

MEETING MINUTES
City of Hot Springs
Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC)
Thursday, April, 2021 1:00pm
City of Hot Springs Board Chambers, 133 Convention Blvd, Hot Springs, AR 71901
In-Person and by Teleconference

1. CDAC Chair Terry Kent called the meeting to order at 1:11pm. Those in attendance:

- Terry Kent, CDAC Chair and Member-at-Large
- Leslie Ramsey, CDAC Co-Chair and Member-at-Large
- Kelly Thomason, CDAC Member-at-Large
- Alice Marshall, CDAC District 2 Representative
- Michelle Sestili, City of Hot Springs CDBG Administrator
- Penny Thornton, Former Safe Haven Executive Director
- Cindy Wagstaff, Garland County Habitat for Humanity
- Corbett Sanders, Samaritan Ministries
- Joseph Micucci, Salvation Army
- Krystal Throgmartin, Encounter Church
- Becca Clark
- Sandy Scott
- Ann Hill
- Alix Stafford
- Bart Stafford
- Boyce Mitchell, Ouachita Behavioral Health & Wellness
- Pat King
- Wayne Bryan
- Sally Carder, St. Luke's Episcopal Church
- Kim Carter, Cooperative Christian Ministries & Clinic (CCMC)
- Haley Villines
- Mike Davidson, Garage Church
- Kathy Randel, St. Luke's Episcopal Church
- Janie Smith, Jackson House
- Larry Williams, Area Agency on Aging
- Anne Quinn, Garland County Habitat for Humanity
- Sarah Fowler, United Way of the Ouachitas
- Janice Jones, Park Avenue Community Association
- Rasa Myers, Stokes Creek Neighborhood
- Kimberly Lew, Southwest Arkansas Partnership local homeless coalition
- Erica Cross, Spa Area Independent Living Services (SAILS)

Copies of the meeting agenda and proposed 2021 Annual Action Plan were provided to all in attendance in-person and emailed to those that joined via teleconference.

2. March 4, 2021 meeting minutes approved (4-0)

3. New Business: 2021 Annual Action Plan

Michelle Sestili presented the fiscal year 2020 Annual Action Plan highlights and answered questions.

Basic Overview

- The CDBG fiscal year was changed to July 1 – June 30th last year. Our 2021 fiscal year begins July 1, 2021 and ends June 30, 2022
- The City was allocated \$439,471 in fiscal year 2021 CDBG funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in March
- HUD requires that the City submit an Annual Action Plan describing the activities that will be undertaken and how funds will be distributed
- Public questions and comments were welcomed as part of the Citizen Participation Process
- In December, an announcement was made that the City Board of Directors would dedicate fiscal year 2021 CDBG funding to the acquisition/rehabilitation or construction of a quarantine/shelter for homeless and at-risk households who cannot afford to quarantine away from their household
- The quarantine/shelter will also be funded with \$317,926 in CDBG CV-3 CARES Act funding, which was adopted in a prior amendment
- This annual action plan proposes:
 - \$71,106.04 in CDBG Planning and Administration (18% of the 20% allowable)
 - \$363,364.96 for quarantine/shelter acquisition/rehabilitation or construction
- Neither a building nor a location for the quarantine/shelter has been identified. A work group of experienced non-profits is currently touring similar sites across the state for ideas and coordinating with the City to define size, scope, etc.

CDAC Chair opened the floor for in-person public comments. Michelle Sestili then called upon each person on the teleconference for questions and comments.

Comments heard and considered:

Peggy Thornton - I was the Vice Present of the Safe Haven shelter for women and children. I am thrilled that the city has taken on this responsibility to find a shelter. We had through our facility hundreds of women and children and I know we turned the lives around of a lot of them. Some are college graduates now, some got their GED. They have jobs. They have housing. I'm really proud of what we did. I know it's tough for a non-profit to take in enough money to make it work, because I've experienced that, but I think if we all work together and we have the City behind it that it will work. I don't know the status of the Housing Authority building that we rehabbed <110 Highrise Circle>. We spent probably \$175,000 bringing that up to code. It will house up to 34 people. There were 6 rooms upstairs for families and 19 downstairs for singles in bunks. It was a very, very nice facility. Thank you again for doing this. I will keep up with you. I want to be a part of what you're doing.

