douglass Park homes. Also there were changes to the board members. Ms. Getchius said Homestead Corporation had trouble finding a house within their budget. Chairperson Cobb inquired if there were any negative issues. Mr. Loschen answered no; this project will bring two more families into Urbana. Commissioner Vidoni wondered if Homestead Corporation was on the right track. Ms. Getchius replied Mr. Loschen has worked with Homestead Corporation and provided guidance as to the type of house. She believed they now have the capacity to take on this project since the Douglass Park project is completed. Mr. Loschen said Homestead Corporation has hired a real estate manager to oversee their different rental projects.

Commissioner Lewis asked who reviews the federal regulations. Ms. Getchius answered Mr. Loschen is the reviewer. Mr. Loschen remarked that he and Ms. Rasmussen are attempting to give an annual seminar on financial responsibility of participating organizations. Commissioner Lewis was concerned that participating organizations and City Council do not fully understand the regulations governing the programs. Commissioner Diana agreed.

In response to Commissioner Silvis, Mr. Loschen stated one of the two properties has been identified. Homestead Corporation plans to rehabilitate the first property and move in a tenant

before starting the second project. This would help with the cash flow. Commissioner Silvis wondered if Homestead Corporation anticipated a negative reaction from neighbors. Mr. Loschen explained Homestead will purchase an existing house and rehabilitate it. The only impact would be new residents in the neighborhood. Commissioner Lewis asked if this project would be required to be made visitable. Ms. Getchius replied no; rehabilitation projects are not required to meet the visitability ordinance.

Commissioner Lewis moved to recommend approval to City Council the agreement with Homestead Corporation for Single-Family Rental Rehabilitation Program. Commissioner Diana seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Lewis discussed the impact of the visitability ordinance. He stated any ordinance has a heavy impact on someone, although this is not a problem with Midwest topography. He said private sector acceptance of the concept is the next level. Chairperson Cobb thought if the general public sees visitability as a positive concept, the market will respond to the demand for visitable homes. Commissioners Lewis and Silvis agreed that visitable homes would be more attractive as the population ages.

Adjournment: Chairperson Cobb adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Recorded by Connie Eldridge