



Community Development Advisory Committee Regular Meeting

February 4, 2025
1:00 PM
Simms Municipal Building, Room 275
808 S. Buchanan
Amarillo, Texas 79101

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Introductions

On February 4, 2025, the Community Development Advisory Committee met at 1:00 PM at Simms Building, Room 275, to provide the committee an opportunity to introduce themselves and hold a vote regarding reallocation of CDBG funds from Emergency Repair to Full House Rehabilitation per Environmental Health Referral.

In attendance were:

Tommie Knox – Vice Chair	Community Development Advisory Committee
Mara Kinoff	Community Development Advisory Committee
Katt Massey	Community Development Advisory Committee
Maya Marrujo	Community Development Advisory Committee
Lee Studer	Community Development Advisory Committee
Jason Riddlespurger	Community Development Director
Stefanie Rodarte-Suto	Community Development, Assistant Director

No members of the public were present.

ITEM 1: **Call to Order**

Tommie Knox established a quorum and called the scheduled meeting of the **Community Development Advisory Committee** to order at 1:00p.m. Tommie read the agenda and passed it over to Jason Riddlespurger to provide overview of Community Development Department and procedural view of today’s work session.

ITEM 2: **Overview**

Jason Riddlespurger introduced himself and Stefanie Rodarte-Suto. Department has

grant team who are in attendance, housing authority, team of housing inspectors, an accountant, office staff and Coming Home team.

Grant Team: Amarillo is an entitlement community receiving CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funds. We do not apply for these funds. They are automatically sent based upon city size and use of funds in the past. Home Investment Partnership grant – very similar to CDBG but more difficult to use. We use mostly for tenant based rental assistance. The grant team works to ensure compliance with HUD regulations and TDHCA (Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs). The regulations are complex and constantly changing

Housing Department: Basically section 8 housing vouchers. There is a huge waiting list that is worked through. We are currently almost through the current list and will be creating a new list. Lots of paperwork and calls to both landlords and tenants.

Inspectors: They perform home inspections.

Coming Home Team: Working on solutions for homelessness in Amarillo. Case managers and social workers do outreach into the streets and interact with people living on the streets. We provide emergency supplies, information on community resources for food assistance and housing. We maintain a housing list and move folks into housing with a voucher from the housing program and provide case management and support. We also provide work force program to help with employment.

Prep Program: Support for folks leaving prison and/or homelessness or several years of unemployment with a huge gap in work resume. They work on beautification projects cleaning up parks and public areas. They go to Goodwill computer training center for computer training. We provide interview training, resume building training and some life skills. They can work in a City department they are interested in to find out if they are a good fit for that type of work.

Transformation Park is upcoming outdoor safe shelter where people receive assistance to work into their own housing eventually.

Community Development Mission Statement: Community Development is committed to improving the community, alleviating poverty, and finding lasting solutions to homelessness.

- 2. Public Address** Citizens who desire to address the Community Development Advisory Committee with regard to matters on the agenda or having to do with the City's policies, programs, or services will be received at this time. Each speaker will be limited to three minutes. The Committee may not discuss items not on this agenda, but may respond with factual, established policy information, or refer to staff. The Committee may choose to place the item on a future agenda. (Texas Attorney General Opinion JC-0169.)

Tommie Knox invited public comment. No members of the public were present.

3. Approval of Minutes

Members reviewed the minutes. Motion to accept the minutes by Kat Massey. Seconded by Tommie Knox. Unanimous approval.

4. Regular Meeting Items

4.A. Public Hearing

Jason Riddlespurger announced we the committee will need to help develop new consolidated 5 year plan this year. We have hired a consulting firm and there will be a lot of public engagement events. The committee will be called upon to review applications again this year.

Jason Riddlespurger welcomed the new committee members and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Lee Studer – Lived in Amarillo all his life. Served on this committee 15 or 20 years ago. Retired 2 years ago and wants to be involved again. He supports the work.

- Tommie Knox –Amarillo native. Serving in the community is everyone's responsibility. He is on several different committees.
- Maya Marrujo – Born and raised in Amarillo. Has mostly lived in Amarillo in the San Jacinto and North Heights neighborhoods. Was homeless for about year at age 18 or 19. First time serving on a board. Wants to help impoverished communities.
- Kat Massey – Worked for COA briefly. Prior involvement with Jason and his work inspired her to join the board. Wants to help make peoples lives better.
- Mara Kinoff – Born in Amarillo, raised in Colorado. Her dad was police Sargent who believes in small community policing. Here mom was director of an alternative school which helped teen moms and worked on drop out prevention. Wants her son to see we should help out our community.