Pat King - I will define myself, because that's how I'm going to speak. I have a degree in microbiology from the University of Maryland Summa Cum Laude, graduate and undergraduate courses in virology and graduate courses in epidemiology. We may be a day late and a dollar short in putting in a quarantine shelter, because we're coming very close to herd immunity with the vaccination. I don't know about the homeless, but you can't have it as such that the people in the shelter cannot be in a common area. They need to be served meals in their rooms. I don't know what your qualifications are for allowing someone in. Do they get a test to see if COVID is present? There are asymptomatic carriers who never come down with the disease or only have a mild portion of it. I got antibodies, but never got sick so I must have had the germ at some point. Having tested positive when I didn't get tested, but it should have been there, are you going to let me in <the shelter> and expose me to people who have active cases? These are all considerations you have to do. I heard this virus has a 14 day incubation period, but that seems to have

changed because they keep talking about people coming down with it 5 days after an event, but with the incubation period you don't know if they're going to come down with it or conquer it themselves. You may be exposing people who may not otherwise get sick if you put them in with sick people. This is of great concern to me just knowing half of it. The other part, I don't know how you're going to get this thing up and running before it's a non-issue, but if we go ahead and buy the building, furnish it and do all of that, within a year the CDBG money runs out the facility falls as a burden upon the city to maintain and extend and whatever and it's a city budget item after that with no end in sight. As a tax payer, that concerns me. Thank you.

Sally Carder - I want to thank you so much. I work in the outreach program at St. Luke's <Episcopal Church Outreach Ministry> and work day-to-day with the homeless. Speaking as one who has worked with the city's homeless population for many years that basic mistrust and fear of the unknown will keep our homeless neighbors from going to Little Rock should they need to be quarantined for COVID. After several discussions with the state health department, that's our only option at this time. City and community leaders have struggled with this problem since March of last year. COVID is here to stay and we can find a solution now or we can continue to worry about that this time next year. Our homeless wander all over this town because they have nowhere to go that's theirs. A permanent shelter would provide a place for them to congregate, be supervised and receive services from multiple agencies, non-profits and churches. A path to self-sufficiency and an independent life could be developed for many of our homeless people. The key is to have access where we can provide consistent support. It's impossible for some of our people to find their own way out, but this center could mean a new life for many, many of them. An example of what I'm talking about comes from our recent Warming Center. We had more than 70 of our homeless friends and more than that would come in to eat for 9 days. Out of that CCMC opened 37 new cases people being provided services to get all kinds of help – birth certificates, medical documents, social security cards, medical attention that's needed, SNAP applications, job searches, housing applications and that list goes on and on. Two went into rehab programs. In closing let me say that homelessness is not a choice anyone would ever want to make. You don't grow up "wanting to be homeless." There are way to many reasons for us to discuss today why people are homeless, but they're there. Homelessness is also an economic development issue and one of compassion. Because these two issues interconnect, homelessness becomes everyone's problem and it will take all of us... the business community, non-profits, faith-based organizations, City and County government and individual citizens. All of us to make it better. Long overdue. Long overdue. At least this sounds like we're going to be on the right road. Many thanks to the Board for their foresight.

