

**Meeting Minutes  
State College Borough  
CDBG/Citizens' Advisory Committee  
August 6, 2019**

The State College Borough Community Development Block Grant/Citizens' Advisory Committee (CDBG/CAC) meeting was called to order by Selden Smith, Chair, on Tuesday, August 6, 2019 at 12:04 p.m. in the Municipal Building, 243 South Allen Street.

**Members Present**

Selden Smith, Chair; Rebecca Misangyi, Vice-Chair; David Gaines; Jason Olcese; Marcia Patterson; and Bruce Quigley

**Members Absent**

Alexis Burke

**Others Present**

Maureen H. Safko, Senior Planner; Elizabeth S. Eirmann, Planner-Housing Specialist; Denise L. Rhoads, Administrative Assistant; and Colleen Ritter, State College Community Land Trust (SCCLT)

**Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made by Ms. Patterson and seconded by Mr. Gaines to approve the June 25, 2019 minutes as submitted. The vote was unanimously in favor.

**Chair Report**

Selden Smith, Chair, had nothing to report.

**Public Hour**

The public did not wish to discuss items not on the agenda.

**2020-2024 Fair Housing Analysis Update (FHAU)**

Ms. Safko's overview included:

- Discussed the schedule: 1) 30-day public review period to begin on or about August 29, 2019, 2) public hearing on October 14, 2019 and 3) present to Council for action on October 21, 2019, 4) submit the FHAU to HUD on November 15, 2019.
- The purpose of the FHAU is to guide Borough efforts to improve fair housing.

CAC's comments included:

- Mr. Gaines asked if portions of the document reflected some newer ideas/objectives. Ms. Safko replied that the FHAU discussed previously identified impediments and those newly identified through the FHAU process that would all be reviewed a little further in the agenda.
- Mr. Quigley expressed concern about the safety of pedestrian access to campus citing an example on North Atherton.
- Mr. Olcese noted he read an article recently that stated zoning practices practically forced residents to drive instead of walk. He noted that revising zoning ordinances to allow greater density would help to solve this problem.
- Mr. Gaines asked to what extent did the objectives follow through to the impediments and were there any fundamental changes to the objectives in the report. He also asked that the zoning rewrite reflect an emphasis on increasing access to affordable housing units.
- Mr. Gaines noted that the zoning conversation was focused on new development and voiced his interest in addressing older development as well.

Ms. Safko stated the State College Borough has partnering with SCCLT, Temporary Housing Foundation, Inc., (THF) Pennsylvania State University Housing Research Center, and the Hamer Institute (Energy +) committee to increase the affordability of living in the historic homes of the Borough by conducting energy audits prior to rehabilitation and working to carry out audit recommendations to reduce the cost of living in, or operating, older homes.

Impediments discussed:

- Lack of affordable housing and financing
  - Objective: The Borough would continue to pursue providing affordable housing opportunities to expand housing choices in the Borough. Ms. Safko noted that the inadequate supply of family size units identified in 2014 was no longer identified as a need in the community, and that demand has grown instead for single and double occupancy units.
  - Action: Continue to fund the homebuyer programs as well as provide funding to rental acquisition and rehab projects as properties are identified. Also, work with the Centre County Affordable Housing Coalition, and other county and regional partners to develop region-wide housing market analysis to identify needs and opportunities for affordable housing.

Ms. Eirmann gave a brief overview of the THF purchase of a duplex on Logan Avenue, which created two affordable 3-bedroom apartments. Ms. Safko noted that the Borough continues to work with two CHDO partners to address the need for both home buyer and rental units. While the State College Community Land Trust model is ideal for home buyers recent work with Temporary Housing Foundation has shifted to meeting the need for more affordable rental units.

- Inadequate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure
  - Objective: As a means to increase the affordability of living in the Borough by providing a safe and accessible alternative, low-cost form of transportation, the Planning and Community Development department and

- the Public Works department could collaborate to improve the adequacy and safety of the bicycle path network and pedestrian walkways.
  - Action: Utilize CDBG funds to remedy missing links in the network of bicycle trails and pedestrian walkways that are most likely used by Borough residents to commute from home to work, school, and other community facilities.
- Lack of knowledge of PA Tenant/Landlord Law as it relates to complicated lease language, and reasonable accommodations for children and support animals
  - Objective: Improve access to tenant/landlord law for the illiterate and disadvantaged.
  - Action: Support the efforts of the Centre County Affordable Housing Coalition and the Center for Alternatives in Community Justice to develop educational materials modeled after Lancaster County's tenant handbook in cooperation with the Mid-State Literacy Council and help to distribute the educational materials to those most in need of protection from predatory leases.
  - Objective: Help landlords navigate changes in fair housing protections by providing them with the latest information regarding support animals and supportive services available in the community.
  - Action: Work with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, Mid-Penn Legal Services, or other organizations to secure or develop printed and on-line materials offering up to date information regarding emotional support animals and to distribute these educational materials to landlords through various outreach methods.

#### CAC's comments:

- Mr. Smith asked what the objections to vouchers were: 1) stereotype of Section 8 tenants 2) perception of time-consuming bureaucratic practices and 3) inspection by Housing Authority staff of condition of the structure.
- Mr. Quigley stated the biggest objection was limitation of fair market rents.
- Mr. Gaines stated the way rents were rising in State College dissuaded people from renting.
- Ms. Eirmann asked Mr. Quigley what it would take to increase the number of vouchers available. He replied that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has structurally designed program policies to reduce the number of vouchers.
- Ms. Eirmann stated vouchers needed to be utilized within a certain amount of time or the tenant would lose the voucher and be returned to the voucher waiting list.