Jason invited committee members to ride along with Coming Home teams.

Tommie Knox offered time for public comment. No members of the public were present.

4.B. Public Hearing: FY2023 CAPER (Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report)

Tommie Knox announced that the Community Development Team will provide an overview of the FY2023 CAPER and open to public comments afterward.

Stefanie Rodarte-Suto presented CAPER report. CAPER is a report required to report accomplishments and outcomes to HUD. The report is on two programs: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership Program. Both programs are entitlement funds. We qualify through a formula grant HUD does. We have received CDBGs since the 70s and HOME for many years. The report was published last year at the end of the year for public review. Notices for public comment were published in both English and Spanish newspapers in December for 15 days. No public comment was received.

Last year, the programs served a total of 4,510 people living in Amarillo. CDBG spent about \$807,000 for public services; demolition and clearance for dangerous structures in the city's low to moderate income areas; emergency repairs and rehab support and program administration. The allocation was about \$1.5 million. We are working on sidewalk projects in target neighborhoods and a parks project. Funding will be used for these projects but they take time to implement.

For HOME project, we spent about \$1,161,486 on two primary activities. Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program (TBRA) over \$800,000. Also provided support for Habitat for Humanity, our Community Development Housing Organization (CDHO). They completed two houses last year and one so far this year.

The report has been emailed to committee members. Opportunity for public comment was given. No members of the public were present.

4.C. Reallocation of CDBG funds from Emergency Repair to Full House Rehabilitation (per Environmental Health referral)

Consider the reallocation of available funding to Full House Rehabilitation/Major Repair in response to a referral from the Environmental Health Department

Shiela King presented. We have the CARE program for emergency repairs. The maximum per resident is about \$8,000. We have a property in need of new water and sewer line. We have money available from minor rehab program. Environmental Health sets aside \$25,000 per year for emergency repairs.

This property was referred to us by Environmental Health. There is a problem with plumbing issues causing sewage going onto neighbor's property. In order to help with this property, it exceeds the amount allowed by the CARE program. We are asking for funds to be reallocated to a new program called Full House Rehabilitation. This would allow us to provide funding to make the house safe for both the owner and the neighbors.

Repairing the sewer and water lines will not be enough to make the home safe to live in. The owner is an elderly lady with mobility issues. In order to make the home safe to live in will require about \$66,000. We are requesting to use \$50,000 allocated to Minor Repair and add the remainder needed from the CARE program. These funds would make the home safe and livable. The expenditures are allowable under CDBG guidelines.

Open to Questions

Tommie Knox Q – This would be for plumbing repair?

A – This would be a full home repair. Inspectors who went to the property found other issues that need to be addressed. The owner's health and safety are both at risk. The roof needs to be repaired; the sewer lines, the water lines; flooring needs to be repaired; painting needs to be done. The funds requested will make the home safe and livable instead of fixing a few things just to get by. This will make both the owner and neighbor safe.

Q – We're looking at cosmetics and safety issues?

A – Yes sir. The Minor Repair program does allow expenditures for cosmetic repairs under CDBG guidelines. The full repair can be completed within CDBG guidelines and we have the funds available if the reallocation is approved.

Q – Is this the only property being repaired?

A – Yes

Jason – If the board votes to approve this, the new program will exist for future homeowners with problems. This happens occasionally. We occasionally come across a house in a state of disrepair that to be livable, it requires multiple repairs instead of just one or two. We don't have an endless pot of money so we need to be judicious in how we manage the funds but this one makes sense.

Stefanie – This is a request we received from Environmental Health because this affects the safety of the neighbors as well as the property owner. The problem would continue if the only repair is the sewer lines. The problems with the house also need to be addressed.

Jason – This will also prevent a house from potentially needing to be demolished. The repairs will raise the house's value for the current owner and future owners. We prefer not to demolish houses. We would rather have citizens live in a home. We would prefer to fund rehabilitations instead of demolitions. We cannot move forward unless we have board approval and the new program has started.

Tommy Knox – In 45 years of housing experience, rehabilitation makes more sense than demolition. I'm in favor if rehabbing a property any time we can. This case will not help just the owner but the whole community.

Lee Q – What are some of the other required repairs?

Shiela A – The owner has mobility issues. There are two steps to a second floor. The owner has been without water and heat and cannot use range or refrigerator. Gas line repair is needed. She is unable to use the shower in the bathroom because of mobility issues. This remodel would provide her access to the shower again. Painting is needed and some garbage removal she cannot do. It takes her 20-25 minutes to come down the stairs at the entrance to the house and across the yard to public transportation. The front steps need to be replaced. It is very dangerous for the owner. She does not have a caregiver and it is dangerous for her to leave the home on her own.

