

YAMPA VALLEY HOUSING AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING
August 24, 2015

Kathi Meyer, Yampa Valley Housing Authority Board President, called the special meeting of the Yampa Valley Housing Authority to order at 3:00 p.m.

Board members present included: Kathi Meyer, Catherine Carson, Trish Sullivan, Scott Myller, Roger Ashton, Cole Hewitt, Craig Melchow and Doug Monger, John St. Pierre. John Spezia and Dillon Fulcher were absent.

Others present included: Jason Peasley, Yampa Valley Housing Authority Executive Director. Sarah Katherman prepared the minutes from a recording.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

YVHA BOARD RETREAT INTRODUCTION

Jason highlighted the accomplishments of YVHA over the past several years and suggested that now is the time to identify where the organization is headed and what it needs to do to get there. He stated that the objectives of the retreat are to: 1) establish the vision for YVHA for the next five years; 2) set goals that reflect that vision; and 3) identify the strategic objectives to accomplish those goals.

HISTORY

In response to a question from John St. Pierre, Kathi reviewed the history of YVHA, noting that it was begun as the Regional Affordable Living Foundation (RALF), a non-profit which was funded by a state grant. As RALF, the organization acquired Hillside Village Apartments. In 2004 RALF was transformed into YVHA, a multi-jurisdictional authority with the ability to ask the voters directly for a sales or property tax or impact fee on new development to support community housing. Fox Creek Village was the first project undertaken by YVHA. The proceeds from the sale of those units were used as the down payment on the Elk River Village property. When the recession hit, YVHA let go all but one part-time employee, and it has built itself back since then. Trish noted that RALF was also involved in the development of West End Village. Kathi filled in the details of that project. RALF (and then YVHA) was also a partner in the development of 21 self-help (sweat equity) homes in the community. Jason reviewed the inclusionary zoning ordinance, identified in 2004 as a tool to address the "keep up" component of the community's need for affordable housing. The City, County and YVHA were charged with the "catch-up" component, which focused primarily on the Steamboat 700 development west of town. He offered that the concept behind the exaction on development was that new development needs to pay for the impacts it creates.

VISION

Catherine stated that her vision for YVHA in five years is that the organization continues to be financially healthy, has a strong staff and a strong Board. She added that YVHA should be managing three strong communities in Hillside, Fish Creek & the Reserves (Elk River Village), and that YVHA is the leader in community education on housing issues. Catherine added that YVHA should be partnering with the City and County on defining the housing needs and identifying solutions to address those needs.

Cole echoed the need for YVHA to maintain its financial health. He offered that the education component is also important, particularly regarding helping people to understand what is actually attainable or affordable for them. He stated his support for increasing YVHA's partnerships with the City and County. Both Catherine and Cole highlighted the importance of ensuring that the Reserves is successful.

Doug emphasized the need for stability in the organization through partnerships and advocacy, rather than taking on the full risk of development. He added that the community has faced cyclical affordable housing problems for decades, and YVHA represents an effort for maintain a focus on the issue over time when few are willing to take ownership of the problem.

Scott said that he had nothing new to add, but stated his agreement that the organization should maintain healthy finances and develop homebuyer education. He added that YVHA should be tracking the housing problem, the AMI and the state of the market regarding both homes to purchase and units to rent. He stated his support for helping developers overcome the obstacles to affordable development.

Kathi said that she would like for the City and County to continue to support YVHA financially at some, albeit reduced, level. She argued that even a small contribution signals a buy-in regarding the mission of YVHA as well as a continuing partnership. Kathi reviewed the difficult financial software conversion that was the root of the past issues with the financial statements. She stressed the importance of developing the educational component of the organization, to include the website, seminars and any other tools that become available in the future. She agreed with the emphasis on partnerships and shared risk.

Trish expressed agreement with previous comments. She added that she does not think the community will ever support a tax to fund affordable development, so partnerships and grants will remain key to the organization's success. She also suggested that YVHA look outside of the City for new opportunities.

John St. Pierre stated that he is in the process of working on developing affordable housing in Hayden. He reviewed the projects that other mountain communities have built. He questioned the rationale behind an exaction on builders rather than local businesses and the ski area. He asked if it would appropriate for YVHA to speak up for the residents of the Iron Horse. Kathi reviewed the involvement of YVHA in negotiating relocation funds for the residents of a mobile home park that was demolished to make way for the Riverwalk development. John stated that his vision for YVHA is to be an advocate for what is *truly* affordable.

Roger agreed with previous comments, but offered that many of them represent goals rather than a vision. He suggested that YVHA should aim to raise the conversation in the community from affordable housing as a problem for others to solve, to its being a priority for the community. He stated that this would lead to increased funding and support. Doug noted that a large segment of the population supports the local housing situation as it is because they want property values to increase for their personal gain.

