

**APPROVED APRIL 25, 2000**

**CITY OF URBANA  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
Tuesday, March 28, 2000, City Council Chambers**

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

**Commission Members Absent:** Carol Westfield

**Others Present:** April Getchius, Mike Loschen, Karen Rasmussen, and Connie Eldridge, Grants Management Division; Jerry White, Champaign County Association for the Mentally Retarded; Lester Pritchard, Citizens for HOMES; Barbara Pritchard, PACE, Inc.; Esther Patt, Urbana City Council, John L. Johnson, Illinois Center for Citizen Involvement; Tracy Parsons, Urban League of Champaign County; Malou Cristobal, Victim Offender Reconciliation Program.

**Call to Order:** Chairperson Cobb called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m. A quorum was present.

**Approval of Minutes:** Minutes for the February 22, 2000 meeting will be available at the April 25 meeting.

**Staff Report:** Ms. Getchius said the Committee of the Whole reviewed three homebuyer programs: *AssistUrbana*, Home at Last Program, and 5 Percent Program. *AssistUrbana* and 5 Percent Program were forwarded to City Council. City Council elected not to participate in the Home at Last Program.

**Petitions and Communications:** None.

Chairperson Cobb changed the order of the agenda and moved the Draft Proposal – Visitable Home Ordinance before Old Business.

**New Business:** **Draft Proposal – Visitable Home Ordinance** - Lester Pritchard, Citizens for HOMES, referred to the packet memo on the Proposed Visitable Home Ordinance and a video presentation at an earlier Community Development Commission meeting. He said this ordinance would codify the concept of visitability for single family homes. He reminded commissioners that Illinois Center for Citizen Involvement (ICfCI) fully supports this ordinance and is currently building homes with these standards.

Chairperson Cobb stated the CD Commission supports visitability; however, there may be technical differences with the height of electrical outlets. Ms. Getchius noted the Visitable Home Ordinance is more restrictive than the Fair Housing Act Design Manual. She plans to meet with Mr. Pritchard to further review the proposed ordinance. Mr. Pritchard believed the

standards in the ICfCI contract required electrical outlets be placed 18 inches above the floor. He remarked the Citizens for HOMES would be willing to compromise on the height of the outlets (for example, 15 inches). Chairperson Cobb appreciated Mr. Pritchard's efforts on visitability. Ms. Getchius noted that staff would like additional time to review the proposed ordinance, meet with Mr. Pritchard and the ICfCI architect. Ms. Getchius requested the Commission continue this item to the April CDC meeting.

**Old Business:**           **Draft City of Urbana/Urbana HOME Consortium Consolidated Plan FY2000-2004** – Commissioner Diana requested the page numbering be corrected.

Ms. Getchius summarized new information and changes to the draft Consolidated Plan. The public hearings revealed a need for emergency shelters for families and a need for assistance and shelter for elderly and elderly abused persons. The Housing Authority will change the residential complexes by separating the elderly from mixed population. Also, some Section 8 contracts were lost. The federal government made recent changes in Lead-Based Paint Abatement that will have a major impact on all rehabilitation projects. The full impact is unknown at this time, and staff anticipates amending the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan to reflect these changes. Chairperson Cobb asked if the Health Department would provide lead-based paint inspections. Ms. Getchius answered the C-U Public Health District's recent five year plan did not mention lead-based paint. Staff will work with the C-U Public Health District to address these changes. In response to Commissioner Lewis, Ms. Rasmussen stated the HUD SuperNOFA is not doable at this time.

Ms. Getchius noted the language on the Fair Housing section was a variation of what Ms. Patt had suggested. She believed there should be a multi-jurisdictional approach as discussed at the public hearings.

Regarding HOPE VI application and one-for-one replacement issues, Ms. Getchius reviewed her discussion with Mike Sewart, Research Director of the Housing Research Foundation. HUD's major principal is leveraging HOPE VI funds by getting the private sector involved. The new Consolidated Plan language targets one-for-one replacement and leveraging private monies. She suggests flexibility in structuring the development plans to attract a private developer. Ms. Getchius felt the biggest weakness of the last HOPE VI application was not having a private component. In response to Commissioner Diana, Ms. Getchius clarified the project in Bradenton, Florida had one-for-one replacement of public housing units, a tax credit and a home ownership component. Commissioner Diana noted this was almost a 100 percent increase in housing units, which may have made Bradenton's application attractive. Discussion continued on wording of the Consolidated Plan to encourage private development beyond one-for-one replacement.

Ms. Getchius pointed out the specific Public Works projects that replaced the generic entries in the Annual Action Plan. Mr. Loschen reviewed changes to the HOME budget: 1) the Village of Rantoul will use HOME funds for land acquisition and infrastructure costs to prepare for construction by Habitat for Humanity, 2) Champaign County will use some funds for program delivery costs, and 3) \$20,000 was transferred from the Whole House Rehabilitation Program to the Small Rental Properties Program.

