

**CDAB MEETING
NOVEMBER 20, 2019
MEETING MINUTES**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Vanessa Harris, Chair
Rufus Davis, Vice-Chair
Ruby Harris, Second Vice-Chair
Twyla Williams
Anita Dawkins
Buford George
Victor Laurie
Michael Wyant
Melissa Wilson

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Kristopher Doss

OTHERS PRESENT:

Maurice Head, CDAB Administrator; Todd McDonald, AICP, Planning & Development Director;
and, Theresa Eddy, Secretary

Chair V. Harris called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

1. Approval of the October 17, 2019, Meeting Minutes.

Mr. Davis made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Wyant seconded, and the motion carried.

2. 2018-2019 CDBG Expenditures and Performance Profile – Mr. Head submitted a graphic breakout of the allocated block grant funds for 2018. The funds received were \$468,832.00 and the total allocated was \$293,451.58. The chart highlighted the Timeliness Ratio; which shows the unexpended funds were 1.43%. HUD states that the city cannot carry more than 1.5% total allocation within a single year, to which that came under the threshold. If the city goes over 1.5%, HUD grades you as being high risk. The majority of the funds were allocated to low to moderate-income housing, 64.84% of Black/African Americans and 28.55% Caucasians with 6.6% falling under the category of others. There were 1,214 persons assisted directly, primarily by Public Service and Public Facilities with 26 households receiving housing assistance. Mr. Davis asked if the funds would be more this year, to which Mr. Head stated that they probably would not. Mr. Davis asked if there were leftover funds would the city lose that money, to which Mr. Head responded that the funds can roll over annually but if the project hasn't been completed in a couple of years they might look at other projects. There have been some agencies that don't receive enough funds in one year so they request additional funds the following year to complete their project.

3. Review the 2020 Competitive Process Schedule – Mr. Head went down the 2020 Calendar Dates with the board members and highlighted January for the Election of Officers and the application kick-off. The dates of April 20, 21 and 23 are the interview and formulation dates. In May, the board will approve applications go to the City Commission for approval and then they go to HUD.

4. Cancellation of the December 19 Advisory Board Meeting.

Mr. Davis made a motion to approve the cancellation, Mr. Wyant seconded, and the motion carried.

5. Discussion of the CDBG 2020 to 2024 Five-Year Consolidated Plan – Goals, Objectives and Programs to be implemented over the next five years. Facilitator – Dean Mitchell

Mr. Dean Mitchell, Executive Director of the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce, addressed the board. Mr. Mitchell shared that his background was with the U.S. Congress

working with Policy and Procedures and that he understands the importance of the CDAB and the allocation of grant funds. Mr. Mitchell asked everyone five questions and went around the room for everyone's answers.

#1 Question: If you could make one change in the City of Dothan, what would it be?

- Answers:
- Affordable Housing - Fairness for all people of Dothan - Traffic Issues
 - Revamp the Police Department - Mass Transportation
 - More Publicity for the Funds that are available for Businesses or Individuals
 - Trade Education - Economic Synergy - Infrastructure Investment
 - Sidewalks & Bike pads

#2 Question: If you were the City Manager, what would be your recommendation to the Mayor and City Council for investments?

- Answers:
- Education - Affordable Housing - Early Childhood Education
 - City Beautification (tear down or fix houses) - Education - Teachers Pay
 - Vocational Trade School Expansion – Infrastructure - Job Training –
 - Job Creation - Economic Development - Homeless Shelters

#3 Question: Taking all financial caps off the table, what would be the number one need for the low and moderate-income residents of Dothan?

- Answers:
- Higher paying jobs - Housing (5) – Weatherization - Job Training
 - Safe, Affordable Housing - Neighborhood Improvement
 - Affordable Transportation

#4 Question: Is your answer to #3 a realistic goal given the limited resources? Yes or No?

- Answers: Yes (7) - No (5)

#5 Question: What would the realistic goal of your answer to #3 be, given the fact that you have limited resources?

- Answers:
- Housing (4) - Recruit Higher Paying Jobs - Needs for the Disabled
 - Weatherization to Elderly - Job Training - Economic Synergy
 - Safe Affordable Housing - Neighborhood Improvements through developer incentives - Neighborhood Revitalization

Mr. Mitchell shared a list from David Duke from the Wiregrass 2-1-1 of the un-met needs for the fiscal year 2019. This list included; Transportation (22%), Utility Assistance (18%), Motel Bill Payment Assistance (15%), Shelter for Homeless (14%), Rent Payment (12%), Utility Deposit Assistance (11%), Rental Deposit Assistance (5%), and Low-Income Subsidized Private Rental Housing (3%). Most relate to housing. Mr. Mitchell stated that the people in need are calling for what this board was talking about.

Mr. Mitchell believed that the efforts and goals of this board are consistent with what the community needs. Housing is on everybody's mind and about 40% of dollars are going into housing. Mr. Mitchell asked if the board would consider doing 100% towards housing, to which Mr. McDonald stated that the City Commission would have to approve no public service funding. Mr. McDonald stated that theoretically, 85% of the grant funds could be allocated to housing. Mr. Head asked if the board members would consider that and the majority were against the idea since Public Service was as important.