Craig emphasized the importance of education and communication, noting that not many people really know about YVHA. He added his support for re-establishing a funding source through the reinstatement of fees on new development in the City and County. Jason offered that funding sources would be found if the issue became a priority for the community, as suggested by Roger. He said that inclusionary zoning might be the right tool for that funding, but there may be others.

GOALS

Jason offered that remaining financially healthy and managing strong communities at YVHA's properties are really just doing the organization's business in a responsible fashion. He stated that the other items mentioned above – advocating for the low-income segment of the population and developing educational programs – are in a different category of tasks. He summarized the two parts of the vision as the operational responsibility and the aspirational objective.

Doug asked the Board if an opportunity similar to the Fish Creek Mobile Home Park were to arise, would it be something YVHA would do again. Jason offered that if the organization could acquire a property that fit well into

its portfolio, then yes, but added that such an acquisition should not be done without proper due diligence regarding infrastructure and risk. Kathi reminded the Board that Fish Creek was acquired at a time when mobile home parks were being demolished. She noted that RALF was involved in the negotiations that allowed the Harms' mobile home park to be purchased by its residents. John St. Pierre suggested that new pressure would be brought to redevelop the existing mobile home parks. Catherine stated that once the infrastructure project is complete, YVHA should consider how to improve Fish Creek and transform it into a nicer, stronger neighborhood.

Jason noted that continuing to invest in and support YVHA's properties is included in the existing Strategic Plan, as are advocating for affordable housing and developing education. He offered that establishing goals that fit this vision would be useful as a step toward defining the tasks that need to be accomplished in order to achieve those goals.

Catherine stated that improving the neighborhood at Fish Creek is a worthwhile goal. She said that doing so would include enforcing resident ownership and promoting ways for residents to improve their units. She said that monitoring the construction of the Reserves will be important over the next year and a half. Catherine suggested that YVHA should enlist the hospital and the school board as partners, and should consider hiring someone to improve YVHA's online and social media presence. Catherine also offered that someone should be trained to back-up Sandy in accounting.

Cole stated that if YVHA intends to expand what it is doing in the community, it will be important to evaluate staffing needs and be proactive in hiring. If that is not possible, then the Board needs to ensure that staff's time is properly prioritized and that resources are efficiently managed. Doug disagreed that more staff is needed at this time. He offered that once the dust settles from the current projects, staffing can be re-evaluated. Kathi offered that the lack of cross-training is a problem that should be addressed, but that it may not require additional staff. Jason said that if the organization is going to expand its operations from current levels, more staff will be needed. He reviewed the wide-ranging duties of his job.

Regarding what needs to be done for the Reserves project, Jason stated that the entitlements and permits need to be completed over the next year, with construction to begin in the spring. He said that he would be presenting the project to Planning Commission and City Council on behalf of the partnership. There was a discussion of the level of construction oversight that YVHA would be expected to perform to ensure long-term quality. Jason reviewed the interests and motivations of each participating entity in the project.

Jason asked if there was consensus on the goals stated so far. Doug offered that identifying potential partners needs to be done prior to building those relationships. He stated his advocacy for mobile home parks. He stated that YVHA should remain open to new types of products and projects.

Craig stated his support for developing educational programs for the community. Catherine suggested hiring a consultant to expand the YVHA online and social media presence. Doug asked who the audience would be for this. Catherine stated that she wants those looking for housing to be able to go to the YVHA website as a primary resource. Jason reviewed the types of questions that people often ask when they call YVHA, and noted that he has little to offer them. Roger stated that this would be an opportunity to establish partners to whom Jason could direct inquiries.

In response to a question from John, Jason stated that the organization is now on sound financial footing, having addressed the potential disaster with the Fish Creek water and sewer system and the financial burden associated with the debt on the Elk River Village property. Doug noted that continuing support from the City and County is still needed for operations. Jason said that continuing support depends on YVHA providing good value,


and added that YVHA is working toward reducing its reliance on the City and County. Several YVHA Board members agreed that the City and County should remain financial partners, at some level.

Catherine suggested that a re-evaluation of the Down Payment Assistance (DPA) program should be included in the strategic plan. Cole reported that he had discussed the program with several mortgage lenders. He said that he would not recommend the DPA as a first option. He offered that it is time to either restructure the program or re-purpose the funds.


Jason stated that refining the goals, establishing a timeline for accomplishing them and identifying the tasks and resources needed to do so are the next steps in the strategic planning process. He offered that there would be time at the September meeting to continue the conversation.

ADJOURNMENT

No further business coming before the Board, same adjourned sine die.



Sarah Katherman, Minute Taker



Kathi Meyer, President