



**UNAPPROVED  
MINUTES  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
Tuesday, October 26, 2004, City Council Chambers**

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

**Roll Call:** Connie Eldridge called the roll. A quorum was present.

**Commission Members Present:** Fred Cobb, Robert Lewis, Nancy Quisenberry (arrived 7:20 p.m.), Joanna Shisler, Anne Heinze Silvis, Umesh Thakkar, Dennis Vidoni

**Commission Members Absent:** Chris Diana, Theresa Michelson

**Others Present:** Bob Grewe, Connie Eldridge, Community Development Services; Steve Ray, Developmental Services Center; Kathy Sims, Center for Women in Transition (CWIT).

**Approval of Minutes:** *Chairperson Cobb asked for approval or corrections to the September 28, 2004 minutes. Commissioner Thakkar moved to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Shisler seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

**Petitions and Communications:** None.

**Staff Report:** Mr. Grewe distributed the following: Consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER), A Directory of Who's Who in Government, a letter from the Disabled Citizens Foundation, and a staff report memorandum.

Mr. Grewe noted that the City of Urbana had a new vendor for Neighborhood Cleanup. The project was bid by the ton rather than volume. This fall's cleanup required three fewer dumpsters; however, spring cleanup usually has a heavier volume. The new vendor used the transfer station on North Lincoln Avenue. Commissioner Vidoni asked about the cost of Neighborhood Cleanup in terms of the budget. Mr. Grewe believed that over time the City will save money by bidding the price per ton rather than volume. However, there is no way to convert volume of past cleanups to tonnage to confirm this. The Annual Action Plan (AAP) included \$15,000 for Neighborhood Cleanup, with the CD Sink Fund as a contingency. Last year both cleanups totaled \$18,000. Mr. Grewe felt the cost for this cleanup was "in the ballpark." He noted some residents wondered whether one cleanup would be better. Staff will consider this.

Mr. Grewe announced that the School-Based Health Center open house is October 27. All Community Development (CD) Commissioners are welcome to attend. When Chairperson Cobb wondered about the need to RSVP, Commissioner Quisenberry, who has been involved with the program, said there would be no problem. Commissioner Thakkar was impressed with the center's services and suggested that vision assessment be included.

The City held public hearings on the AAP for Fiscal Year (FY) 2005-2006 and the Consolidated Plan for FY 2005-2009. There was good feedback from the meeting held at King School. The hearing was held in conjunction with United Citizens and Neighbors (UCAN) monthly meeting. One concern was how the redevelopment of Lakeside Terrace would impact other programs.

Staff provided CD ROMs of Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations to social service agency representatives at the application workshops. Commissioner Vidoni asked if any applicants for Neighborhood Organization Grants (NOG) attended. Mr. Grewe indicated that all agencies and neighborhood groups received the invitation; however, he was not aware of any NOG representatives attending the workshops.

Mr. Grewe announced that Karen Rasmussen resigned from the City of Urbana. Ms. Rasmussen briefed staff on the Shelter Plus Care and Supportive Housing Programs.

Due to funding, Family Services of Champaign County requested the City of Urbana wait until early 2005 to prepare its subrecipient agreement.

**Old Business:** Referencing the tours of the TIMES Center and Homestead Single Room Occupancy (SRO), Commissioner Thakkar mentioned the caseworkers' presentations, mentoring, and training workshops. Concerning persons who leave the TIMES Center, he asked where they were going and if they were successful. Commissioner Thakkar suggested that successful graduates return to mentor others. He also suggested involving local banks in the residents' savings program at the TIMES Center. Another question was how social service agencies could work with other agencies and share information with each other and the CD Commission.

Commissioner Lewis remarked that some residents of the TIMES Center return and contribute to the facility. However, his overall concern was whether our community's needs were being met. He noted that Homestead SRO is a good program; however, it addresses the needs of only a small percentage of people in need. Commissioner Lewis stated that Champaign/Urbana should take a hard look at supporting a larger population, especially families with children. He supported expanding housing programs for people in need.

Chairperson Cobb felt it was very important for Mass Transit District (MTD) to provide bus service to the larger employers. Mr. Grewe mentioned including this issue as an unmet need in the Consolidated Plan. Commissioner Lewis recommended including "in-kind service to help people get to work." Commissioner Thakkar added that the agencies' caregivers would also accept donations of computers and electronic equipment.