Janie Smith – Good afternoon. I'm Janie Smith with the Jackson House. I have had pretty much, since the age of 6, a lifetime of working with this population. Dad would bring people home that he would help. That was before there was children's services et cetera and Ouachita Children's Center because he helped start all those things. I truly have been in this my whole life and we have been at the Jackson House for 21 years now and we have worked with all of the various agencies around town. That has been one of my goals; to make sure we are in partnership with everyone because each homeless individual or family unit has needs that can be different than the next group. So we need to be able to work with all of them. Partnership with the City, we are seeing great results with the HopeWorks program that is offered to male and female homeless. We are seeing great activity there and folks interested in employment training and

skills practice. I just want to say that we are here as a long term facility. We have been here 45 years, and my dad's program was here 10 years before that. We are part of that system. We have worked really, really hard at partnering with the City, County, other agencies, state, federal, FEMA. Since I've been there this is our second recession. The first was right after the hurricanes and that debilitated our entire county and we lost a lot of homeless shelter beds then because all of those places were bankrupted that were providing those services. A few came back in the interim years and that's all that's left. That's why it's going to take a major effort and financial support to get it off the ground. I think once it's going, individual and private donations will commence, and partnership with all the different agencies will provide all of the different services that are needed for ongoing success. To me the best success would be if we weren't needed at all. If we can take that success one individual, one family at a time to produce productive individuals we'll be in good shape. Thank you for your support and I'm always here for any questions.

Cindy Wagstaff – I'm Cindy Wagstaff with Garland County Habitat for Humanity. Like Janie said, a lot of us organizations here in Hot Springs work together very closely, but of all of the things offering in Hot Springs a shelter is not one of them. It is a great gap in our city. There's nothing worth than someone calling who has called from agency to agency to agency and that's about all that we can do is say here, try this person. There is no shelter available for these people. Homelessness happens for a variety of reasons and it requires a very multi-faceted approach. It gives these people the opportunity to move forward. When someone calls our office normally something catastrophic has happened that displaced them from their home. Our program is very specific and we are not able to help everyone. The agencies in here <present at the meeting> are not able to help everyone. There's nothing worse than telling someone, "I'm sorry but there is nothing we can do for you". The Habitat organization applauds this effort and 100% lend our support for this.

Boyce Mitchell – Hello, my name is Boyce Mitchell with Ouachita Behavioral Health and Wellness and also oversee a program called PATH that provides assistance to transition from homelessness. I also work in 3 other counties. I want to thank you for stepping in and taking on this responsibility. I've seen a lot of homeless people. It's not a choice. It's not pretty. It is everybody's problem. We can act like it's not, but it is. If you want to take a look at it... I took a trip to California. If you want to see what happens when it goes unmanaged visit California. People are using the bathroom in front of businesses.... It needs to be managed. If you don't manage it it will manage you. I say we take this opportunity and let's get ahold of it and control what happens so it doesn't control us. Thank you.

Kim Carter – Hi, I'm Kim Carter with Cooperative Christian Ministries and Clinic, CCMC. We were a participant in the warming shelter in February and so much information and learning was garnered from the experience. We saw that quarantine/shelter is necessary. To say that the emergency is almost over... our CDC Director said this morning that the next pandemic is coming. Not the next wave of COVID, but the next pandemic is coming. Persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness are at risk for severe illness due to COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses due to underlying conditions that are closely correlated to homelessness and poverty specifically chronic lung disease and serious heart conditions. This quarantine/shelter must provide areas for containment of the spread that would allow the occupant to be fully isolated in quarantine all in one area – bed, bath, food service all in one area. Persons without housing have a deep rooted distrust of government, medical establishments. We witnessed a significant

resistance to COVID testing, COVID treatment and the new vaccination effort in the homeless population. If we have to transport an individual to quarantine in Little Rock <Arkansas Department of Health Operation Compassion homeless quarantine/isolation shelter> it will not happen. We have underreported numbers, underreported testing, but then it ends up clogging up our hospitals because we've waited until the last minute to address issues. When not being used for a quarantine facility this shelter would be able to provide low-barrier entry for assessment, triage and addressing needs. The goal would be to intentionally link individuals to permanent housing resources so that people could move on quickly. Low barrier entry to include men, women and even family spaces. When we operate different programs that target different people it creates a maze of barriers for individuals trying to access assistance and proves difficult to navigate and slows the process. So many individuals that CCMC has worked with through the warming shelter this past February were eligible for so many services, but navigating the agencies, the agency times, transportation and communication is overwhelming and complicated. We want to provide centralized information and the ability to connect people to providers. There's no need to reinvent the wheel. We are looking at evidenced based programs that are running well. Shelter isn't the end step. This shelter would serve as an access point to further individual's sustainable lives. Thank you.

