



*APPROVED by CD Commission 11-25-2003*  
**MINUTES**  
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
**Tuesday, October 28, 2003, City Council Chambers**

**Call to Order:** Chairperson Cobb called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m.

**Roll Call:** Connie Eldridge called the roll. A quorum was present. Chairperson Cobb welcomed Nancy Quisenberry, a new member of the Community Development Commission. Commissioner Thakkar thanked staff for arranging this teleconference.

**Commission Members Present:** Fred Cobb, Robert Lewis, Carl Perry, Nancy Quisenberry, Joanna Shisler, Anne Heinze Silvis, Umesh Thakkar (by teleconference), Dennis Vidoni

**Commission Members Absent:** Chris Diana

**Others Present:** Bob Grewe, Connie Eldridge, Mike Loschen, and Karen Rasmussen, Community Development Services; Judi Jones, Urban League.

**Approval of Minutes:** *Chairperson Cobb asked for approval or corrections to the August 26, 2003 minutes. Commissioner Shisler moved to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Thakkar seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**Petitions and Communications:** None.

**Staff Report:** Mr. Grewe referenced an information packet that staff had distributed before the meeting. One item was an updated matrix of grant funding for Community Development and Housing Programs. Two additional grants were added since the last matrix: the Residential Lead based Paint Hazard Control and the Chicago Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program. Another was a list of acronyms and terms used by Grants Management Division staff.

Commissioners received the Tenant-Based Rent Assistance (TBRA) Program Description 2003, as approved by City Council. Remembering earlier changes by the CD Commission, Commissioner Vidoni asked if the wording was changed in the final document. Mr. Grewe answered yes; it also included subsequent changes by City Council. Ella Coleman and Mike Loschen held a TBRA workshop on September 23 to inform social service providers about this program.

City Council approved the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice on October 13, 2003. Commissioners received a copy of the document. In response to Chairperson Cobb, Mr. Grewe said the document is on the City of Urbana's website.

Commissioner Thakkar asked if wording that he had requested was included in the final version of the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice. He wanted children and their families

to have access to resource centers that support informal learning opportunities. Mr. Grewe believed this issue was included.

Mr. Grewe noted that City Council approved the listed Community Development Block Grant subrecipient agreements and a HOME Program agreement. Staff is executing the agreements.

The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) was forwarded to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Commissioners will receive a copy, and it will also be on the City's website.

The Eads at Lincoln Subdivision is almost completed. Jim Rose, Homestead Corporation, is working with homebuyers and lending institutions on the closing arrangements and the amount of subsidy to be provided by the HOME Program.

Staff continues to meet with Housing Authority of Champaign County and their Developer, Brinshore Development LLC, on redevelopment of Lakeside Terrace.

There has been very limited use of the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) HELP Program. Only \$48,000 of \$2,000,000 available has been used for this first-time homebuyer program. To create more interest in the program, staff will hold a workshop for first-time homebuyers, realtors, and lenders on November 8. Also, staff produced a public service announcement on first-time homebuyer programs for Urbana Public TV.

Mr. Grewe noted the CD Commission had decided to put the majority of funding into the IHDA HELP Program due to Assist Urbana's higher interest rate of 7.3%. Assist Urbana has been restructured so that the interest rate reflects new market dynamics. The current interest rate is 6.25%. Since this change, 23 homebuyers have participated, with an average loan of \$81,890.

Neighborhood Cleanup was held on Saturday, October 18. 19 dumpsters of junk and debris (600 cubic yards) were collected, along with 120 cubic yards of recyclable metals.

**Old Business:** None.

**New Business:** **A Resolution Endorsing the Urbana-Champaign Continuum of Care Ten-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness** – Karen Rasmussen, who has chaired the Continuum of Care for nine years, gave a summary of this plan.

HUD has mandated all Continuums of Care to develop a ten-year plan to end or diminish chronic homelessness. Chronic homelessness is defined as an unaccompanied individual who has a chronic disability and has been homeless either more than a year or four or more times in the last three years. The Continuum convened a committee, which has spent the last 10 months identifying gaps in support services and housing options in the community. The committee also looked at homelessness in general; therefore, the plan includes issues affecting families and children. There is a movement to educate Congress that while the chronically homeless are a small percentage of the population and do use the greatest portion of the service monies

available, there are other populations very much in need of services. It is hoped that Congress will allow the Continuum of Care to adapt some ideas to families as well as individuals.

Staff presented this resolution to the City of Urbana's Committee of the Whole on October 27, and it was forwarded for approval to City Council. Staff is expediting this resolution so it may be presented to Phillip Mangano in Springfield, Illinois, on November 18. Mr. Mangano is President Bush's appointee as Executive Director of the Interagency Council on the Homeless. The interagency is working with the National Alliance to End Homelessness to implement 400 plans nation-wide by January 2004. Staff will discuss with Mr. Mangano the Continuum's achievements and problems, such as expanding the definition of homelessness to include families living with friends or relatives rather than in a place of their own. At this time Congress does not recognize overcrowding situations as homelessness.

