

Housing trust fund task force continues to move toward goal

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HUXLEY — The task force organized to create a housing trust fund in Story County met for the third time Thursday night. The meeting focused on a few specific areas as the group discussed how it is progressing in its goal to create a housing trust fund in the county.

The group was organized with that task in mind after an affordable housing conference put on by A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy in March. In 2003, the Iowa Legislature created a state housing trust fund to provide financial assistance for housing projects related to the development and preservation of affordable housing for low-income households in the state.

Once a housing trust fund is officially created in Story County, it will focus on the development and preservation of affordable housing for income qualified residents.

Task force members in attendance Thursday, either by phone or in person, included Rev. Eileen Gebbie, pastor of Ames United Church of Christ, AMOS; Jason Paull, First Christian Church, AMOS; Amber Corrieri, Ames City Council member; Warren Madden, senior vice president for business and finance, Iowa State University; Dan Culhane, president and CEO, Ames Chamber of Commerce; Roberta Milinsky, Associate CEO, Youth Shelter Services; John Klaus, Ames Progressive Alliance; John Lott, architect for Benjamin Design Collaborative, Mark Jackson, Story City administrator; Steve Ringlee, local entrepreneur, and Erik Bunker, commercial loan officer, First National Bank.

Newly elected Story County Board of Supervisors member Lauris Olson also took part in the meeting with some discussion of her possibly becoming a representative of the county board on the task force.

The group discussed some of the steps that are being taken to make sure its goal becomes a reality. Those topics included application development, disbursement of funds, local matching efforts and overall governance of the project.

With the application still being in the early stages, it was agreed the group was moving along as expected, but it is still too early to show any definitive results. However, one area in which things have progressed noticeably is the group's conversations with city officials.

According to Lott, some members of the group met with Ames City Manager Steve Schainker to indicate that they would like to have a commitment from the city to contribute part of the \$50,000 local match required to set up the housing trust fund.

“Our meeting with Steve Schainker was basically set up to introduce him to the task force and to introduce him to the idea that we will be expecting some type of commitment from the city,” Lott said.

Lott added that no specific amounts were discussed, but Schainker did urge the group to request funding before the city ends its budgeting process. Even though the city and other municipalities will likely commit to funding the project this year, the funds would not actually go out until 2018.

The group also discussed meeting with representatives of the private sector in Story County for additional funding.

During the meeting, the task force also passed bylaws that are required to file as a nonprofit organization under 501(c)3 regulations, set guidelines for donations and conflicts of interests, and established a board of directors for the application process that includes Corrieri, Bunker, Ringlee and Henry.

From there, the group discussed what a benefit the housing trust fund will be to Story County and how much people are looking forward to the it becoming a reality.

“I have not talked to a single person who thinks this is a bad idea, which that feels really good,” Gebbie said. “Everyone says, ‘Yes, and I want to be a part of it.’”

The next meeting will be on Thursday Feb. 23, 2017, at Ames United Church of Christ.

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