Crystal Throgmarten – Hello. I am Crystal Throgmarten and I am an ambassador with Encounter Church. We work hand in hand with organizations such as Full Circle Missions, St. Luke's, CCMC and others. We also participated in helping with the warming shelter and things like that. I have been in healthcare here in Hot Springs for 15 years. I've seen it from the healthcare standpoint and a compassion standpoint as part of our ministry. We definitely need services that heal these individuals and put them on the right path. Some of my education led me to study some psychology. I love Maslow's hierarchy of needs and he says that you cannot move to full functioning abilities until you have food, shelter and water. I think this is a great opportunity to take a step in that direction and Kim just mentioned that we will have a centralized location for resources to help these individuals navigate and build up to that self-actualization point and become productive and profitable, benefiting our community. On behalf of Encounter Church, we're here, we've been supporting the ministries around and learning from them. We're looking to grow. We are here to fill in the voids that funding cannot.

Haley Villines – Good afternoon. My name is Haley Villines and I don't work for an agency that works with the homeless. I work for a public school. Fortunately, we were closed during the time that the warming shelter was open, which gave me an opportunity to go and volunteer with my friends Sally and Kim. It was a brand new experience for me to work with the homeless and I sent Michelle <Sestili> a written comment because I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to be here this afternoon. I will tell you the last part that I feel like I need to share with you: The day the shelter closed, I was a coward. I could not make myself go and do the difficult work of turning those people that I had become friends with back out onto the street. It was still frigid outside and there was still snow on the ground. All the agencies could do was give them a donated tent, a tarp, some blankets and a grocery bag of food. These were people I had spent a week talking to, listening to, helping and building relationships with. I just couldn't be the one to tell them they had to go back out there. I have kept in touch with some of my new friends. I check on them frequently and I put my head on my pillow in my warm home every night and pray that they are safe. These are our neighbors. They are not "other". We all need to know that we are just one or two crises away from being right where they are. I plead with the city to make the right decision and support our homeless neighbors.

Support our homeless ministries and organizations by giving them a permanent location to meet the needs that desperately need to be met. People complain so much about panhandling and the image that the homeless portray on Hot Springs. Well, let's do something about that. Instead of complaining, let's help them. I support the use of CDBG funding for a permanent shelter for our homeless neighbors and I hope our city will too.

Anne Quinn <via teleconference> - I am with Habitat for Humanity and along with Cindy I am in complete support of this. Our neighbors are in desperate need of someplace to go. I'm listening to all of the agencies and people there supporting this and it is pretty amazing. I think we're headed in the right direction.

Sarah Fowler <via teleconference> - As many of those in person have said regarding the homeless and services available. Our phones <United Way of the Ouachita> ring constantly for individuals and more often families who are in desperate need of shelter. Parents do not want to have to part with their children who would potentially qualify to go to Ouachita Children, Youth and Family Services, and they then would have to go to a separate shelter. For those who have already suffered a traumatic experience of being homeless having to then separate is just another hurdle in the process. I firmly believe having a shelter where individuals and families can go to have their basic needs met, where they can truly focus on needs that can be addressed can only propel their lives and future as well as our community as a whole.

Janice Jones <via teleconference> - During this cold snap I was extremely disheartened in finding a location for a young woman who would not go to Little Rock. My only option, I was told, was that the police would find a place for her to stay if there is anything open in Hot Springs. I'm glad to see that we're moving in the right direction. Thank you all very much.

Rasa Myers <via teleconference> - I fully support this. Homelessness is a severe problem that we have and I applaud all the efforts to find a solution.