Ms. Rasmussen noted the childcare section of the Consolidated Plan was changed. She also distributed an updated chart of planned infrastructure projects and reviewed changes to target area construction projects. In response to Commissioner Diana, Ms. Rasmussen will clarify with Public Works the 2000-2001 street improvement project on Gregory Street from Fairview Street to King Park. Ms. Getchius noted both Harvey and Gregory Street improvements were scheduled at the same time and will be funded from the TIF 3 budget. At the request of Commissioner Lewis, Ms. Getchius will provide additional information on the storm sewer project in the Country Club area.

In response to Chairperson Cobb, Ms. Rasmussen summarized public input from the two public hearings. Last minute changes to the Consolidated Plan came from these hearings.

Chairperson Cobb asked if any members of the audience would like to comment on the Consolidated Plan. John L. Johnson, Illinois Center for Citizen Involvement (ICfCI), supported the Consolidated Plan because it provides a series of activities and actions by the City of Urbana in a cooperative approach. He stressed the community should not rely only on federal grants to meet housing goals. Mr. Johnson encouraged local financial institutions to provide affordable housing solutions. He felt the City of Urbana should take a stronger approach to the growing problem of dilapidated housing.

Concerning the Visitable Home Ordinance under New Business, Mr. Johnson does not object to new construction meeting visitability goals. However, the architects for ICfCI are concerned that changes in grading will affect the project's affordability. He felt these issues should be professionally resolved between the developer and the city's code department rather than involving the City Council in the waiver process. He reminded commissioners that increasing housing construction costs are detrimental to low- and moderate-income homebuyers. ICfCI wants to construct visitable houses, and Mr. Johnson does not want to routinely seek waivers. However, he is concerned that lot setbacks and grading may have prohibitive costs. Commissioner Lewis asked if Mr. Johnson had an example of the grading issue. Mr. Johnson answered yes; ICfCI's architect will ask the City of Urbana to consider changes in grading. Mr. Johnson discussed possible compromises between design alternatives and affordability. He requested Citizens for HOMES reconsider the waiver process.

Tracy Parsons, President of the Urban League of Champaign County, expressed his support for the Consolidated Plan. He noted the Community Center in the King Park area was still in the Consolidated Plan and requested it be a priority for staff, the Community Development Commission, and the City of Urbana. Mr. Parsons expressed residents' concerns about including a police facility as part of the Neighborhood Center. He encouraged partnerships with Urbana School District and Urbana Park District for facilities and space. Noting the growing Black population in the area around Prairie School, he requested commissioners not to focus solely on the King Park area. Mr. Parsons thanked staff for including Urban League in the development of the Consolidated Plan.

Mr. Parsons discussed priorities for Consolidated Social Service Funding. He encouraged commissioners to support programs that have a significant positive impact on Black males, for

example in youth services and workforce preparation. Also, Urban League has received a large increase in complaints on how the Black population is being treated by local landlords. He asked the city to consider the track records of landlords who participate in rental rehabilitation programs. Chairperson Cobb inquired what kind of complaints Urban League is receiving. Mr. Parsons answered evictions without proper cause or proper procedures, refusal or denial to accept Section 8 tenants, landlords not willing to repair or keep up properties, etc. Urban League refers renters to the Tenant's Union.

Commissioner Vidoni asked about the wording of Homeless Strategies. Ms. Rasmussen explained that is HUD's terminology from their guidelines. Discussion continued on suggested wording.

*Commissioner Vidoni moved to forward the City of Urbana/Urbana HOME Consortium Consolidated Plan FY 2000-2004 as amended to City Council. Commissioner Silvis seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**Draft FY2000-2001 Annual Action Plan (CDBG and HOME budgets)** – Ms. Getchius reviewed the changes mentioned earlier during discussion of the Consolidated Plan. Chairperson Cobb asked if the budgets balanced. Ms. Getchius answered yes. Commissioner Diana inquired about the timing of the construction projects with the fiscal year budgeting.

*Commissioner Diana moved to recommend the draft FY2000-2001 Annual Action Plan to the City Council. Commissioner Liebman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**New Business: HOME Monitoring Letter** – Mr. Loschen described last summer's visit to the City of Urbana by Kimberly Danna, the HUD HOME monitor. Overall, Ms. Danna felt the City of Urbana was doing a good job, but she suggested recommendations on record keeping and procedural items. The first finding was the City of Champaign source documentation for their rental rehabilitation clients. Chairperson Cobb asked if the City of Urbana received any comments. Mr. Loschen replied that Ms. Danna reviewed the Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program and found it to be in excellent shape. Regarding the second finding with ICfCI, Commissioner Diana wondered if better record keeping would correct the finding or if the finding concerned allowable soft costs. Mr. Loschen answered this would be corrected in next year's HOME budget by creating a separate line item for CHDO operating expenses. In response to Commissioner Lewis, Mr. Loschen stated CHDO operating expenses cannot exceed 50 percent of their operating budget. Other soft costs may be documented through payroll records.

Chairperson Cobb asked if the City of Urbana received a grade from HUD. Mr. Loschen quoted from HUD's letter, "In general, we found the Urbana Consortium's HOME program to be well administered and primarily in compliance with HOME and related requirements." In response to Commissioner Vidoni, Mr. Loschen noted HUD is aware of the city's staff shortages and has granted extensions. Ms. Getchius added staff has been in touch with HUD and has been resolving some of the issues raised in the monitoring letter.

