

BNIP NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING
Wednesday, January 20, 2016
6:00 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

A neighborhood meeting was held on Wednesday, January 20, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. at the All Saints Church, Parish Hall, on the corner of Scott and Beeber Streets.

Kim Wheeler, Lycoming County, began the meeting, stating that this meeting is the tenth neighborhood meeting over a 2 1/2 year period. Meetings began before the former Brodart property, now Memorial Homes, was demolished. The BNIP partner representatives and the BNIP residents in attendance introduced themselves.

A resident (Al Mills) asked about the structure outside of Memorial Homes. Jeff Eaton, Arbor Housing, stated that the structure is not meant to be covered. It is a pergola that is designed to be opened and not stained. Ms. Wheeler suggested that vines or plants could grow over it to make it more visually appealing.

Mr. Mills also commented that a STEP, Inc. project home was for sale right after the work was completed and wants to know if that is allowable. Ms. Wheeler stated that there were no provisions for that situation at the time of the incident. Mr. Grado stated that prohibiting the sale of a property immediately after the work is completed can be enforced in the Rental Rehabilitation program. Mr. Mills complained about the property located at 1530 Scott St., saying that it looks like a junk yard with abandoned vehicles and trailers.

Ms. Wheeler stated that there are a cluster of STEP, Inc. completed projects on Scott St. and on Scott St. and Memorial Ave. The number of renters in the Brodart area has increased from 52% to 57%. Ms. Wheeler stated that we are accommodating the increase in rental properties with the City's Rental Rehabilitation program. Ms. Wheeler noted that staff from STEP, Inc. meets regularly with the Codes Department to have direct collaboration on projects. The City's Rental Rehabilitation program started in June and the program maintains the affordability of properties. There is a significant public investment in the neighborhood that includes the streetscape work. We have received additional PHARE funds in the amount of \$515,000: \$250,000 for the Homes-In-Need program, which will cover all the current applications, \$200,000 for the City Rental Rehabilitation program and \$65,000 to Habitat for Humanity for the second property that is being built next to Memorial Homes.

Becky Beaver has been the on-site manager of Memorial Homes since November. The complex has been 100% occupied since December. It has been a big change to have the property fill up quickly. As the manager of Memorial Homes, Ms. Beaver wants to help the community. Ms. Wheeler mentioned that residents of Memorial Homes who attended prior meetings are happy living there. Ms. Beaver said that the complex has a full spectrum of different types of tenants. Ms. Beaver did talk to the tenants about tonight's meeting. Mr. Ochs suggested that the next meeting be at Memorial Homes. Mr. Mills commented that he thought Memorial Homes was exclusively for senior residents. Jeff Eaton, Memorial Homes, stated that there are one and two bedroom apartments that accommodate some seniors as well as small families. Mr. Ochs asked

about the turnover at Memorial Homes. Mr. Eaton commented that a few apartments have turned over and that only three or four tenants have moved out.

Ms. Wheeler reminded the attendees that The Williamsport Housing Strategy includes Grove St. Commons, a housing complex for seniors, located in the east end of the City as well as two lots that Habitat for Humanity will be developing. P & L Investments are responsible for building 32 single family, market rate town homes on the vacant property that remains at Memorial Homes. The City is having an ongoing conversation with P & L Investments.

Ms. Wheeler provided an update on the Habitat for Humanity “Brush with Kindness” program. Habitat will do painting, landscaping, and yard clean up. There are no new “Brush with Kindness” applications. We are currently looking at how to open up the program for new eligible activities such as rehabbing secondary units, such as garages, that have fallen into disrepair. We may be able to use Habitat’s “Brush with Kindness” funds as long as the property has gone through the STEP, Inc. or the City program. We will review the existing applications to cross reference. Ms. Wheeler requested that the residents provide the addresses of the primary structures. Mr. Mill mentioned that the garage at 1530 Scott St. is falling down. In other news, the foundation for Habitat’s first home is done and Habitat is waiting for the weather to break to continue construction.

Mr. Grado suggested that residents contact the Codes Department about properties in disrepair. The Codes Department can take the initiative and there is a court process that needs to take place. There was a request to have a Codes Department representative at the next meeting. Mr. Grado mentioned that, in addition to notifying the Codes and Police officers, residents can also speak to the Mayor about their concerns.

