



CITY OF HELENA
Affordable Housing Trust Fund Advisory Board
August 10, 2022 - 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM
Zoom Online Meeting; <https://zoom.us/j/98576794873>
Meeting ID: 985 7679 4873
Or, dial in at: 1 (346) 248-7799

Call to Order and Roll Call

(00:16:45) Roll Call was taken, and the following all responded present: Byron Beley, Riley Hanson, John Rausch, Stephanie Bull, Michael O’Neil, Rachel Ballweber

The following members were absent: Chris Hunter

Members of the public present: There were two members of the public present, including Ann Schwend from Montana Environmental Information Center and someone who identified as Dr. G.

Minutes

(00:19:41) July 10, 2022 meeting minutes unanimously approved

Regular Items

(00:21:30) A. Discuss Advisory Board Review Process and updated documents

(00:21:45) Kara summarized the Advisory Board Application Evaluation Form and Guide. Kara explains how the review criteria from the Program Guidelines were divided into different sections and what the scoring options are for each criterion. The Guide includes descriptions of each grade category to give the Board assistance when evaluating proposals.

(00:25:00) John Rausch stated that it was a great place to start but said it would be hard to give feedback on a form that he had not used yet. He suggested revisiting the form after the first application round was over.

- (00:26:01)** Kara responds to John and the Board that while the Program Guidelines and Application documents will need to be formally adopted by the Commission, there is more flexibility with supporting documents such as this. So, this group will have the option to re-think the evaluation process and the tools used as often as necessary. She related the experience that the Missoula Housing Trust Fund Board and staff have had, which is that they also chose to reevaluate their methods after the first round and made changes to the scoring guide that reflect some of the points already made by this Board.
- (00:27:15)** Michael questioned why the highest score has the lowest point number. Others in the group also agreed that it may be more logical to have a good score be a high score. Related to that, Riley wondered if there should be an option to give a project a zero and observed that the descriptors for the Needs Improvement category may have been better suited for the Adequate category.
- (00:28:30)** Kara responded to the Board feedback concerning the scoring and the categories. The points could easily be switched so that a good application had a high score as opposed to a low score. Having points at all was just a tool to rank similar projects or similarly well/poorly put together applications. City staff are tasked with making sure that applications are eligible and complete, so ideally, there shouldn't be a need to completely fail a project based on any of the evaluation criteria.
- (00:31:00)** Michael said it might be possible that a project would be good but not meet certain criteria. Michael brought up the previous month's discussion around weighing some categories differently than others. Some criteria might be threshold based whereas others could be ranked and prioritized.
- (00:33:37)** Riley thought the length of time a project would maintain its affordability also related to the first criteria (alignment with Priorities and Goals). Riley thought the two most important items were that the applicant had the financial backing and the knowledge to carry out a project.
- (00:34:43)** Byron thought the overall form was worth trying and that applicants with experience should be able to submit proposals that would score high with this system.
- (00:35:25)** Kara brought up the idea of a bonus point option to help the Board prioritize different criteria. Kara used the sustainability priority as an example. If a project addressed some sustainability issues really well, then maybe that project could receive an extra point in that category. Michael was concerned about giving applications more points for fulfilling basic requirements of the Fund. He also brought the idea of breaking up the first category, as it covers a lot of material. By breaking it up and giving each of those categories the same point options, that would automatically weigh that category to matter more.
- (00:39:45)** Riley described having four sections with equal points as opposed to three. If each category has three criteria and equal points. The Goals and Priorities section could have 3, 6, and 9 points for each category as a way to give it more weight than other categories.

- (00:40:57) John suggested adding as many criteria as the Board wanted to each category as another way to weigh the three or four categories. Riley responded by adding that the criteria could be organized by their weight tier as opposed to the subject area they covered. Michael added that he would like to see the Priorities and Goals section expanded and given more points, given that it really covered the basic requirements, including community need.
- (00:45:58) Kara clarified the feedback from the Board and said that she would incorporate that into a new draft of the evaluation guide document. Michael asked if there would be another meeting prior to the Commission date where the Board could officially recommend the documents. Kara described the timeline for submitting the documents, which is three weeks prior to the Commission date it will be reviewed at. The Board asked whether it was possible to schedule a quick follow-up meeting to discuss revisions or whether this document could be introduced at the Admin meeting on the 21st as opposed to the 7th, which would give a little more time for editing and Board review.
- (00:56:34) Michael brought up the point that the guidelines and application documents were the real important items to get in front of the Commission as quickly as possible, and that it might be possible to bring another version of the Evaluation guide before the Commission before the Fund goes live. Michael asked that the revised Guide be sent out to the Board and whether any Board members should attend the Commission meetings.
- (00:59:38) Michael asked the Board if they all felt comfortable with Kara utilizing the feedback during this meeting to make edits and taking that to the Commission prior to another Advisory Board meeting. The Board agreed that that would be okay.
- (01:00:19) Riley suggested adding Building Planning to the Project readiness category. He stated that that would be a really important aspect of a proposal that would be telling as to how quickly they could move forward with the project.
- (01:02:05) **B. Review current timeline for adopting documents and opening funding to applications**
- (01:02:15) Kara shared her screen, which showed the Trust Fund Outlook Calendar. She highlighted several key dates, which included: August 26th – when NWMT will submit their bid package to the City detailing what financial services they can offer to the process and at what price point. September 7th – First Administrative meeting, during which Kara will be presenting the Trust Fund documents and the work done so far. September 26th – Commission decision to adopt documents or not. October 3rd - (depending on passage of docs) - the funding will be released for proposals. November 17th – Applications are due. November 18th – Staff review for eligibility and completeness, then hand the applications to NWMT for underwriting reviews. December 1st – NWMT returns applications with underwriting reviews and the City passes those along to the Advisory Board for review. December 14th – Applicants present their projects to the Advisory Board. December 16th - (if necessary, depending on how many applications there are) - The Advisory Board will meet to consolidate their evaluations of the projects and decide how to rank projects and recommendations to the Commission. First Admin meeting in January,

the Board will present their recommendations to the Commission. At the first regular meeting after that, the Commission will make final funding decisions.

(01:12:45) The Board agreed that we could wait to see how many applications come in before deciding whether a second December meeting was necessary. Michael asked if there was any further discussion needed on this item and there was none. He concluded that any future scheduling should also be passed by Board members not present at today's meeting.

(01:13:38) C. Discuss changing the standing meeting to the 2nd Wednesday of each month

(01:13:45) Michael asked the Board if moving the meeting to the second Wednesday of the month would work for everyone. None of the Board had scheduling conflicts with this proposal.

(01:15:49) Michael stated that the workload for this group could really vary throughout the year and that there may be months where it would be unnecessary to meet.

(01:16:50) Michael asked for the calendar invite to be deleted and a new one sent out to avoid duplicate meeting invitations.

Questions/Comments

(01:20:06) Byron asked if the December application review meeting could be done in person. Kara said that we're currently in a hybrid model for Board meetings and April added that we're waiting for more direction on this from the City Clerk's office. Michael said that regardless of the format, the Board should make sure that everyone can access the documents and will be able to contribute to the meeting.

Public Comment

(01:18:10) Michael asked if there was public comment. There is no public comment at this time.

Meetings of Interest / Announcements

(01:19:15) The next Advisory Board Meeting has been rescheduled for September 14, 2022 at 2pm. The standing meeting time has been adjusted to the second Wednesday of every month from 2-3:30pm.

Adjournment

(01:23:45) There being no further business before the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Advisory Board, the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.