The plan is divided into four sections: prevention, coordination, maintenance and evaluation. There are individual goals under each topic. Agencies responsible for implementing the strategies are indicated by parentheses.

In response to Commissioner Vidoni, Mr. Grewe explained this was an advisory briefing. Ms. Rasmussen said the Continuum of Care drafted and approved the document, and it is not subject to change. The Continuum of Care was requesting endorsements from many agencies to help accomplish these goals. In response to Commissioner Vidoni, Ms. Rasmussen noted the National Alliance to End Homelessness is a national not-for-profit organization that was established five years ago. Under Congress mandate, they developed the first ten-year plan to end chronic homelessness. The National Alliance was responsible for encouraging the US Conference of Mayors to draft and approve a ten-year plan to end chronic homelessness.

Commissioner Vidoni asked if this was a non-governmental effort by a group of people and if staff modeled the plan after their proposal. Ms. Rasmussen replied yes, and noted the National Alliance's website has gathered all current ten-year plans. Staff particularly focused on plans from Indianapolis, Chicago and Decatur, Illinois.

Commissioner Vidoni remarked that the document contained many acronyms and abbreviations, and it would be helpful to have these spelled out. Ms. Rasmussen agreed. She noted the plan would be guidance for Continuum members when considering future funding opportunities. Commissioner Vidoni asked why the reference to the Salvation Army was in bold print. Ms. Rasmussen answered the previous staff at the Salvation Army had agreed to facilitate these two efforts, and she had been waiting to confirm the current staff would agree to this. At this time the Salvation Army has agreed to facilitate these, so Ms. Rasmussen will remove the bold type.

Commissioner Vidoni asked about staffing, logistics, and funding for the Urbana-Champaign Continuum of Care. Ms. Rasmussen stated the Continuum is made up of staff from the various agencies listed in the plan. They meet on a regular basis, with the City of Urbana staff putting in a great deal of time and effort. No money is contributed to the Continuum. Commissioner Vidoni asked if Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds may be used to pay for this effort. Ms. Rasmussen answered yes; CDBG funds pay for some of this. However, the Continuum of Care is responsible for applying for the Shelter Plus Care and Supportive Housing

Grants. There are administrative funds available under these. Administrative funds for all funding sources are for administrative activities of those funding programs. This is over and above the administrative funding from the City's CDBG Program. Mr. Grewe added that the majority of Ms. Rasmussen's salary is from CDBG. Indirectly, CDBG has helped fund the Continuum since Ms. Rasmussen has been the Chairperson of the Continuum since its beginning in 1995.

Commissioner Vidoni asked if it was inappropriate for direct funding of this organization. Ms. Rasmussen answered there is no federal funding available for the Continuum of Care. Some other continuums fund staff from discretionary funds from their not-for-profit agencies. The Urbana-Champaign Continuum of Care has not done so. The City of Urbana has provided the work that has been done. Ms. Rasmussen added this Continuum has greatly supported the community's homeless programs.

Commissioner Vidoni asked if it was feasible or legal to fund this in a more direct way. Mr. Grewe answered that if the Continuum of Care needed a resource, they could request it. Ms. Rasmussen gave the example of the Continuum receiving funding for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The Cities of Champaign and Urbana funded the match for the HMIS grant under their CDBG Public Service. The Continuum has applied for a renewal of this program this year.

Ms. Rasmussen described the renewal process for the East Central Illinois Continuum of Care, which is comprised of 13 counties (including Iroquois, Piatt and Vermillion). When it was time to submit their Notice of Funds Available (NOFA), the person who wrote that portion of the grant application describing the continuum's activities billed the not-for-profits \$7,500 each. Ms. Rasmussen learned that not-for-profit agencies have some discretionary funds from private donations that could pay for a grant writer.

Based on his current position in Washington, D.C., Commissioner Thakkar understood the need to pay for a grant writer. Applying for grants is a complicated process, especially in this current economic climate. Ms. Rasmussen stated the not-for-profit agencies greatly appreciate the City of Urbana's work that goes into the application process each year. The City of Urbana has brought almost \$5,000,000 in funding to this Continuum. If Ms. Rasmussen were to leave, Mr. Grewe believed the City would have to provide funds to hire someone to administer the activities related to the Continuum.