#### Cost burden of owning older homes

- Objective: Work with partners to identify opportunities to make deeper impacts on energy conservation in houses rehabilitated through the housing programs of the Borough and its affordable housing partners by utilizing expertise from PSU and the private sector to secure additional sources of funding and to implement the recommendations of energy audits.
- Action 1: Utilize resources from PSU and the private sector to prepare rehabilitation specifications based on professionally prepared energy audits

that recommended ways to incorporate energy efficiency retrofits into the housing rehabilitation process.

- Action 2: Apply for at least one additional source of grant funding to supplement HOME Investment Partnerships Program and CDBG resources used for the First-Time Homebuyer program and Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Programs.
- Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals may have limited access to information about housing programs and anti-discrimination protections
  - Objective 1: Improve housing choice for those with LEP by working with affordable housing partners, and community resources, including PSU, to provide program related information in various languages including Spanish, Korean, Cantonese, Russian, and/or other languages, as is identified to be necessary.
  - Action 1: Translate the annual Fair Housing notice, Community Needs Public Hearing Notices, and Housing Program Brochures into Cantonese, Korean, Spanish, Russian and/or other languages as appropriate to the population.
  - Objective 2: Improve the equity of program delivery by building relationships with culturally diverse community groups including churches, instructors of English as a second language, ethnic based clubs and businesses, etc.

Ms. Safko stated that the Borough has an increasingly diverse population, creating the need to communicate CDBG and HOME Program information in more languages.

- Lack of landlords in the Borough that would lease to tenants with Section 8 housing vouchers
  - Objective: Work with the County and other affordable housing partners to develop relationships with landlords as needed to provide education to dispel barriers to renting to tenants with Section 8 housing vouchers.
  - Action: In cooperation with the Housing Authority of Centre County, hold a workshop for landlords that included information designed to dispel misconceptions about participation in the Section 8 program.

A motion to recommend approval of the 2020-2024 Fair Housing Analysis Update to Borough Council was made by Ms. Misangyi and seconded by Mr. Quigley.

Mr. Olcese asked if the draft of the FHAU could be amended to also identify certain zoning policies as a potential impediment to affordable housing. Ms. Safko asked committee members to look at the summary of the FHAU, which showed that the 2015-2019 FHAU included an impediment regarding the need to review existing zoning ordinances for policies that add to the cost of housing and impede fair access to housing. Ms. Safko stated that a similar impediment could be repeated in the 2020-2024 FHAU. Mr. Olcese agreed that this option would address his concern. Other Committee members concurred that the recommendation of Mr. Olcese would improve the FHAU.

The motion was amended to recommend the 2020-2024 Fair Housing Analysis Update to Borough Council for approval as presented, with the addition recommended by Mr. Olcese. The vote was unanimously in favor.

## **2020-2024 Consolidated Plan, including the 2020 Annual Action Plan**

Ms. Safko's overview included:

- Ms. Safko noted the information came from the 2010 Census Data and 2013-2017 American Community Survey.
- Data showed that racial and ethnic minority populations are disproportionately cost burdened.
- She also stated that because the numbers of racial and ethnic minorities are relatively small, there is the potential to have an impact on the statistics even if the Borough can assist just a few households. Increasing the number of racial and ethnic minorities that know about housing programs may increase the number that apply to participate.
- She stated there was a growing need in the community for a year-round homeless shelter and that there were several types of homelessness.
- Mr. Quigley stated there was a lot of talk about supportive housing and how the network of help goes away once someone received supportive housing. It was clear that support services needed to continue after the homeless are housed.

Mr. Smith wanted it noted that this committee would definitely miss Ms. Misangyi and had very much appreciated all her efforts for this group. All wished her good luck with her new position at Centre Safe.

Next discussed: Budget

- Ms. Safko stated that based on community input, the approach to the budget had been to stay the course with CDBG funding, taking the maximum of 15% for Human Service agencies, and noting that the Borough would continue with funding for the current five agencies that provide housing services.
- Additionally, the Capital Improvement Plan was reviewed:
- 2020 funds would be used for public facility improvements such as accessibility, site improvements and equipment upgrade as well as for streetlight and curb ramp replacements.
- 2021 - additional park accessibility and equipment upgrades, streetlight and curb ramp replacements, and street reconstruction.
- 2022 - additional streetlights and curb ramp replacements.
- 2023 - bicycle and pedestrian safety improvement with additional construction of a shared use path to connect sections of existing paths.
- 2024 - streetscape improvements in the West End neighborhood.

CAC's comments:

- Mr. Olcese wanted to add to the conversation the potential to meet the need for increase outreach to landlords, and to those with limited English proficiency, by contracting with one of the human service agencies to do outreach for the Borough programs. Ms. Safko noted Ms. Ritter and the board and staff of SCCLT did a wonderful job of outreach during the Green Build project. She

added that board members and staff of the land trust would be a great group of people to reach out to and Ms. Ritter agreed.

Next discussed: CDBG budget

- Ms. Safko noted no funding would be added into the contingency and would now be added to the FTHB program. She noted this was a slight shift from what was proposed in the past.
- She stated the Borough needs to build relationships with landlords and those groups who are most in need of support and funding from Borough programs.

Next discussed, briefly: HOME budget

- Ms. Safko stated the Borough would split the funding equally between the SCCLT and THF equally.

A motion to recommend approval of the 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan including the 2020 Annual Action Plan as presented was made by Mr. Olcese and seconded by Ms. Patterson. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Ms. Safko shared that Mr. Quigley would present information on owner-occupied, and rental housing rehabilitation in Union County at the September CAC meeting.

### **Upcoming Meeting**

Tuesday, September 3, 2019 at Noon

### **Adjournment**

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 1:20 p.m. by Mr. Quigley and seconded by Mr. Gaines.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise L. Rhoads  
Administrative Assistant