

MINUTES
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes of the City Planning Commission meeting held June 11, 2020 in the City Council Auditorium, City Hall, 212 SW 9th Street, Lawton, Oklahoma.

The agenda for the meeting was posted on the bulletin board in City Hall in compliance with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act.

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Chairman David Denham.

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Denham
Ron Jarvis
Paula Bowen*
Neil Springborn
Darren Medders
John Jones
Deborah Jones

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dave Davison

ALSO PRESENT: Richard Rogalski, Secretary
Greg Gibson, Assistant City Attorney
Tammy Anderson, Recording Secretary
John Mackey, Legal Counsel
Christine James, Housing & Community Development Administrator

*entered meeting at 1:33 p.m.

CONSIDER APPROVING THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 27, 2020, MEETING.

MOTION by D. Jones, SECOND by J. Jones, to approve the minutes of the February 27, 2020 meeting. AYES: Springborn, Denham, Jarvis, Medders, D. Jones, J. Jones. NAYS: None. MOTION CARRIED 6 - 0.

CONSIDER RECEIVING A PRESENTATION ON THE DRAFT ANNUAL ACTION PLAN FOR FFY 2020, RECEIVING INPUT FROM PUBLIC SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS, HOLDING A PUBLIC HEARING TO RECEIVE CITIZEN COMMENTS AND PROVIDING A RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY COUNCIL.

The Citizen Participation Plan requires a public hearing before the City Planning Commission (CPC) and City Council to consider the projects funding levels for the Annual Action Plan (AAP) for FFY 2020. The hearing is to obtain input from Lawton citizens, the PSOs and the members of the CPC for development of the final plan. The

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Annual Action Plan for FFY 2020 allocates funds for the program year beginning July 1, 2020, and ending June 30, 2021. It also describes the projects approved to implement the Consolidated Five-Year Plan. Any proposed changes may affect both the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) programs.

James said her division receives approximately \$1 million in funding through the CDBG and HOME grants. She said the department also has funding left over from previous years, and they have about 5-7 years to spend money.

James said funding allocations for 2020 are like previous years. She said the 2020 budget includes an admin budget, a rehab budget, a home budget, emergency repair budget, and a budget for exterior repairs and improvement. James said each FFY includes funding for a first-time home buyer recipient. However, James said her division has not had a first-time home buyer apply and receive assistance in a few years. Because of this, the 2020 budget includes funding for several first-time home buyer recipients. James said her division did receive a first-time home buyer application a few days ago.

James said her division is still paying back a Section 108 loan, which covered infrastructure costs. James said the loan payments are submitted biannually, and these payments come out of the CDBG grant.

James said approximately 15% (or \$107,000) of the yearly budget goes to Public Service Organizations.

James said her division has come up with several different ways to spend leftover funding from previous years. She said \$500,000 has been set-aside for new construction projects. For new construction projects, James said her division will purchase a dilapidated home, demolish the home, and build a brand new house. James said her division has recently purchased a property for a new construction project, however there have been delays due to COVID.

James said her division has allocated \$15,000 for the splash pad at the intersection of 6th and Bellmont in the Ranch Oaks Addition. James said this project is underway, and when completed there will be a new shade structure and a new fence at this facility.

James said her division has also allocated \$41,000 for renovations at the Owens Multipurpose Center. James said they will be renovating the bathrooms at the facility to make them handicap accessible.

James said the roof at the Patterson Center is in poor shape. She said there's been discussion as to whether the roof should be repaired or if the building should be completely torn down and rebuilt. Although the decision has not been made, James said her division will likely help fund construction costs for this building.

James said her division will also provide funding for a kitchen remodel at the H.C.

King Center. She said the kitchen is currently inoperable due to a mold infestation.

James said the Lawton Housing Authority is in the process of renovating the Armed Services YMCA to convert the building into a veteran's resource center.

James said \$340,000 in funding has been set-aside for sidewalks. She said the sidewalk project that's currently underway is located in the Ridgecrest Addition.

James said her division will also provide funding for drainage in the Legion and Vernon Housing Addition, which is the neighborhood located behind the Patterson Center. She said flooding has been a problem in this area for quite some time.

James said her division also partners with the Lawton Housing Authority to provide rental assistance for low-income households.