Kimberly Lew <via teleconference> - I volunteer with SWAP <Southwest Arkansas Partnership local homeless coalition>. I am definitely in support of the quarantine/shelter and appreciate all the leadership of the city to bring compassion and connection and cooperation, and allow the good citizens of Hot Springs to focus on helping meet needs. I think this will help the city in ways we cannot yet count or understand.

Erica Cross <via teleconference> - Erica Cross with Spa Area Independent Living Services in Hot Springs. Previously I was a homeless liaison for Hot Springs School District so I understand the dire need for some sort of shelter for people experiencing homelessness. I wanted to offer this, people with disabilities disproportionately experience poverty and homelessness. We just ask that during planning it include accommodations for people with disabilities and a plan to meet that demand, provide meaningful access for persons with disabilities and anything we can do to help support the shelter we are on board. Thank you.

Kay Ekey <via teleconference> - I dialed in to listen and learn. I am concerned about our homeless friends. I'm afraid numbers will only increase as we lose more of our affordable properties to short term rentals. I fully support this project. Thank you to all of the organizations working together to make it happen.

Carol Scholp <via teleconference> - I want to applaud everyone that has participated and thank you, Michelle, for all of your hard work. I want to thank the City for its insight into this. My experience with homelessness has been over several years with Sally Carder and Kimberly Lew, and I got into this that like most people I could solve the problem. I went to them <the homeless> to see what was needed thinking I would be buying blankets and gloves and hats and that, and when I got down there I decided I should ask them. They asked me to get them coffee. This is how simple it can be to address some of the needs. I bought them coffee and cards so they could get a meal, and I got to know them through that. I got to know the ones that are at the library. The reason I bring this up is because I carry things in the trunk of my car and if they need something they know they can come and ask me. What kind of society do we have? I'm part of the Giving Circle and for years now we have been giving to the food pantries, Janie Smith's Jackson House, to every charity that needs it including the City's water program to keep people from having their water shut off. I am so happy to hear people getting on board with this. I particularly second what Sarah said. My main concern has been families with children. We have no place for them to go and they are afraid to go to the shelters. Sometimes they'll stay in cars. This is a desperate need in America today and we are just a part of it. Anything that needs to be done I will help in any way that I can. Thank you.

Michelle Sestili then read a verbal comment in opposition to the proposed allocation of CDBG funds to a quarantine/shelter and eight written comments in support of the proposed quarantine/shelter that had been received by email prior to the meeting.

CDAC publicly discussed the 2021 Annual Action Plan and recommended that the Hot Springs Board of Directors consider the plan as proposed (4-0)

4. Old Business

Michelle Sestili provided CDBG project updates:

-----Funded-----	
CV-3 Quarantine Shelter	\$317,926 Pending HUD approval. NOTE: Building/site not identified at this time.
CV-1 Homeless Assistance	\$76,824 total allocation; \$10,510.18 balance after purchasing the homeless shower/restroom trailer, insurance, supplies and cleaning services
CV-1 Rent Emergency Subsistence Payments	\$100,000. Ouachita Behavioral Health & Wellness (subgrantee) launched the program in February. Applications being accepted. Referrals can be sent to Case Manager Loren Eitel-Morphew LorenE@obhaw.org or (501) 762-9038
CV-1 Utility Emergency Subsistence Payments	\$26,825. Ouachita Behavioral Health & Wellness (subgrantee) launched the program in February. Applications being accepted. Referrals can be sent to Case Manager Loren Eitel-Morphew LorenE@obhaw.org or (501)

