

RICHLAND COUNTY CHAPTER 980 COMMITTEE

March 19, 2019

A meeting of the Richland County Chapter 980 Committee was held at 2:00 p.m. on March 19, 2019 in the Main Conference Room of the Community Services Building, 221 West Seminary Street, Richland Center, Wisconsin.

Members Present: Tracy Thorsen, Scott Timm (attended via phone), Mary Collins Johnsrud, Benjamin Southwick, and Lynn Newkirk.

Members Absent: Mike Bindl.

Others Present: Meghan Rohn.

Approve Agenda and Posting: Motion by Lynn Newkirk, seconded by Mary Collins Johnsrud to approve the agenda and proper posting. Motion carried.

Consideration of Housing Options for Impending Release of Sex Offender: Mary Collins Johnsrud reported that she viewed the properties discussed at the previous meeting and both looked acceptable. Tracy Thorsen reported she received responses from three vendors that have expressed interest in the property located at 28564 Fruit Street in Gotham, and are interested in placing offers. The vendors requested a notice from law enforcement that all of the neighboring properties had been notified of the intent to house the offender at the property and Tracy Thorsen explained that this has not been done at this point since the committee is not that far along in the process.

The property is a foreclosure that is now owned by Veterans Affairs. There are various issues with the septic as well as the furnace, therefore there is some work that needs to be done before it would be habitable. Tracy Thorsen explained that there is currently an offer on the property, however one of the vendors is still interested and was under the impression that the current offer may not be successful. The other vendors are still interested in trying to locate another property in the area. Letters were also sent to all of the currently property owners regarding potentially entering into a rental agreement, however no response has been received.

Benjamin Southwick drafted a letter to present to the judge outlining the efforts of the committee and will deliver it this afternoon. Benjamin Southwick questioned what the next step of the committee should be if a vendor is not successful in the purchase of a property. Tracy Thorsen noted there is still the option of putting an ad in the paper seeking a rental property and explained that the vendor who is planning on still placing an offer on the Fruit Street property was hoping to know more about the availability of the property in the next few days.

Tracy Thorsen distributed an updated spreadsheet of possible properties. Scott Timm suggested the committee continue to provide as many properties to the vendors as possible. He also reported that it was his understanding that a hearing was held earlier today and the defense attorney for Mr. Sugden was pursuing sanctions against the county. As a result, the judge will be recusing himself from the case since he does not feel it is appropriate to rule on sanctions against his own county.

Discussion was held regarding how sanctions could even be considered at this point in time since the 180 day timeline does not expire until May. It was also questioned if there is confusion regarding the 180 day provision since this only appears in the ACT and not the statute, which sites 120 days. Tracy Thorsen asked if Scott Timm has seen legal counsel pursue sanctions before. Scott Timm explained he has seen this one other time in Dane County, however the County was able to present what efforts were being put forth to find a proper placement and an extension was granted. This is the first time however he has ever seen a judge recuse himself and therefore it will now go before another judge.

It was determined that the letter that was drafted for the judge should be delivered as soon as possible and the 180 day provision needs to be highlighted, as well as what steps are being taken to find a placement. Tracy Thorsen also suggested highlighting that we have 8 vendors that we have sent the properties to and 4 vendors have responded with interested in purchasing a property.

Benjamin Southwick discussed the possibility of working with Congressman Kind's office regarding the property owned by Veterans Affairs. It was noted that often times the process can be accelerated if the right person is contacted. Tracy Thorsen will also continue to check for new properties and send them to Lynn Newkirk to review. Any new properties that appear to be appropriate will be forwarded on to the vendors.

Discussion was held regarding moving forward with placing an ad in the paper and what the content of the ad should be. Benjamin Southwick suggested avoiding language that may discourage renters from contacting us and the language should be kept vague. Tracy Thorsen will draft an ad and bring it back for the committee to review.

Benjamin Southwick asked if Lynn Newkirk knew what properties the County owned that they have been unable to sell. Lynn Newkirk noted she would speak with Julie Keller to obtain this information. The idea of purchasing a vacant lot and a mobile home was also discussed however Lynn Newkirk discussed the various issues with this arrangement and noted that mobile homes are often not acceptable.

Adjourn: The next meeting was scheduled for April 4, 2019 at 9:30pm in the main conference room of the Community Services Building. Scott Timm noted he would not be able to attend. **Motion by Benjamin Southwick, seconded by Lynn Newkirk to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Meghan Rohn

Confidential Administrative Secretary