Commissioner D. Jones asked how much backlog funding the Housing and Community Development division has.

James said they have a little over \$2 million in backlog.

Commissioner D. Jones asked James if her division has discussed homeless shelters.

James said funding for homeless shelters would be classified under HOME funds. She said HOME funds have strict guidelines for usage. However, James said her division can look into what could be done for homeless shelters.

Commissioner D. Jones said homelessness has been an issue for a while, and she feels the community would benefit from a new broader homeless shelter.

James said next year her division will have to compose a new five-year consolidated plan. Before this five-year plan is drafted, a community needs analysis must be done. She said part of this year's admin budget will pay for consultants who will help prepare for the next five-year plan.

Chairman Denham asked what the balance of the Section 108 loan would be after the most recent payment has been cleared.

James said she's not sure what the balance would be, but the loan will be paid in full in approximately ten years. She said the loan was refinanced in 2018, at which time they were able to get a lower interest rate.

Chairman Denham asked if the balance of the Section 108 loan can be provided to Commissioners at the next meeting.

Chairman Denham asked if the CARES act funding is incorporated into the budget being brought before the commission today.

James said no. She said the CARES act money has been approved by Council and is being used for utility assistance. James said their division has currently received \$31,000 worth of vouchers for utility assistance.

Commissioner Springborn asked how the average citizen is made aware that this sort of help is available.

James said the Lawton Housing Authority has a hotline available for those in need of assistance. James said many City Council members work hard to spread the word about available assistance. James said her division also advertises through signage. James also noted that her division cannot assist with rental properties, and she said there are many rental homes in Lawton. James said a home must be owner occupied to receive assistance from their department.

Chairman Denham asked if a home has to be owner occupied to receive utility assistance.

James said no.

Commissioner Medders asked who would be eligible to apply for the \$500,000 new construction project.

James said applicants must be first-time home buyers, they must be 80% or below on income, and they must also be prequalified through the bank to purchase the home. She said her division would do a buy down to make the home affordable, but the purchase would go through a traditional bank. James said they've had issues finding contractors who are willing to build simple houses that low-income households can afford.

Chairman Denham said students at Vo-Tech build a house every few years. He suggested contacting Vo-Tech to see if it would be possible to get these homes donated the Housing and Community Development division.

Commissioner D. Jones asked James if they've given any thought to using prefabricated homes. She said contractors might be more interested in this approach.

James said they have not considered that idea.

Chairman Denham invited representatives from the various public service organizations to present information about their services.

Sheryl Gregory, Executive Director of the Great Plains Improvement Foundation, said her organization services Comanche County with seven programs. She said her organization operates the C. Carter Crane Empowerment and Advancement Center, which is a homeless shelter for the community. Ms. Gregory said she is pleased to hear that Commissioner D. Jones is interested in expanding homeless shelters, as it is a real need for the community. Ms. Gregory said C. Carter Crane services men, women and

families. She said her vision is to either expand C. Carter Crane or find a new site to build a larger facility to improve the services provided at the homeless shelter. Ms. Gregory said her organization works with the Housing and Community Development division to provide transitional housing for citizens. She said the City of Lawton has provided her organization with over \$175,000 to rehab seven transitional houses. Ms. Gregory said her organization is a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) and they also build affordable housing for low-income families. Ms. Gregory said the GPIF owns duplexes in Chattanooga, and they also own several properties in Geronimo where they are planning to build duplexes next year. She said her organization also operates Child Support Services, and they offer a free volunteer tax assistance program. Ms. Gregory said her organization offers prescription assistance for uninsured or underinsured individuals who are on maintenance medication. She said her organization also works very closely with other organizations within the community such as the Salvation Army, Goodwill, Catholic charities, and her organization is the Chair for FEMA.

Commissioner Medders asked how many people can be housed in the current homeless shelter. He also asked how many individuals her organization hopes to be able to house if the shelter were to be expanded.

Ms. Gregory said the current homeless shelter can house 20-24 individuals. She said her goal is to get a new building that will allow them to expand their vocational services.

Commissioner Medders said there are several empty schools that could possibly be used to house the homeless.

Ms. Gregory said her organization has looked into this option, but it would take a lot of rehab to transition the building from a school to a homeless shelter. She said her organization would prefer to build a new facility that would be energy efficient.

