



HOUSING SOLUTIONS NETWORK

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 9, 2013

9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Conference Room, Traverse City Michigan Works Office

A. Welcome and Introductions

Emilee Syrewicze	Northwest Michigan Supportive Housing
Nikki Basch	Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
Pat Hess	Northern Lakes Community Mental Health
Virginia Coulter	Grand Traverse County
Tina Allen	Greater Grand Traverse Continuum of Care
Carol Brito	MSHDA/Homeownership
Jennifer Kowal	Traverse Area Association of Realtors®
Brandon Fewins	Senator Stabenow office
Ilah Honson	Traverse City Housing Commission
Jeff Vitton	Grand Traverse County
Carol Moorman	Goodwill
Cathy Odom	Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency
Nancy Haynes	Fair Housing Center of West Michigan
Sarah Lucas	Northwest Michigan Council of Governments
Paul Bussey	Northwest Michigan Council of Governments
Kirstie Sieloff	Northwest Michigan Council of Governments

B. Consideration of Agenda and May 2013 Meeting Minutes

The May meeting minutes were accepted as presented.

C. County Updates

No county updates at this time.

D. Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians Housing Programs

N. Basch of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (GTB) talked about housing activities and programs for tribal members. She explained that the GTB offers services to members first, then other Native Americans, and then to the general public. The GTB offers low-income and market rental assistance, rental subsidies, rental deposit assistance, emergency home repair funds, down payment assistance, preventative septic pumps, a Tribal Business Resource Center, and education programs such as homebuyer and financial classes to the six county region of Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, and Manistee Counties.

Emergency home repair assistance is offered to all tribal member homeowners facing home issues detrimental to their home and/or health. Elders are always eligible regardless of income, without payback. Another program provides members with funds to make necessary home improvements/retrofits in light of a disability. The Tribal Business Resource Center offers up to \$9,000 in combined funds. There are \$3,000 grants available and \$6,000 loans. Recipients must also partake in an education program.

N. Basch also mentioned the difficulty of acquiring property in Grand Traverse County for their housing programs, because members need to be near transportation.

Network members discussed questions following the presentation. To qualify as an "Elder," individuals must be at least 55 years old. The reason for the GTB serving primarily the six-county region is because that is where the GTB originated. The GTB also has a newsletter that goes out to all members.

When home/building projects to be undertaken, individual projects are bid out to outside contractors, although preference is given to tribal members. The GTB has a difficult time getting contractors, because the projects are small and the bids are low. The GTB is always interested in attracting new contractors to bid on these projects. The recently built modular homes are holding up well, but are having issues with foundations. The GTB is also running fiber optic cables around the casino to serve surrounding members. The property upon which the houses are built is owned by the GTB. The GTB puts it into the IA and it is leased to homeowners for 50 years with an automatic renewal of 50 years.

N. Basch mentioned that some members with housing subsidies have faced discrimination. N. Basch also expressed interest in creating a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), possibly through partnership.

N. Basch noted that many tribal members work and live in two different locations so transportation can be an issue. The GTB just received a \$25,000 grant to work with BATA and address public transportation needs. They also recently submitted new 2014 Housing Plan in partnership with the USDA. She added that the GTB is still not able to serve all members who have housing needs. There are 111 low-income units, with 89 being in Peshawbestown. There are about 20 people on waiting lists for every size home.

Please feel free to visit the GTB's website: <http://www.gtbindians.org/default.asp>

E. Framework for our Future: Housing Survey Results and Next Steps

S. Lucas of the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments shared information on the *Framework* project. The *Framework* outlines the next steps for the *Grand Vision*. It creates actionable strategies for local government units and nonprofits. The project includes four separate study areas (housing, transportation, energy, and land use). The actual regional document is similar to a master plan. The Housing Survey Report is in the drafting stage. NWMCOG is still waiting on additional survey respondents, although over 400 people have already participated. The original presentation can be accessed on the Housing Solutions Network webpage.

Members discussed survey results and noted that respondents being primarily from Grand Traverse County reinforces the belief that many people think the Grand Vision only serves Grand Traverse.

Members discussed mobile homes, often viewed as affordable, when in reality, they can often get very expensive with associated living fees. Some individuals choose such housing because of their credit scores. In relation to housing choice, there seems to be a lack of education in regards to discrimination. Some people don't even know they are being discriminated against or discriminating.

F. Roundtable Discussion and Announcements

E. Syrewicze shared that the Foundation for Mental Health is changing its name to Northwest Michigan Supportive Housing. Details of the change are currently being discussed. T. Allen also announced that E. Syrewicze will be their new chairperson of the Grand Traverse Area Continuum of Care.

S. Lucas talked about the Grand Vision CORE Network goal setting work has taken a couple turns and will be delayed. Indicators or measurements of progress are now the focus rather than a single collective goal for all networks, as originally planned. Additionally, NWMCOG was awarded funding to create a mini-grant program to fund community housing market analyses. The program will be started in the six-county region, but NWMCOG would like it to be expanded to the ten-county region. NWMCOG, who is administering the program, will ask for matching funds from the grantees. NWMCOG would also coordinate RFPs and hire consultants.

C. Odom of the Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency discussed how they applied for a housing preservation grant from the USDA, but the entire but state is only getting \$84,000. Last year their organization received \$25,000 for three counties. This time they are asking for \$20,000 for four counties, but it is unlikely that they will get that amount.

I. Honson of the Traverse City Housing Commission shared that July 10, 2013, they are having a public meeting for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. They are proposing a few changes, including changing the manner in which people are

removed from the waiting list if the program is ever underfunded. Currently the policy is last on, first off. They would like to change it to protect the most vulnerable classes. Voucher participants without income are currently required to come into the office on a quarterly basis, which is a challenge for office staff. They would like to make it so that if there is a head of household supporting the individuals, that they do not need to come in. Additionally, they want to establish a local preference for waiting lists, because there have been cases that people from other regions in Michigan receive vouchers, stay up north for one year, and then go back. There will be a Housing Commission meeting on August 8th.

C. Brito of MSHDA/Homeownership updated that down payment assistance and Home Affordable Refinance Program (HARP) money is still available.

Next regular Housing Solutions Network meeting is in September.

The purpose of the Housing Solutions Network is to provide a forum for interagency and intergovernmental communication and coordination related to housing issues in Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, and Wexford Counties. This meeting is open to all who wish to attend. If you are not planning to attend this meeting, but would like to have input in the discussion, or provide handouts to the group, please contact Sarah Lucas, Northwest Michigan Council of Governments at (231) 929-5034 or sarahlucas@nwm.cog.mi.us.