**Set Priorities for Consolidated Social Service Funding** – Ms. Rasmussen briefly summarized the Consolidated Social Service Funding process. She reminded commissioners their

responsibility is to determine priorities for funding. Social service agencies consider these priorities when determining what programs to establish or which part of a program should be emphasized in their grant request.

Considering Mr. Parson's concern for African American males, Commissioner Vidoni asked if there was a way to set priorities to meet this need. Ms. Rasmussen answered yes. City of Urbana and Cunningham Township staff review applications and forward to City Council. After City Council determines programs and allocated funds, city and township staff decide which programs fit available funds. Ms. Rasmussen checks for programs that would be eligible for CDBG funds and that meet the priorities set by the Community Development Commission. Commissioner Diana remembered last year's funding priorities to be job training, youth services and homeless assistance.

In response to Commissioner Silvis, Ms. Rasmussen noted the limited funds and suggested having only three priorities. Referring to the Public Service Strategies in the Consolidated Plan, Ms. Rasmussen said the funds are directed to very low- and low-income households. Also, strategies may be combined, for example, job training for youth.

Commissioner Lewis concurred with Commissioner Vidoni's concern regarding the needs of African American males. Commissioner Silvis asked for clarification of Mr. Parson's statement. Mr. Johnson responded that many young African American men cannot read or perform well in school. Commissioner Lewis added many are going to prison. Mentioning the limited funds, Mr. Johnson suggested directing funds to meet the needs of African American youth for education, family empowerment, and summer programs. He asked commissioners make their general concerns known through the Consolidated Plan. He noted the community does not have organizations to provide comprehensive vocational training programs. Mr. Johnson felt the City of Urbana should look for agencies that need small amounts of money but will accomplish much.

As a member of the Urbana School District 116 Equity Committee, Commissioner Lewis said that after-school, weekend and summer programs make better students. He suggested working with the school district to fund programs directed at low-income and African American students. Ms. Rasmussen reviewed current community mentoring programs with a primary focus on young African American students. Ms. Rasmussen agreed that this is a major issue, and many community groups are beginning to address this.

Commissioner Diana proposed having only one category—youth services. He felt this would make a statement to the agencies and school district about the importance of youth services. Chairperson Cobb agreed. He mentioned the lack of minorities and females in the trade unions and suggested an outreach program. Ms. Rasmussen described the federal Youth Build Program which trains youth in construction trades. She stated the city funds an on-going House Painting Program through Urban League.

Ms. Rasmussen asked if commissioners wanted to fund a number of organizations that provide youth services or just one large program. Chairperson Cobb preferred funding the most effective programs. Noting many beginning programs, Commissioner Diana thought it was better to fund more rather than fewer programs. Ms. Getchius felt this agreed with Mr. Johnson's philosophy.

Commissioner Silvis concurred; however, she was concerned with funding programs that are attractive to males at the expense of programs for females. Commissioner Silvis preferred staff look at a variety of programs and chose the most effective. Ms. Rasmussen remarked the city cannot discriminate based on race, gender, etc.

Commissioner Liebman stated a small amount of money divided among many programs will not have much impact. He proposed spreading the funds among many agencies and then concentrating the following year's funds on those programs that really made a difference. Commissioner Liebman felt funding should be tied to reporting which programs worked and which did not. Ms. Rasmussen requested commissioners help establish criteria on how to judge progress.

Mr. Johnson stated neither the Champaign or Urbana City Councils have developed clear plans to meet community needs. He felt social service funds are often distributed on a political basis. He urged commissioners look to the Police Department, public schools, churches, and social agencies to establish community priorities. He cautioned agencies about expecting continual funding.

Esther Patt disagreed with Mr. Johnson. She said the real problem is that many needs go unmet. Most social service agencies do not have enough funds or staff to meet all community needs. Ms. Patt clarified that priorities set by the Community Development Commission primarily determine which agencies receive CDBG funds rather than city and township funds. She noted it is a reality that human service providers are dependent upon governments and that the majority of these agencies' budgets will be personnel. Rather than fully fund a program, the city usually contributes only a portion of the operating budget.

Commissioner Diana reminded commissioners they may target CDBG funds to benefit the Community Development Target Area. Reflecting on Ms. Patt's comments, Commissioner Vidoni supported choosing one or two priorities, not projects. Chairperson Cobb mentioned youth services. Commissioner Silvis raised the issue of job training, especially for youth. Mr. Johnson suggested a requirement that contractors who participate in city-funded rehabilitation hire a percentage of youth. He also urged commissioners to consider the homeless population. Discussion continued on possible priorities.

*Commissioner Lewis moved that the Community Development Commission set the following priorities for the Consolidated Social Service Funding: (1) youth services, (2) job training, and (3) assistance to homeless population. In response to Commissioner Silvis, Commissioner Lewis confirmed the order of the priorities. Commissioner Paquin seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**Adjournment:** Chairperson Cobb adjourned the meeting at 8:59 p.m.

Recorded by Connie Eldridge