Mr. Mitchell asked if the applicants had access to other financiers outside of the CDBG funds, to which Mr. Head stated that there was only one viable housing organization in Dothan and that is Habitat for Humanity. Dothan doesn't have multiple organizations that come to the CDAB for funding. We need more Non-profits, Developers interested in Affordable Housing, and more Neighborhood-based organizations. A problem is that Dothan lacks the organizations with the capacity to do the projects. Mr. Mitchell asked if

the City could provide or match funds that the CDBG offers, to which Mr. McDonald stated that they would have to make sure that there were no more back funds available first. Had they used all of the Federal allocations before they started looking at the local allocations? Local dollars were spent on the Howell School Project. Mr. McDonald stated that there could be incentives for developers where the City could give them the land, like a market-rate project.

Mr. Davis was optimistic about the 'thinking outside of the box' initiatives. Mr. McDonald stated that it would take a conversation with the City Manager and believed that he would be open to these types of ideas. Mr. McDonald stated that the City Manager was open to helping out 'neighborhoods' and felt that we were behind in this arena.

Mr. Mitchell stated that he would like to see a small block of homes turned into Affordable Housing and thought about how to do that and who was going to do that and what resources were available. If you could concentrate on one block or fix these few houses somehow. Mr. McDonald stated that the Howell Schools Project was a great catalyst for this. Mr. Mitchell asked if that was going to happen on its own, by the private sector, or was there some type of public investment needed? Chair V. Harris asked how the downtown group used incentive money, to which Mr. McDonald stated that it's specific project-oriented, like the Façade' Program. CDBG couldn't give money to the DDRA to do the rehab of the museum, that took city investment but the CDBG has given to the Façade' Grant, Sidewalks, and other construction things. Mr. Mitchell stated that a group went to Austin, TX to look at a program that either constructed or used small houses for the homeless and didn't know how that would fit into this group. Mr. Davis stated that the Ark came in with an elevator project but he brought it to the board at the last minute; however, it seemed like a great project. Mr. Head stated that the CDBG was more for families, homes, learning, things that would boost economic growth in the city. There was separate funding from HUD that would be for homeless activities.

Ms. Dawkins would like to be in collaboration with SEACAP with their housing, counseling, training course for low or moderate-income people. Mr. Head stated that the CDBG has funded SEACAP \$70,000.00 but as a condition of that money, the board could have said, you need to set up housing counseling at your downtown location. That would have been a legitimate requirement for them getting the funds. Mr. Head stated that the facility could be improved and that this could be something SEACAP would be open to.

Mr. Mitchell stated that housing was on everyone's mind and it was something that the board could concentrate on. Mr. Mitchell asked if there are any other communities out there that have already tackled this, that Dothan could replicate from on a smaller scale, and/or maybe reach out to the National League of Cities if there are any communities in the South that have done this on a scale that they could replicate. Mr. Head stated that many communities are in the same place as Dothan, but the difference is that those other communities have more capacity with their housing providers. They have 4-5 non-profits they deal with housing development where Dothan has one. You need a non-profit infrastructure in place. The CDAB has the money and they have the ideas but lack the infrastructure to implement the ideas.

Mr. Head stated that it would take a while to get a project from start to finish. Ms. Dawkins recommended Gary Hall, who served on the Alabama Housing Board as Director, as she believes that he would be a great person to help. Ms. T. Williams suggested to bring Mr. Hall and someone from the Wiregrass Foundation together and Mr. Davis stated that this was what he meant by Synergy, bring them all to the table.

Ms. Ruby asked who owns the motel across from the Plant and the one by the Dothan Eagle and Mr. McDonald stated that they were privately owned. Ms. Dawkins stated that they

were not going to sell, that they were renting them out. Mr. Head stated that it brings up the concept for a Rental Registration Program that would make property owners fix up their properties or have an inspection done by the city before someone moves in.

Mr. Head stated that they could apply for a Lead Grant to fix older homes with elevated lead levels, but it is a matter of applying for the grant. Mr. McDonald stated that Mr. Head was looking for someone to apply for the grant. Mr. McDonald suggested getting in touch with Scott Farmer to see if they had someone that worked with these types of grants. Mr. Head stated that it is an opportunity for the board and worth finding out.

Mr. Mitchell asked Mr. Head if he had to write up the top to bottom priorities, what everyone can do to help encourage more activity in the housing arena, what would be the #1 thing, was it the capacity and if so, how do you convince the city to get into this arena. Mr. Head said that this was a very good question. Mr. Head stated that other cities have 4-5 people on the Community Development staff. Mr. Head stated that if the city wanted to take on the challenge of Neighborhood Revitalization and Affordable Housing, they would have to realize that it would take more than one person. Ms. Dawkins stated that they could use consultants and Mr. Head said that could become part of the 5-year plan. Mr. Davis asked that they add to the 5-year plan that the city considers helping with these projects financially. Mr. Head stated that the city put in \$100,000.00 to the general fund this year and next year for housing rehabilitation and that he will research how to access it. Everyone thanked Mr. Mitchell for helping the board be steered in the right direction.

6. Public Comments

7. Adjourn

*Ms. T. Williams motioned to adjourn, Mr. Davis seconded, and the motion carried.
The meeting ended at 5:16 p.m. The next meeting date is January 16, 2020.*



Vanessa Harris, Chair



Kim Vann, Secretary