Jervis Jackson, Director of Lawton Support Services, said his organization is the lead agency for Southwest Oklahoma Continuum of Care. Mr. Jackson said his organization is responsible for the "I Care" program, which works to provide housing for homeless veterans. He said his organization offers tenant-based rental assistance for veterans as well as housing vouchers from the Veteran's Administration. Mr. Jackson said as a CHDO his organization is in the process of establishing low-income housing specifically for Veterans and their families. He said his organization receives funding through the local Emergency Solutions Grant program. Mr. Gregory said his organization offers additional resources for veterans to include healthcare, transportation, and benefit registration assistance. He said his organization has developed a coordinated intake system to efficiently provide veterans with these services. Mr. Jackson said his organizations goal is to not only provide veterans with the service they need, but also to provide a transition into permanent housing. He said their organization is attempting to achieve a functional zero status, which would mean they could provide housing for a homeless veteran within 30 days. Mr. Jackson said currently there are only 12 functional zero communities in the United States. He said one of these functional zero communities is Norman, Oklahoma.

Chairman Denham inquired about the timeline for achieving functional zero.

Mr. Jackson said they would like to achieve functional zero within the next 12 months. He said they are working to transition the Armed Forces Y into a centralized location for the services provided by his organization.

Kerri Matthews, Program Director for Marie Detty New Directions, said her organization provides services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Ms. Matthews said her organization provides a shelter for these victims and their families. Ms. Matthews said her staff receives ongoing training and they are responsible for getting resources out to Comanche, Cotton, and Caddo counties. She said her organization also educates the Lawton Police Department on how to handle situations involving domestic violence and/or sexual assault victims. Ms. Matthews said residents of their shelter receive case management to include counseling and services for their children. She said her organization also receives funding from the local Emergency Solutions Grant program. This funding allows their organization to provide utility assistance to residents of their shelter as well as community residents. Ms. Matthews said her organization provides assistance for sexual assault spotters and they work closely with the Health Advocacy Center, which is a facility where sexual assault victims go for forensic exams. Ms. Matthews said her organization has a court advocate at the Comanche County Courthouse who helps with protective orders. Ms. Matthews said over 750 protective orders are filed each year. She said her organization now offers a pet shelter for residents and they also provide residents with legal aid.

Glen Ryswyk, Clinical Director of the Lawton Christian Family Counseling Center, said his organization provides counseling services for the community. He said there are nine counselors at his facility. Mr. Ryswyk said they offer various types of services to include individual counseling, pre-marital counseling, family and marriage counseling, and counseling for those struggling with depression and anxiety. He said their organization must raise approximately \$200,000 a year to meet the needs of the community. Mr. Ryswyk said his organization does receive some funding to help provide services to uninsured individuals.

Chairman Denham thanked the public services organizations for the services they continue to provide for the community.

Chairman Denham declared the public hearing open to receive citizen comments.

Chairman Denham declared the public hearing closed.

Commissioner D. Jones emphasized the importance of doing a community needs assessment to determine areas where backlog funding could be used.

James said her division has been reaching out to consultants to get the ball rolling with next year's needs assessment.

Chairman Denham thanked the Housing and Community division for their dedication to bettering the community.

Ms. Gregory noted that community action is required to do a community needs assessment every three years. She said the last one was done in 2017, and the findings from that assessment showed the top three community needs to be: affordable houses to rent and purchase, affordable healthcare and road conditions. She said she will provide James with a copy of the 2017 assessment.

Ms. Gregory said her organization also has a program that helps make homes more energy efficient.

MOTION by D. Jones, SECOND by Medders, to recommend to the City Council approval of the draft Annual Action Plan for FFY 2020. AYES: Jarvis, J. Jones, Medders, D. Jones, Denham, Bowen, Springborn. NAYS: None. MOTION CARRIED 7 - 0.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS OR COMMENTS

Mackey said he was very impressed with the presentations from the public service organizations, and he thanked the representatives for their passion and dedication.

Chairman Denham said he wishes Mrs. Dollarhite a happy retirement.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Rogalski thanked both City staff, Commissioners, and the public service organizations for their hard work.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None.

Meeting adjourned at 2:28 p.m.

David Denham, Chairman
City Planning Commission

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