

HUMAN SERVICES BOARD
Minutes of Meeting January 8, 2009

CALL TO ORDER: 6:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Carrie Healy, Ron Lambe, Bill Lenehan, Elma (Pat) Maye, Jason Sims, Amy Tuley, Joanne Willson

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Logan Wessendorf (Youth Advisory Committee Liaison)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mike Thomspson

STAFF PRESENT: Vicki Georgeau, Deputy Director of Neighborhood Services

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Minutes of the December 4, 2008 meeting were approved 7-0 as submitted.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Kalamazoo County Transit Authority (KCTA) Update - Dale Hein: Mr. Hein was present to discuss the impact of the recent millage failure, and planning activities underway by Metro Transit and the County to prepare for another ballot proposal. Hein explained that there will be two millage proposals in 2009: 1) a millage for county-wide services in May 2009; and 2) a millage for City of Kalamazoo services in the November 2009. Both millage proposals will be similar to what was proposed in 2006 and neither are likely to include an increase in current millage rates. If both millages pass, plans to merge Metro Transit into the KCTA will be modified so that an independent board continues to represent services within the City of Kalamazoo. Lenehan suggested KCTA look at creative solutions, such as crossing county lines near Calhoun County to provide demand-response services and shuttles from villages into cities. Maye commented that services are not convenient due to the infrequent buses along certain routes. Lenehan noted a need for more shelters, and recommended KCTA develop a plan to overcome the perception that large buses often have few riders, and recruit new riders to the system that do not depend on public transportation. Tuley recommended KCTA increase public education efforts for the next round of millage proposals. Hein and Lambe reviewed the proposed Transit Community Education and Mobilization Project that will involve training people to make presentations at existing community meetings, as opposed to organizing new separate meetings to discuss public transit and the millage proposals. Board members were encouraged to share ideas with Hein and Lambe as to how to implement the education program.
2. Housing Program Appeal 08-01: Staff summarized the applicant request to convert an existing CDBG low-interest housing loan with annual payments, to a deferred loan with no annual payments. In response to Lenehan, staff explained that extensive collection efforts have been made over the past two years, and that household income has declined significantly since the previous appeal. In response to Sims, staff explained that income and resources were verified by the applicant's employer and financial institution, and that budget information submitted by the applicant indicates disposable income is limited after basic needs are paid for. Willson noted that with the first and second mortgage, secured debt is more than the value of the property. Staff acknowledged this concern, but noted that converting the loan to a deferred loan does not put the city lien at more risk. Tuley noted that the request will allow the applicant to become and remain current on the first mortgage and avoid foreclosure, which will help protect the city lien. A motion by Willson, supported by Maye, to approve the appeal as requested, conditioned upon the completion of financial counseling by a HUD approved counselor prior to the loan modification, was approved 7-0.
3. Public Disclosure of CDBG Program Conflict of Interest – Elma (Pat) Maye: Staff summarized the letter from the City Attorney explaining the status of the request for a waiver from the Conflict of Interest provisions of federal regulations as they pertain to the CDBG program. Ms. Maye stated for the record that she has been employed with the Fair Housing Center of Southwest Michigan as the Director of Education and Enforcement since January 2003, and because of her employment, she has a conflict of interest with regard to funding decisions involving the CDBG program as the Fair Housing Center of Southwest Michigan is a sub-recipient of City of Portage CDBG funding to carry out fair housing activities. Further, Ms. Maye indicated her intentions to not participate in any discussions pertaining to the award of any funding to the Center and other CDBG funding awards. In addition, Ms. Maye indicated she would also abstain for voting on such matters.

Lambe commented that he has a similar conflict of interest with regard to human service funding through the General Fund. Staff indicated that it is appropriate to also declare a conflict of interest, and not participate in discussions and

voting on General Fund applications, but that a waiver is not required as the agency for which he has a conflict has not requested CDBG funding. Maye and Lambe noted that they both have considered if it is appropriate to resign from the Board.

Chair Tuley opened the agenda item for public comment. Cory Bailes, 2309 Beethoven Avenue, Portage, Michigan, commented that it would be unfortunate if Maye and Lambe resigned from the Board and recommended they continue their service, provided they take appropriate steps to declare their conflict of interest, and not participate from discussion and abstain from voting. No other public comments were received.

In response to an inquiry from Tuley, staff explained that subsequent to the Board meeting, a letter would be sent to the Detroit HUD Field Office that again requests approval of the waiver for Ms. Maye, and that a response would be requested from HUD within 30 days from receipt of such request.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS: None.

ADJOURNMENT: As no further business was brought before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:20 p.m. Respectfully submitted,

Vicki Georgeau, AICP
Deputy Director of Neighborhood Services