

Hope for Homes Meeting Minutes
August 11, 2023 at 10:00 AM at Winona Community Foundation and online

Present: Marie Kovecsi, Nancy Brown, Kalene Engel, Rachel Stoll, Patrick Michener, Dan Wilson, Rosemary Fagrelus, Maureen Holte, Tim Hunter, Linda Soderstrom, Chris Meyer, Marcia Ratliff.

1. **Welcome & Introductions**
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Tim moved to approve the minutes from the July meeting; Linda seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
3. **Approval of Agenda:** Marcia moved to approve the agenda as presented; Chris seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
4. **Update on Grants:**
 - a. **Strengthening Rural Communities Grant:** Marie, Tim, Rosemary and Crystal have met and revised the original grant application. Funding will be requested for a flex fund (not trust fund) and mitigation expenses. The group is meeting with Harlan Buckalew next week to discuss the application, after which it will be submitted for consideration by Minnesota Housing Partnership.
 - b. **Winona Community Foundation:** The deadline for the 2nd round application is September 1, 2023 at 11:59 p.m.. The max award is \$7,500. One of the reasons the prior grant application was not funded is because WCF does not like to be the first funder of any project. It is possible that we may know whether the SRCG was funded prior to September 1st. Kalene forwarded the Word version of the WCF Grant to Tim so the grant subcommittee could rework the language and submit it for consideration.
5. **Scattered Sites Project:**
 - a. **Personnel:** The person hired for the Housing Resource Specialist position starts on August 21st. Hiawatha Valley would like to shift some of the money from the ARP allocation to create a separate office space for the HRS and Scattered Sites ARMHS Practitioner at Hiawatha Bluffs Living. Attendees were in support of this idea. Tim will be talking to Laura (who is administering the ARP funds for the County) about the shift in funding.
 - b. **Other:** WECare is going to establish a location in Winona. Among other services, it will be offering Housing Stabilization Services—which is a service believed to be offered by anyone in Winona County.
6. **Local Housing Trust Fund:**
 - a. **Rosemary's Discussion with Buffy Beranek of SEMMCHRA about the Winona County LHTF:** Rosemary spoke to Buffy and brought her up to speed on the activities of our group. Buffy stated that it may be a while before the trust fund is in place, but once

it is, she plans to solicit businesses and others to contribute to the fund. The County trust fund will support a broad range of activities. She does not have staff to administer the trust fund and does not intend to apply for Federal Home Loan Funds. She strongly supports this group's efforts to establish a trust fund at WCF as it can be used for the specific purposes that will benefit our programs. Buffy will be invited to a future meeting of this group.

- b. Hope for Hopes LHTF:** Buffy strongly supports the Hope for Homes' efforts to establish a trust fund at WCF as it can be used for the specific purposes that will benefit our programs. Solicitation letters have already been drafted for the WCF Fund, so once the HRS is on board, we might be able to move forward to establish the fund.
 - c. City of Winona HRA/Trust Fund:** Because Winona has its own HRA, SEMMCHRA is only able to serve Winona County (excluding the City of Winona). They also administer the Section 8 Program for the City of Winona, as city HRA turned it over to them. The City of Winona could establish its own Local Housing Trust Fund, but the HRA leadership does not seem interested in doing so and has seemed generally opposed to raising taxes for the HRA.
- 7. Purpose/Status of Hope for Homes and Responsibility for Housing Issues in Winona County:** A robust discussion was held on the desired on the purpose and structure of Hope for Homes going forward. At present, the group is a workgroup of the CJCC and does not have a formal structure, nor is it a 501(c)(3). Grants have been applied for using Winona County as the applicant. Kalene described how the Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention morphed from a CJCC Committee into its own entity, under the umbrella of Livewell Winona/Winona Health. There are several organizations in Winona that are working on different areas in housing currently. Winona Area Kitchen Table is working on building advocacy for housing. Winona HRA operates public housing and doesn't seem to want to do more than that. HVMHC will be handling the Scattered Sites Supportive Housing Project. SEMMCHRA will be setting up the Local Housing Trust Fund and working on pursuing additional grant funding using the money provided by the County to hire a grant writer. The City of Winona staff are interested in creating housing opportunities and were good working partners for Waters Edge. Chris and Marie were planning to speak to Nick Larson after the July meeting but were not able to connect. A county-commissioned housing study is in progress. Despite all these efforts, there is no central agency or organization working on housing. Kalene noted that if there were a central agency, there would need to be paid staff to run it. Dan said that there is a grant that will be available in 2024 to build capacity for community housing organizations. Rosemary suggests that this group apply for an implementation grant from MHP.
- 8. Housing Study:** A preliminary draft of the Winona County Housing Study has been released. Dan read the study which lays out the needs fairly well but does not provide a lot of recommendations for tangible next steps. The Housing Study group was supposed to meet at the end of August, but that has been pushed to early September. The EDA webpage with notes and explanation of Housing Study can be found here: <https://www.co.winona.mn.us/379/Economic-Development>

9. **Member Updates:**

- a. CJCC/WRAP+: WRAP+ is sponsoring a Poverty Simulation on October 12th from 9-11 am and 1-3pm at the VFW. Signup at hvmhc.org by clicking on the Community Mental Health Trainings button.
 - b. Engage Winona Kitchen Table: The City of Winona budget includes funding for a Community Economic Development Specialist, which is an added position.
 - c. MHP: There is a lot of money available for housing through the legislative allocations, but it will take some time to roll out the programs as many new staff are being added. Some of the funding for new builds has already been committed.
10. **Thank you, Rosemary!:** Thank you to Rosemary Fagrelus for being our Technical Assistance Advisor for the past 18 months. We greatly appreciate Rosemary's help and will miss her greatly!
11. **Next Meeting:** September 8, 2023 at Winona Community Foundation. Regular meetings will be held on the 2nd Friday of each month at 10:00 a.m.

Meeting adjourned: 11:29 a.m.

Minutes by Kalene Engel