Kat Q – Explain where we are pulling \$66,000 from.

A - \$25,000 from Minor Rehab fund allocated this year plus rollover. Remainder from CARE.

Q – When will repairs begin? Does owner have a place to stay during repairs?

A – She will be in the home during repairs. Coming Home program will assist with needs during the remodeling.

Q – Are contractors ready to go?

A – Yes. Once funds are allocated, repairs can begin.

Any other questions?

Maya Q - Do you know what the foundation of the house looks like? Is it in tact?

A – The contractor will check the foundation before starting repairs.

Maya Q – If the foundation need to be repaired, that will add expense. It wouldn't make sense to do repair if the foundation is compromised and will cause additional damage to the house once repaired. Do you have a copy of the inspection report?

A – No.

Lee Q – If the foundation is good and then contractor discovers a foundation problem, does the contractor notify you and you approve the additional repair? Or does the committee need to approve additional repairs?

Jason A – We are opening a new program that will allow higher expenditures. We have had inspectors through the house and have not been notified of any foundation problems. It's an older house, so foundation problems should be apparent if there are any. I believe we have a pretty good estimate on the repair cost.

Mara Q – If we start this program, will this project use up all the 2025 funds?

Jason A – No. We have the funds already. This is just a reallocation of funds. This program may not be funded every year but it will be available should the need arise in the future.

Tommy Q – This will be open to other properties in the future?

Jason A – Yes. We have a partnership with Environmental Health who is helping us determine which projects affect the neighborhood and not just the individual property.

Tommie Knox opens for public address. No members of the public are present.

Tommie Knox makes a motion to approve the reallocation.
Kat seconds the motion.
Vote taken. Motion passes unanimously.

Q – Will the committee receive an update on the project?
Stefanie A – Yes. We will have Community Development week in April and anticipate an update at that time.

Jason – We have never tried to figure out how to involve this committee with what we do or find out what citizens are thinking. If you have ideas please let me know.

Tommy Knox – Meeting more than once a year would be beneficial.

Maya – Would like more frequent meetings also. Would like to explore hosting an additional meeting outside of City offices in more vulnerable spaces. Instead of having people come to us it might be helpful if we go to them.

Lee – Worked in a staffing agency to hire clerical staff. He would go into businesses and he was amazed at the business owner's lack of knowledge about clerical positions. An owner wanted a receptionist for \$8.50 per hour. He asked the owner if he could live on \$8.50 per hour. The owner said no. Lee asked why should the receptionist?

Lee told the owner that most women who find themselves being a single mom do not always have a support system, they don't have nearby relatives who would help. They leave your company for a \$0.25 increase because they are trying to feed their children. Lee informed the owner he would not place anyone with his company again and left.

There was another young woman who came in tears because she had a small child and was job hopping for \$0.25 per hour increases to provide for her family but didn't realize it didn't make her more money. He showed her it wasn't really making more money. He offered her a temp to hire position and told her if she stayed two years, she would be making more money. She called Lee six years later to thank him and let him know that she was still at the same company and is now the office manager.

He give these stories because they are applicable to the work this committee does. The broad Amarillo community is not aware and has preconceived ideas regarding the homeless or those less fortunate because they do not know. They are not mean or bad. Just uninformed people. He is 100% for finding ways to inform the community regarding community development programs.

There was an organization called Christmas in April who would go in and provide home repairs like this one. If you have never had an experience like this lady,

you don't have an appreciation without sweat equity and seeing the appreciation in someone's face. I will help meet as often as we need to meet.

Kat said when she worked for COA, a man called in and said we just need to round em all up and put them on the edge of town in a chain-link fence and let it be the wild west. Kat went to tell the Mayor who knew the person. The caller had never been in financial straights. Kat and the Mayor wondered where is the empathy? Encourage people to attend meetings to find out what is going on. We need to shine the light on what city staff are doing to educate people as to what is happening. It is difficult to communicate to the community what is going on in the community.

General agreement that it would be a good idea to take the meetings to the people instead of having them come here as evidenced by no one from the public being here today! Incentives have been provided to encourage attendance in the past but with little result.

Lee observed that it is unfortunate but many folks just don't care. Our job is to be available and visible to those who need to see us.

Jason – Community Development is willing to step up and help in any fashion. Please provide feedback regarding activities you would like to see initiated. We would like to see more public engagement. We need to be consistent.

Tommie Knox adjourns the meeting at 2:10pm.