Jeff Dawson, STEP, Inc., provided a status report on the Homes-In-Need program. Since June 2015, STEP, Inc. has completed 11 jobs. There are 26 jobs on the waiting list now, 14 total jobs completed (*Mr. Dawson reported at the meeting that 14 jobs were complete, but the actual number of completed jobs is 18*), 3 jobs that are ready to start and one in progress. An audit means a pre-inspection, which is followed by preparing a scope of work. Mr. Dawson talked about a resident who attended the June meeting and whose property was cited by the Codes Dept. She was not able to make the improvements herself. She participated in the Homes-In-Need program and the property has been greatly improved. Mr. Dawson mentioned to Sun (resident in attendance) that STEP, Inc. will begin her job before spring. Mr. Dawson will check the status of the Dorothy Camp job located at 1501 Scott St. He estimated that the cost of the jobs is \$9,000 to \$10,000 per property (however, this was only with the 2014 funds used so far). *The average job cost average is approximately \$25,000.* The maximum per job is \$25,000. There are currently no new applications.

Ms. Wheeler stated that the BNIP Homes-In-Need program is very generous and residents who earn up to 200% of the area median income are eligible. She also mentioned that projects that involve health and safety concerns get dealt with immediately.

Mr. Grado stated that one million dollars of infrastructure work has been done in the neighborhood. The work includes the reconstruction of Beeber St., the addition of a retaining

wall, storm water management improvements, new crosswalks and the removal of the guiderail. A resident commented that the Stevens St. sidewalk and alley area are in poor condition. We have acquired new LED lighting. The total cost of the LED lights equal 35% of the cost of the regular lighting. In 2018, the City will be required to calculate pollution output for the storm sewer. Mr. Ochs asked about graffiti on retaining wall. Mr. Grado stated that the City Streets Department may treat the retaining wall. Mr. Ochs suggested that the group walk around the neighborhood during daylight savings time. A resident asked if there would be curb work on Stevens St. Mr. Grado replied that there is no plan currently because there are no funds. The City has a street list and a five year work plan. Stevens St. is not as bad as some of the other streets in the City. The City needs to have a sidewalk that is accessible into Memorial Pool. We are also interested in planting trees. We can come back to the group to decide priority projects for the future. The City's funding for projects is decreasing each year. The City has invested more funds in the BNIP neighborhood than in other City neighborhood. West Fourth St. from Campbell St. heading west is a PennDOT street.

Mr. Mazur described the City's BNIP Rental Rehabilitation program. Eligible applicants are the owners of the rental properties. PHARE funds provide 85% of the funds and the owner of the property provides 15% of the funds. Mr Mazur explained that eligibility depends on a tenant's income. He stated that a tenant's household income must be verified to be below \$31,000. A correction of this statement is as follows: *The City must spend thirty-percent of the funds on applicants whose tenant household income is less than \$28,200; after that obligation is met, the City can assist households that earn up to two-hundred-percent of the Area Median Income.* Mr Mazur also stated that the maximum amount per project is \$25,000. *That figure is for a 2-unit building; however for a 3-unit+ building, the maximum amount of funds that can be allocated is \$30,000.* Additional information that her shared includes:

- The program uses local contractors with the proper accreditations.
- The property owner selects the contractor.
- There are PHARE affordability guidelines for the rents.
- The required rents are usually acceptable for the landlord.
- A ten year mortgage is placed on the property as a 0% interest deferred loan.
- The mortgage is forgiven after ten years.
- Rents are allowed to increase 2-3% increase per year.

Currently, there are two projects on Stevens St. that will be completed by spring and two properties that are in the pre-inspection phase. Community Development staff and the Codes staff perform inspections for health and safety items. Mr. Mazur provided before and after photos of the projects.

Ms. Wheeler stated that there is consideration for the project area to be expanded to the Pajama Factory up to Grier St. The City is hoping to receive DCED funds for façade beautification and because the above-referenced programs for the BNIP area are no longer receiving applications, there may be a need to expand the neighborhood boundaries. The potential expanded zone could include both sides of West Fourth St and both sides of the northern boundary of Park St. Expanding into this area adds 377 residential structures. Mr. Ochs questioned the decision to expand east. Ms. Wheeler responded that the Pajama Factory is a neighborhood community asset and there may be opportunities within the Pajama Factory to provide residential housing on the upper floors. In addition, rehabilitation of the building was a DCED funded City project that

leveraged dollars. An estimated 120 plus artisans are in the Pajama Factory. The first Friday event in January 2016 was attended by 3,000 plus people. Mr. Grado stated that there will be a plan for parking when Mr. Winkleman increases the occupancy. Mr. Winkleman recently refinanced to continue to do improvements to the building.

Mr. Grado stated that people should not get accustomed to the vacant lot by Memorial Homes as it will eventually be developed for housing.

Ms. Wheeler stated that the meeting place may change based on the expansion of the area. There is no next meeting scheduled. We will continue to reach out to landlords and to look for additional funding. Please call STEP, Inc. or the City to participate in the BNIP programs. The BNIP website will be updated in the next few months.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.