

COLUMBIA CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY MEETING MINUTES
Regular Session
Common Council Chambers of City Hall, Columbia City, Indiana
July 16, 2024
5:00p.m.

Members Present: Bryan Graham, Chair
Matt Curry, Vice Chair
Steffanie Powers, Secretary
Latricia Banuelos
Jennifer Duff
Mike Malcolm
Jennifer O'Connor

Also in Attendance: Ryan Daniel, Mayor
Chip Hill, Community Development Director

Call to order/Roll call/Minutes

Chair Bryan Graham called the meeting to order. Attendance was as listed above. Bryan Graham asked for a motion to approve the June minutes. Vice Chair Matt Curry made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Latricia Banuelos. A voice vote was taken; passed unanimously.

Ideas about how to promote current programs

The CCHA has not recently received any new applications for its two loan programs. Mayor Daniel confirmed that information regarding the owner-occupied rehabilitation and residential facade loan programs are on the City's Community Development page. The City and the CCHA will promote the CCHA loan programs on their respective Facebook pages.

Down payment assistance

Bryan Graham has been gathering information about a potential down payment assistance program. Mayor Daniel remarked that if down payment assistance can encourage housing development, then it may be a fit; however, we would want to make sure it would actually grow our housing stock. Bryan Graham will get more details about the program.

Landlord registration

Mike Malcolm previously identified several questions and issues that would need to be answered before proceeding with a landlord registration program, and discussed some of his questions with the mayor. First, Mike Malcolm noted that we would need code enforcement for the landlord registration list. Mayor Daniel confirmed that code enforcement is in the budget for next year. Mayor Daniel explained that Columbia City and Whitley County currently have an agreement that the County acts as the City's code enforcement. The upcoming city code

enforcement official would be involved before county officials; the city code enforcement official would warn a citizen that they were violating a standard and help create a plan for remediation of the issue. If the problem failed to be addressed, the issue would then be escalated to county officials, such as Craig Wagner, the county building inspector.

The registration fee paid by the landlords would be collected by Rosie and would go into a special landlord registration account. The fee could be due annually, in January. The CCHA would need to make sure that the amount of the fee, as well as other parts of any landlord registration ordinance, complies with legislation passed by the state of Indiana. If a rental property is sold, the new owner would have 30 days to register if using the property as a rental.

Mayor Daniel noted that there needs to be an update to the minimum housing standard and the rental piece could be a part of that code.

Mayor Daniel clarified that a proposed ordinance regarding landlord registration would go to Columbia City's Common Council, not the Whitley County Commissioners. The CCHA would come up with the general tenets of the proposed program and Marcia could help write the ordinance. As the ordinance is getting close to finalized, the CCHA or the landlord registration subcommittee would meet with the mayor or Chip Hill to iron out some practical details. Then, after it is finished, the ordinance would be presented to the Common Council.

How to define and identify properties qualifying as rentals was discussed. The CCHA could get a list of properties that have a 2% instead of a 1% property tax cap from the auditor or assessor to identify properties that are not homesteads. The aim would be to identify second homes that provide profit or reimbursement to the owner. The CCHA would need to consider how to identify properties such as apartments that are above businesses downtown. Columbia City Connect might be able to help identify such properties.

Mayor Daniel stated that the time to make improvements to rentals to make them safer, more secure, and more sanitary is during a tight housing market. Eventually, though we do not know when, there will be a recession and rental vacancies.

There was a discussion about whether the first year of landlord registration would be voluntary or mandatory. Making the first year voluntary would be a way to ease landlords into the program; they would have the incentive of being on a list of rental properties/landlords so that renters could find them more easily. However, it was pointed out that there might not be much voluntary participation in this current market where landlords do not have problems finding renters. Another possibility would be to make landlord registration mandatory from the beginning but waive the annual fee the first year. Details about the landlord registration program, including the amount and timing of fees, will be discussed further in subcommittee and then brought back to the full CCHA.

Hooper House

Bryan Graham notified the board that the Hooper House is up for auction with Kraft Auctions. There was discussion about whether it would be feasible for the CCHA to purchase and rehab

the house. Bryan Graham shared that the current high bid was \$4,500.00 and there was a buyer's premium of \$3,500.00 or 10%, whichever is greater. With taxes, the current total cost of the house would be about \$10,200.00. The auction ends on Wednesday, July 24.

The board discussed whether the Hooper House could be used as a business; however, the property is zoned with an R1 designation. The point was made that the layout of the interior of the house is not ideal for modern homes (small rooms and closets, second story windows that go to the floor, etc.). It was decided that some of the CCHA members would go see the house later this week and a special session would be scheduled for 5:00 p.m. on Monday, July 22 at City Hall to discuss the Hooper House further if it seems like a viable option.

Adjournment

Steffanie Powers moved to adjourn, seconded by Jennifer Duff. The meeting was adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

Submitted by Steffanie Powers, Secretary