

**Blair County Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF/Act 137) Advisory Board  
Meeting Minutes  
Blair County Courthouse: Conference Room 4B  
August 9, 2023**

**Present:** Tricia Maceno, Scott Durbin, Susan Eberhart, Jim Gehret, Missy Gillin, Christine Zernick, Trina Illig, Betsy Nelson, Wendy Melius and Jennifer Kensinger

Missy Gillin welcomed everyone. Betsy Nelson, Community Development Specialist, joined the meeting.

**Approval of Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**

The minutes of the May 10, 2023 meeting were emailed to the Advisory Board members prior to today’s meeting.

*Jim Gehret made the motion to accept the minutes as presented. Scott Durbin seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.*

**Public Comment:** *No public comments were made.*

Missy Gillin reviewed the AHTF Current Accounts as shown below:

**Act 137 Account Balance**

Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF)	Operation Safe Space 5/25/23 Approved	Team Effort Committed Meeting 3/2/23 Approved	Lead Committed Meeting 12/13/18	Owner Occupied Rehab Meeting 3/12/21	1 <sup>st</sup> Time Homebuyer Commissioner Meetings 4/5/22, 5/5/22, 5/12/22, 5/27/22	Sustainable Housing Program	TOTAL
Allocation	\$20,000	\$15,000	\$50,000	\$50,000 8/18/2022	\$3,000	\$150,000	
Paid Out as of 7/31/23	\$0	\$0	-\$49,726.20	-\$41,819.55	-\$12,000	\$0	
<b>Program Available BALANCE 7/31/23</b>	<b>\$20,000.00</b>	<b>\$15,000.00</b>	<b>\$273.80</b>	<b>\$8,180.45</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>	<b>\$193,454.25</b>

**AHTF Bank Statement Balance of 7/31/2023: \$434,655.97**

**AHTF Committed Pending Payments: \$193,454.25**

**AHTF Available Non-Committed Funds: \$241,201.72**

<b>AHTF Recording Fee Deposits (excluding interest)</b>	
November 2022	\$7,241
December 2022	\$6,890
January 2023	\$7,527
February 2023	\$4,849
March 2023	\$4,680
April 2023	\$5,954
May 2023	\$5,772
June 2023	\$7,176
July 2023	\$7,735

### **Demo Fund Current Account**

<b>Demolition Fund Bank Statement 7/31/23</b>	\$300,751.91
<b>Demolition Projects Committed Not Paid</b>	\$0
<b>Demolition Program Funds Available Non-committed</b>	\$300,751.91
<b>Pending Board Approval</b>	\$0.00

#### ***Blight/Demolition Fund***

- Missy included a list of approved demolitions in the agenda packet.
- There are not any pending projects.
- All projects are completed and paid.

#### **Program Updates**

##### *First Time Home Buyer Program*

- Christine Zernick had no updates on this program.

##### *Weatherization/Housing Rehab Program (Christine)*

- Christine Zernick reported that Blair County Community Action Program’s Cooling Program funding was “frozen” during the state budget impasse, but since the budget has been signed, the funds are available again.
- Wendy Melius, Center for Community Action Executive Director, doesn’t have a weatherization program in Blair County, only a utility program.

##### *Operation Safe Space (Christine)*

- Christine explained that Operation Safe Space is an initiative to help residents (tenants), who are living in uninhabitable rental properties (most likely red-tagged), find suitable living accommodations. Funding is needed for hotel stays, clothing, hygiene items, food and transportation. Christine thanked the AHTF for awarding Operation Safe Space a \$20,000 allocation.
- Christine works with Rebecca Brown, Director at City of Altoona Codes and Inspections, on identifying these properties.

- The 1<sup>st</sup> Operation Safe Space project helped 7 residents, including pets, relocate to new housing within two weeks.
- Christine reported that the City of Altoona has revoked some landlord rental licenses, which impacts 37 rental properties. The tenants, of those rentals, can look for other housing immediately or wait until their lease expires.

### *Homeless Shelter*

Lisa was not in attendance, but did share updates about the Family Shelter via email.

- 134 men, women and children served since opening
- 7 emergency overnight placements
- Biggest issue: no shows for scheduled intakes
- The shelter suffered flooding on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Repairs were made. City is scheduled to do drainage repair in the Fall.
- Apartments are being advertised generating lots of interest, but many are ineligible because they are unable to pay the rent.