Mr. Grewe noted the Homestead SRO provided optional supportive services to persons interested in those services. Many programs require participation in order to remain in the housing program.

**New Business:** **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Subrecipient Agreements – Second Amendment to Disabled Citizens Foundation Agreement (Project No. 0304-06)** – Mr. Grewe stated the City of Urbana entered into an agreement with the Disabled Citizens Foundation on February 17, 2004. On April 5, 2004 the City of Urbana extended the

agreement's termination date to December 31, 2004. The Foundation has requested a second extension in order to assemble and secure funding. City staff continues to be in contact with the Foundation and has discussed timely expenditure of CDBG funds. Staff has determined that the normal rate of expenditure for CDBG funds will just meet HUD's timeliness requirement. The City plans to purchase properties and work with subgrantees to accelerate project spending. Mr. Grewe noted the City of Urbana had attempted to purchase property near Lakeside Terrace; however, the seller did not want to proceed with the sale. At this time the City is looking to purchase other properties with CDBG funds.

Steve Ray, Chief Financial Officer, explained the Developmental Services Center (DSC) is affiliated with the Disabled Citizens Foundation. The Foundation is waiting for Illinois First Funds to be released, with the final determination in November. The Foundation is committed to the project and fully expects to proceed after receiving funding. However, the Foundation must be flexible due to changes at the state level. Mr. Ray stated the Disabled Citizens Foundation would make a decision by early December after considering all obligations. Since blueprints are ready, the architects state it will be eight months from project initiation to completion, so an extension to April 15 will give ample time to expend the CDBG funds.

Mr. Grewe indicated that although April 15 is likely, the City of Urbana prefers to extend the agreement to June 30, 2005 as a practical matter. If CDBG funds were not spent by April 15, then another extension would be needed. Staff recommends approval of the amendment and believes the City of Urbana will meet HUD's timeliness factor.

Chairperson Cobb inquired what would happen if the Disabled Citizens Foundation did not receive the Illinois First Funding. Mr. Ray answered that current employment training and production facilities are being conducted in a rented facility. When the lease expired, the DSC was faced with market value rents. A comparison of market value rents versus renovating its own facility indicated that the DSC would break even. Although the DSC has negotiated a short-term lease, the long-term benefits to renovate its own facility are better.

Commissioner Lewis questioned the implications to CDBG timeliness. Mr. Grewe responded that the City of Urbana must meet the timeliness test and spend \$176,000 by May. He anticipated the incremental spending would be \$180,000. Pending any unforeseen changes to the expenditure rate, the City must purchase properties or accelerate spending on another project.

Commissioner Lewis wondered if extending the agreement to June 2005 would be a problem. Mr. Grewe indicated the City could be more adamant about an expenditure deadline of April 2005. Commissioner Lewis supported giving the Disabled Citizens Foundation as much time as possible without resulting in timeliness problems with HUD. Commissioner Vidoni confirmed the importance of DSC and Center for Women in Transition meeting the timeliness goal. This concern was due to negative feedback and is not just a business practice.

**Community Development Block Grant Subrecipient Agreement - Amendment to Center for Women In Transition (CWIT) Agreement (Project No. 0102-02)** – Kathy Sims, Executive Director, gave a brief history of the center which provides transitional housing for women and children. Although CWIT started as a women's emergency shelter, staff learned it was not easy to resolve homeless situations in a few weeks. CWIT evolved into transitional housing, which

also reflected the changes in national funding priorities. Currently CWIT has two houses near Provena Covenant Hospital that house 32 women and children and also single women. CWIT is requesting a final extension for construction of its third building. Ms. Sims stated there is still a vast need to provide shelter for women and children. The project will build 7300 square feet of residential and educational space. This will serve an additional five families (up to 16 members) and expand CWIT's educational programming base for computers, music, library, arts and crafts.

CWIT bid out the project last month and extended the bid once. After seeing the cost, CWIT negotiated with the lowest bidder to make additional cuts of \$90,000. CWIT's Board will make a final decision on October 27. Ms. Sims indicated that CWIT was willing to raise funds and finance the remainder of the project. She anticipated groundbreaking in November with completion by May 2005.

