

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE
Wednesday, February 9, 2022
Carnegie Training Room
8:30 AM

Present:

Commissioner Bill Collins
Commissioner Randy Quick
Commissioner Craig McDaniel
Aundi Lesley- Downtown Development Authority Director
Mike Hebert- Assistant Building Official
Cindy Reed- Finance Accountant/Internal Auditor
Meredith Ulmer- Assistant City Manager
Bekki Fox- Community Development Director
Logan Drake- Community Development Administrative Program Assistant

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 AM. Commissioner Bill Collins asked for any corrections to the minutes from the December 2021 meeting. Not hearing any, the minutes were approved by common consent.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Bekki Fox:

- Fox provided an update on the Rebecca Blaylock Child Development Center rehabilitation project. This project is currently out to bid, will be funded by 2021 CDBG funds and has a pre-bid walkthrough scheduled on that same day. Fox stated that there was a decent number of interested contractors in not only Georgia but out of state as well. It was established that only one Roman contractor was currently interested in the project. While Fox had already made a marketing push, it was suggested she do so once more to see if we can attract more locals. While the project cost has increased with a current budget of \$125,000, Fox is prepared to amend that amount if needed. The bid opening is scheduled for March 1, 2022, at 11:00AM. This rehabilitation will be a positive asset to the low-income families served by the Center.
- Fox brought up the Exterior Paint Program for income eligible residents. Due to the lack of available contractors and excessive administrative burden, the switch was made from general repairs to painting the exteriors of eligible homes. There has been a total of two completed homes with four pending applications. Fox stated the department will continue to promote the program. Fox also added that they plan to add a Roof Replacement Program to assist people who meet income requirements. The process will be very similar to the paint program. Inquiring residents have contacted staff before indicating a need for this addition. Fox anticipates the new program will begin by Summer of 2022.
- Fox provided data regarding the CDBG-CV funded Emergency Rental and Utility Assistance Program (ERUG). Fox explained that while staff initially noticed a considerable decrease in applications over the past few months, the effects of the new COVID-19 variant have greatly increased the number of residents applying for aid. Many tenants, landlords, power companies and gas companies have benefitted immensely from ERUG grants. Fox informed everyone that the Floyd County Magistrate has been and will continue suggesting the community reach out to staff for potential assistance.
- Fox then brought everyone's attention to the proposed 2022 Action Plan Budget that includes the following funds:
 - \$650,000 Banty Jones Park Improvements (Including a SPLASH Pad)
 - \$100,000 Planning/Administration
 - TOTAL= \$750,000

Fox explained her reasoning for including the SPLASH Pad. Congress has indicated they might approve a 30% funding increase of \$250,000. As far as current numbers show, staff feels like funds might be better spent by completing one large project. Fox reminded everyone that installing a SPLASH Pad has previously been suggested

by various community members including residents, City staff and some City Commissioners. Not only would this project be central in revitalizing the surrounding neighborhood but residents from South Rome and Lindale will likely utilize the space too. Fox confirmed that the project is eligible for CDBG funding. Commissioner Quick and Lesley stated they would provide reference possibilities and contacts to help get the project started. While there was some concern over the likelihood of some residents and entities supporting the project, those in attendance supported Fox's desire to go through with the process.

- Fox informed everyone that the Maple Avenue Phase 3 sidewalk project from Maple at E. 12th and south to E. 14th was bid in late 2021 and was awarded to Springs Paving. Construction is scheduled to begin the following week, weather permitting. The surrounding neighborhood will be positively affected by this improvement. Discussion was had on the future of that area's small businesses and use of space.
- Fox also discussed the construction of three new single-family homes in partnership with South Rome Alliance, utilizing the HOME Trust Fund account, in which a bid will be posted within a couple of weeks. Two homes will be constructed on Pennington Avenue and one home on Orchid Place in East Rome. The plan is to bid out a 3 bed, 2 bath, ranch-style plan with the potential alternative of a 2 bed, 1 bath, cottage-style plan.
- Fox informed everyone of recent staff changes in the department. Logan Drake's new position will be Administrative Program Assistant. Marleny Escobar left for a new job out of town. An individual for a new position titled CDBG Coordinator has been hired and will start on February 21, 2022.
- Fox explained that the Rome-Floyd County Land Bank Authority is moving forward with utilizing the ARPA funds, awarded by the City, for affordable housing development and neighborhood improvements. An Authority Board planning session is being organized with assistance from the Center for Community Progress, and they will additionally provide monthly technical assistance through their Georgia office for several months moving forward. A new staff position titled Rome/Floyd Land Bank Manager has been added and will work closely with the Community Development Department to achieve goals to be identified. Fox will stay on as Director of the Department where she will continue to lead all initiatives.
- Discussion was had about the varying goals and philosophies of public housing in the community. Meredith Ulmer stated that the City Manager Office's opinion was that the housing incentive funds would be better spent elsewhere. All agreed.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Aundi Leslie:

- Leslie provided copies of the Downtown Development Authority's Annual Report of 2021. Leslie stated that the 2021 numbers were an improvement from 2020's. She detailed positive change regarding net new businesses, social media output/retention, partnerships, grants, and campaigns. Customer satisfaction regarding parking issues has improved greatly.
- Leslie updated everyone that progress is being made regarding installation of the new signage/archway that will be located near the Carnegie Building. This project will not only welcome residents to the area but blend in well with the established aesthetic.
- Leslie gave a presentation on the plan for the upcoming Small Business Incubator, which will be housed in the recently purchased property located at 110 Broad Street. While construction/renovation is in early stages, progress has already been made. Community Development staff will be working in partnership with Downtown Development Staff to organize this project. Leslie stated that while some marketing has already taken place, more efforts will continue. She explained that the goal of the Small Business Incubator is to provide potential small business owners, entrepreneurs, and creators with resources to launch their pre-established business plan. The program's location will serve as a hub of content creation so that these individuals may progress enough to be to become successful when independent.
- Regarding promotion of the accessibility of the Incubator, the need and desire to see an increase in minority entrepreneur involvement. All agreed that the Incubator will serve as an opportunity for many potential individuals to become confident, independent entrepreneurs.

BUILDING INSPECTION/CODE ENFORCEMENT

Mike Hebert

- Since Chief Building Official James Martin could not attend the meeting like usual, he sent Assistant Building Official Mike Hebert in his stead. Hebert introduced himself and expressed his admiration for the quality public service the City of Rome provides.
- Hebert presented a Building Inspections report dated January 2022. He discussed data involving the following amongst the City and County: Single family dwellings/add/rem, mobile homes, multifamily dwellings, commercial/industrial, commercial/industrial add/rem, signs, business licenses, other permits, and inspections.
- Hebert discussed the following code enforcement data among the City and County: Citations, court, notices of violation, demo, and finals.
- Hebert finally stated that the department has recently made a new hire.

OTHER

None.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Logan Drake
Recording Secretary