Missy stated that many beds are available due to the overwhelming amount of “no shows” scheduled for intake. While attempting to contact the “no shows”, a bed(s) must be held for 5 days.

Discussion continued on what steps may be taken to help cut down on the amount of “no shows”. Homeless individuals must go through 211 for coordinated entry to be considered for a stay at the shelter. BCCAP can help with that process.

### **Other Programs:**

#### *Lead Abatement Program (Trina Illig)*

- Trina stated that the Lead Abatement program has approximately 10 to 12 open units.
- 7 applications that were received for the Whole Home program were moved to the Lead Abatement program to do a risk assessment because the properties were identified as being built before 1978. In addition to, there are children under the age of 6 living in those homes.

#### *Owner Occupied Rehab – Trina Illig*

- Trina reported she has approximately 180 applications. At this time, she is weeding out 2018 applications by checking to see if the issues were self-resolved or if the homeowner no longer qualifies for the program.
- Trina stated that the Whole Home program received 100 inquiries and 65 completed applications. 30 applications are from the City of Altoona. Since Trina doesn’t normally use County rehab funding in the City of Altoona, because the City has their own owner-occupied rehab funding, the County is working with the City of Altoona to give them an allocation, perhaps \$425,000, of the Whole Home funding. Applications would be prioritized. Trina is working with the Commissioners to close the application process.

#### *TEAMeffort – Scott Durbin*

- Scott reported approximately 750 campers, in groups of 80 to 140, over an 8-week period came to the Blair County to do light construction/rehab/landscaping work on residential properties.

- Scott stated that there will be video, showing the work TEAMeffort did, which will be shared at a future commissioners' meeting.
- In a future AHTF meeting, Scott will ask for another funding allocation for TEAMeffort for 2024.

### ***Sustainable Housing Program – Missy Gillin***

#### ***Greg Werstil Project Update – Greenfield Township, Claysburg***

- Missy spoke with Greg Werstil who stated that constructing “new” affordable housing, even with a \$50,000 grant from the Sustainable Housing program, was not feasible. However, he did take 3 of 4 existing properties that he had and rehabilitated them and made them low to moderate income housing. The 4<sup>th</sup> property, when completed, will also be low to moderate income housing. Mr. Werstil asked if he still would qualify for the grant money by doing those renovations and making them low to moderate income housing. Scott suggested that Mr. Werstil needs to submit a new proposal, including dates, to verify when the renovations were done. Missy also stated that we would need verification of the rental payments to make sure they fall under low to moderate income threshold. Missy will follow-up with Mr. Werstil.

#### ***Cornerstone Builders & Supplies (Susan Bonsell) Project Update – 1310 Washington Ave, Tyrone & 612 Park Ave, Tyrone***

- Missy distributed a packet from Susan Bonsell that included their first invoice (approx. \$30,000), as well as, details of progress including pictures of the renovations.
- ***Scott Durbin made a motion to approve a partial payment to Cornerstone Builders & Supplies for the completion of the Sustainable Housing projects located at 1310 Washington Ave, Tyrone & 612 Park Ave, Tyrone. Susan Eberhart seconded the motion. All present were in favor. Motion carried.***

#### ***Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) 2 Update – Missy***

- Missy reported that Center for Community Action reopened the application process for the ERAP 2 program. Applications will be taken until August 21, 2023. About 1.2 million in funding remains.
- Wendy stated that they are receiving quite a few applications.

#### ***Emergency Repairs – Tricia, Trina, Missy & Scott***

- Trina stated since AHTF funding is public funding, which requires transparency, the commissioners want to make sure that the procurement process is implemented in the emergency repair program, which would delay the necessity of the emergency repair.
- A list of homeowners in need of this program is on hand.
- A meeting will be set up in mid-September with the Commissioners, Nicole, Tricia, Trina, Missy, Scott, Councilman Ellis & a few other interested parties to discuss how the funds can be allocated, like they are to TeamEffort, so that emergency repairs can take place without having to go through a procurement process.

#### **Next Steps:**

- Tricia to speak with Commissioner Erb to discuss who needs to meet to discuss the details of the proposed Emergency Repair Fund program, which will prioritize code violations.

**Next Meeting:**

The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, November 8, 2023** at 8:15am in Conference Room 4B