Chairperson Cobb asked about the location. Ms. Sims answered the building would be next to CWIT's other two buildings on East Church Street, Champaign. In response to Commissioner Thakkar, Ms. Sims indicated that CWIT has documented an annual need for 350-400 adult women with over 400 children. Ms. Sims stated the community needs comprehensive services, of which CWIT is one resource. There is a need for emergency shelter, community living, and affordable permanent housing. For example, single women transition into Homestead Single Room Occupancy (SRO). CWIT receives calls every day; however, often its facilities are filled. Although homelessness is a complex situation, CWIT is "doing its part" and wants to expand. CWIT offers an extended stay of two years; however, the average stay is one year or maybe even three to six months. Ms. Sims encouraged expansion of Tenant Based Rent Assistance (TBRA), Transitional Housing programs, and Section 8 to help people transition from temporary situations.

In response to Commissioner Lewis, Ms. Sims said that CWIT's full capacity was 32 persons. Commissioner Lewis asked what would be CWIT's ideal capacity. Ms. Sims answered that individuals have a wide variety of special needs—developmental, mental health, substance abuse, limited income—and that no one program can meet all needs. She referenced the Mental Health Center's apartment complexes, TBRA and Section 8 Vouchers. Ms. Sims remarked that the Homestead SRO was one of the best programs in which the community had invested. She mentioned her concern that lowest income persons still have access to the redeveloped Housing Authority properties. The community needs many comprehensive housing programs rather than one big institution.

Commissioner Thakkar asked about support staff at CWIT. Ms. Sims said the two houses, which are next to each other, offer 24-hour staff coverage. There are client advocate case managers, children's programs, and an after-care program for mentoring. She mentioned the challenges in transitioning from community living to independent living. Chairperson Cobb asked about the total number of staff. Ms. Sims replied there are six full-time employees including herself and the office manager, and 12 part-time persons.

Mr. Grewe commented that staff's consideration of this request was about timely expenditure of CDBG funds. CWIT is working with a contractor, and the project is moving forward. If CWIT can spend all or even half of its funding and if the City of Urbana continues with its expenditures, there would be no problem with timeliness.

Chairperson Cobb asked what options the City would have if the funds were not spent by May 2005. Mr. Grewe discussed property acquisition. When there was a timeliness problem a few years ago, the City was able to fund some large Public Works projects that originally were multi-year. Public Works has planned projects; however, they will not be underway until spring 2005. As a contingency, Mr. Grewe will talk with Public Works about absolute start dates and possibly using funds for architectural and engineering services. Chairperson Cobb asked if this would decrease funding to DSC or CWIT. Mr. Grewe answered no, this would simply accelerate a planned expense in the Annual Action Plan. In response to Commissioner Lewis, Mr. Grewe said it was staff's goal to work with subgrantees and still meet HUD's timeliness. Staff is confident about the projects and purchasing properties.

*Commissioner Silvis moved to recommend to City Council approval of (1) the Second Amendment to the Community Development Block Grant Subrecipient Agreement with the Disabled Citizens Foundation and (2) the Amendment to the Community Development Block Grant Subrecipient Agreement with the Center for Women In Transition. Commissioner Quisenberry seconded the motion. In response to Commissioner Shisler, Mr. Grewe clarified that the Disabled Citizens Foundation's agreement was extended to June 30, 2005. The motion carried unanimously.*

Commissioner Thakkar suggested the CD Commission continue to visit social service agencies to better understand their programs.

Commissioner Vidoni asked if there were any issues concerning the Consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER). Mr. Grewe said the CAPER would be referenced during discussions for preparing the FY 2005-2009 Consolidated Plan. The CD Commission will want to consider past and future strategies for future investments.

Chairperson Cobb asked about the impact on first-time homebuyers with the recent increased mortgage rates. Mr. Grewe noted the interest rates for the City's homebuyer programs are 2.5 percent above the Illinois Housing Development Authority's (IHDA) rate. The threshold goes up as the interest rates go up. He added there has not been a great demand for American Dream Downpayment Initiative (ADDI) funds. From staff's perspective, the timing of ADDI has allowed for adjustments and training, so the program will run smoothly for the busy spring homebuying season. The lenders have not indicated any concerns about the interest rates.

**Adjournment:** Chairperson Cobb adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

Recorded by Connie Eldridge