	762-9038
2018 Home Buyer Education Classes	\$3,969 balance. Next class April 10, 2021 from 9:30am-2pm at the Transportation Depot, 100 Broadway Terrace. Registration required at 501-372-2611
2019 RA Psychle 4C Elderly & Disabled Lawn Care and Youth Landscape Mentorship Program	\$8,619.74 balance for youth landscape certifications. Program launched 8/14. 17 lawns serviced, 1 youth engaged in training before winter break at the end of November. Restarting soon!
Malvern Avenue Gateway Improvement Project	\$141,241.56 Contractor should be able to start some aspects of the project in March while waiting for Entergy to bury the power lines.
2018 & 2020 Garden Street Sidewalk & ADA	\$51,899.64 Survey complete. Garden, Bell & Jefferson to start soon.
2020 Bell Street Sidewalk Phase II	\$10,000 Garden Bell & Jefferson to start soon.
2020 Jefferson Street Sidewalks & ADA	\$31,510 Garden, Bell & Jefferson to start soon.
2019 Bus Shelter at Ouachita Behavioral Health	\$2,709.77 balance to be reprogrammed in a 2021 amendment. Concrete pad complete. Shelter to be installed.
Reallocate Bus Shelter to Indiandale Plaza on Malvern	Concrete pad poured by Engineering Dept. Shelter to be installed.
2019 Crosswalk on Malvern to Silver Street	\$11,680 ARDOT consultation in progress.
Habitat for Humanity Lot Acquisition	\$15,000 Environmental review in progress for potential lots.
Off Cycle Infrastructure Improvements	\$35,418.52 Projects to be identified.
2020 Home Buyer Education, Credit Counseling, Refinance and Foreclosure Avoidance Services	\$25,000 Request for proposals to be prepared and released
2020 John Lee Webb House Brick Masonry & Ancillary Roofs	\$44,867.06 balance of \$60,000 total. Weather wrapping complete. Ancillary roof repair in progress.
2020 Cedar Street Sidewalk & ADA Phase III	\$10,261 Funded.
2020 Whittington Avenue Drainage Improvements	\$44,850 Environmental Review <i>to be completed</i>
2020 Chelsea Street Sidewalks & ADA	\$40,800 Environmental Review <i>to be completed</i>
2020 Creek Street Sidewalks & ADA Accessibility	\$32,343.75 Environmental Review <i>to be completed</i>
2020 Park Avenue at Tom Ellsworth Sidewalk, ADA & Drainage Improvements	\$38,875 Environmental Review <i>to be completed</i>
-----Completed in 2021-----	
2020 Spot Blight Nuisance Abatement	\$25,621.02. 5 condemned structures removed: 1023 Mineral, 302 Highland, 407 Mississippi, 142 Greenwood and 248 Hobson.
CV-Homeless Assistance Shower/Restroom Trailer, ULV Cold Fog Sprayer and disinfectant cleaner	Delivered 10/6/2020. 34 showers at free COVID testing day 11/4/2020. 29 showers at homeless count 1/28 & 1/29/2021. 20 showers 3/9/21. Next shower day being scheduled. Daily and full cleaning/sanitation fees paid for warming shelter 2/12-2/22 with 85 day use and 71 overnight maximum.
CV-1 Food/Meals Services and Supplies	\$50,824 Arkansas Foodbank food credits provided to Jackson House (pantry & prepared lunches), Salvation Army (pantry & dinner services), LakePointe Church (food boxes) and FaithPointe Ministries (food boxes).
2019 Dell & Ravine Sidewalk, ADA Accessibility &	\$42,121. Completed in March 2021

Drainage Improvements	
2019 Park Avenue Sidewalk & ADA Accessibility Improvements – East Side	\$42,132. Completed in March 2021
2019 Habitat for Humanity 115 Watt Street	\$5,350 for water line relocation. Home dedicated in February 2021

No comments were heard.

5. Announcements

Comment sheets were made available to comment on the 2021 Annual Action Plan including projects proposed for funding. Written comments received by May 3, 2021 will be considered. It is anticipated that the 2021 Annual Action Plan will be considered by the City Board of Directors during their May 4, 2021 meeting at 7:00pm in City Hall Board Chambers, 133 Convention Blvd.

Anne Quinn announced that Garland County Habitat for Humanity is urgently seeking buildable lots for sale or donation for new, affordable home building.

The next scheduled CDAC meeting is Thursday, May 6, 2020 at 1:00pm in City Hall Board Chambers.

6. Having no further business the meeting was adjourned at 3:13pm (3-0)