Chairperson Cobb asked how difficult it would be to change the definition of chronic homelessness. Ms. Rasmussen did not believe Congress would agree to the change. A study by the University of Pennsylvania indicated that 10% of the homeless population meets the definition of chronically homeless. That 10% uses 58% of the supportive service funding, such as emergency rooms, crisis teams, substance abuse treatment facilities, etc. The rest of the population is temporarily homeless because of a medical emergency, job crisis, eviction, etc. The purpose is to focus limited resources on immediately placing the chronically homeless into permanent housing and provide supportive services. Ms. Rasmussen said this community, like most communities across the nation, does not have affordable housing to immediately house these families and individuals.

Ms. Rasmussen stressed one of the biggest issues is the availability of affordable housing. Rather than reduce the funding for homeless assistance programs, Congress should focus on permanent housing. One example is the pro-rata for the Continuum of Care.

Every year the money that is set aside by Congress is divided by formula to each of the continuums. Each continuum is given a pro-rata amount. The Urbana-Champaign Continuum of Care's pro-rata is approximately \$250,000 - \$260,000 a year. The Continuum can apply for this as long as its application is viable. If that money is used in an application for a permanent housing program, HUD will match it dollar for dollar. This means approximately \$500,000 is available for a permanent housing project. This Continuum has looked to bring permanent housing projects into the community, which is how the community came by its Shelter Plus Care programs. In addition, HUD has renewed the Shelter Plus Care programs outside the pro-rata amount. This means there are new monies available for which to apply, and the Continuum's renewals are automatic.

In response to Chairperson Cobb, Ms. Rasmussen said that the Urbana-Champaign Continuum of Care has been successful in obtaining funding because they have listened to HUD and taken their suggestions. When HUD changed its focus from supportive services to permanent housing, the Consortium applied for permanent housing. This freed up other designated funds for the agencies so they could use them for their supportive services. Ms. Rasmussen felt this Continuum has made real progress by working with HUD, which in turn is responding to direction from Congress. Ms. Rasmussen encouraged all agencies to contact their congressmen to explain their circumstances and thus effect policy changes.

Commissioner Thakkar suggested inviting Congressman Tim Johnson or a member of his staff to attend a CD Commission meeting. Ms. Rasmussen described her efforts to educate others on social service concerns.

**Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) Operating Funds Agreement – Urban League Development Corporation (FY 2003-2004)** – Mr. Loschen explained this is a standard operating agreement between the City of Urbana and Urban League, which is a CHDO. This agreement pledges \$27,132 for administration and operating costs. Except for the dates and dollar amount, this agreement is similar to last year's agreement with the Urban League. Urban League must continue to develop affordable housing through their lease/purchase homeownership program. Mr. Loschen noted these funds have already been budgeted in the Annual Action Plan.

Commissioner Shisler asked where this agreement would apply under the funding matrix. Mr. Loschen replied this would be under the HOME Program. HUD guidelines allow 5% of the annual HOME allocation to be set aside for CHDOs for annual operation costs. These are costs that cannot be attributed to a specific project.

*Commissioner Silvis moved to recommend to City Council approval of the Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) Operating Funds Agreement – Urban League Development*

*Corporation (FY 2003-2004) as written. Commissioner Thakkar seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Referencing the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, Chairperson Cobb asked how changes or suggestions could be made to the document. He was thinking in terms of a suggestion box. Mr. Grewe replied there was a comment/suggestion form in the actual document and also a way to respond through the City's website. Commissioner Thakkar suggested encouraging anonymous responses so that persons could respond honestly. He stated that persons who lived in some housing might experience impediments in a very different way. Chairperson Cobb felt an unsigned suggestion in a suggestion box would meet this criteria. Commissioner Thakkar was concerned with the location of a suggestion box and felt that a very public place would not encourage anonymity. Chairperson Cobb felt anonymity would be ensured, and Commissioner Thakkar agreed.

Mr. Grewe mentioned the target area newsletter, *Neighborhood News*, would include an article about availability of the Analysis of Impediments. Mr. Grewe discussed working with Information Services to develop an anonymous response through e-mail. The document will include a separate folder for comments to be returned. Mr. Grewe felt the CD Commission's commitment to annually review this document was important. Commissioner Lewis suggested mailing a flyer to the community to invite them to a meeting on the Analysis of Impediments.

Commissioner Thakkar asked about a mailing that included a self-addressed, postage paid response to encourage anonymous feedback. He felt it was important for persons to complete the response from the anonymity of their own homes.

Commissioner Vidoni asked why there was a need for anonymity. Commissioner Thakkar felt people living in some housing arrangements might not be willing to share their comments. He wanted to give the opportunity to be forthcoming without repercussions. Commissioner Vidoni asked if persons felt they would be identified if they used a comment folder in the library. Commissioner Thakkar responded that many do not use the library. He felt it was good to encourage library usage, but felt a mailing or an on-site suggestion box would be more useful. He suggested trying a small sample of different ways to determine the best approach to get feedback.

**Adjournment:** Chairperson Cobb adjourned the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

Recorded by Connie Eldridge