BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
OF THE STATE OF MONTANA

MONTANA FIVE-YEAR 2015-2020 CONSOLIDATED PLAN AND
2015-2016 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN
PUBLIC MEETING

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

Heard before Jennifer Olson, Presiding Officer
Montana Department of Commerce
301 South Park, Room 228
Helena, Montana

July 29, 2015
1:35 p.m.

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Attendees in Room 228

Julianna Crowley
Keith Bocian

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WHEREUPON, the proceedings were had as follows:

MS. OLSON: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Jennifer Olson. I am with the Community Grants Bureau at the Montana Department of Commerce. I'm the Community Grants Bureau Chief, and I'd like to welcome you to our public hearing today about the Montana Five-Year Consolidated Plan and the one-year, 2015 through 2016, Annual Action Plan public meeting. I appreciate you taking the time out of your day today.

Before we begin today, I just want to make you aware of a few things. We have a court reporter in our facility today to help record the meeting and transcribe it for us. So if you could, if you're in the room and would like to provide comment, make sure that you speak clearly. But then also, if you're on the conference call or webinar, please make sure that you speak clearly. Later on in the presentation, we'll open up the phone lines so you can provide verbal comments, but while I'm giving my presentation, if you have any questions, please feel free to write them in your webinar queue, and Stephanie will be able to read them.

So I'm going to ask that we just go through and announce who is here in the room. Just in case they're away from the phone, I will repeat their names. And then I'll have Stephanie read who is on webinar. So again, I'm
Stephanie Olson. I'm the Community Grants Bureau Chief.

MS. CRIDER: I'm Stephanie Crider. I'm a program specialist for Community Development Division.

MS. CROWLEY: Julianna Crowley, Community Services Program Officer for DPHHS.

MR. BOCIAN: I'm Keith Bocian, with the Rural Housing Service here in the Sub-Area Office in Helena, Montana.

MS. OLSON: So if you couldn't hear, that was Keith Bocian from the Rural Housing Service. So thank you all for attending here.

And Stephanie, who do we have out in webinar?

MS. CRIDER: Bob Buzzas, Heather McMilin, John Firehammer, Marcia Lemon, Tim Trzinski, Tracy Menuez, and Travis Hoffman.

MS. OLSON: Well, thank you again for joining us. As you know, the Consolidated Plan is a document that the Department of Commerce and Public Health and Human Services worked together on. And we have developed the final draft document, and it's available online, but let me go through a few informational points for your consideration as you review the Consolidated Plan and provide public comment to both Commerce and Public Health and Human Services.

So it is a five-year plan and it's updated annually
for the federal housing, community and public facilities, and economic development investment in the state. What that means is that every five years, HUD requires that we go through a larger analysis of what our goals and objectives are for using those HUD funds to provide funding to the state that will support housing, community development and public facility programs and projects, and economic development programs and projects; so how we invest those funds in the state.

It combines planning and application, citizen participation, and reporting requirements for CDBG, HOME, and ESG. So what that means is that we use this document to help plan how we're going to use CDBG, HOME, and ESG funds. And also in the back of the plan, you'll see there's SF424s, which becomes our application to HUD for federal funds for that five-year plan and then also, with annual updates, our individual yearly application for federal funds.

And the most important component is citizen participation. How we use funds or how we intend on using funds, it is important that we receive citizen participation and feedback in order to make sure that we're making the funds available in the most appropriate, effective, and efficient manner. So you'll see throughout the planning documents that we've done a number of
different things in order to analyze and collect
information or analyze that information in order to make
the decisions and determinations of how to use those
funds.

Also, the Consolidated Plan has really two parts, if
you will. The Five-Year Consolidated Plan, which we're
taking public comment on, is the umbrella for the next
five years, and there's an Annual Action Plan within that
that's annually updated. So we will be doing this
annually for the next five-year period based on that
five-year plan to help guide how we use housing, community
and public facility, and economic development funds to
create those policies and actions over the next five-year
period.

So as you go onto the website, you'll find that there
are two documents. One is quite lengthy, and that's our
five-year plan and one which encompasses a large number of
sections, and I'll go through that later on; and then a
smaller plan, which is the Annual Action Plan, which is
supplemental to the Consolidated Plan.

So these planning documents all pertain Montana's HUD
programs, so ESG, Emergency Solutions Grant; the HOME
Program or HOME Investment Partnerships Program; CDBG or
the Community Development Block Grant Program, including
the three primary uses of those funds, economic
development, housing, and public and community facilities.

So again, the purpose of the plan is to identify what our needs, priorities, and goals are as they relate to housing and community development in all of the local cities, towns, and counties across our state. It also stipulates how the funds will be allocated, which informs how those funds will be used across the state, and it also helps us to invest money into the areas of greatest need. So as part of our review and data collection, we identify what those greatest needs are and then stipulate how those funds will be allocated to meet or at least address those needs.

So HUD has some specific things that have to be identified as goals in the Consolidated Plan, and they fall under these three points of providing decent housing, providing a suitable living environment, and expanding economic opportunities. So ESG, HOME, and CDBG all look to the Consolidated Plan as how we support those ultimate goals that HUD mandates.

So there are, again, several components to the Consolidated Plan. As you can see, the five-year plan, or the Con Plan as we affectionally call it here at Commerce, is open for public comment. It's the 2015 through 2020 Con Plan. It already actually began July 13th, 2015, and it ends August 12th, 2015.
I would just point out that there are 18 repositories across the state. So we have asked individual entities to provide a copy -- or rather, we provided a copy to those repositories to make that copy available to the public if they come in to look at it, or to any other entities. So there are a number of organizations from each corner of the state. And we appreciate them opening up their doors to the Consolidated Plan and putting it in a place where people can view it and read it and make comment on it. All comments must be received by the Department of Commerce, so none of the repositories are taking public comment. We just asked them to make it available in the public location for people to have access to.

Additionally as part of the Con Plan is the Annual Action Plan, and it is also open for public comment. So it's the 2015-2016 Action Plan. The comment period is the same, July 13th, 2015, through August 12th, 2015. And again, you'll find that at all the repositories across the state.

One part of the Con Plan is the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report or CAPER. And so that is not part of this comment period, but it's one of the three components of the Con Plan that we complete. So you'll be hearing from us in the spring more about the CAPER as we finish our program year, which always ends in
March in any given year, and then we go through a public hearing at that point in time. So more information to come about that.

So the Five-Year Con Plan is a little bit different than what we've seen from previous years. If you've taken a look at our previous con plans and even our previous five-year con plan and look at this one, it is very different, actually. The Econ Plan, which is the Consolidated Plan that's entered electronically into IDIS or the Integrated Disbursement and Information System that HUD has established that we must use in order to submit our plan, is what we are calling the Econ Plan. So while you're looking at the version that we've prepared in a Word document, we will also be submitting to HUD our Econ Plan.

And HUD developed the Econ Plan to create consistency between all entities that receive federal funds in order to have more consistent con plans that they review on a nationwide basis. It also creates a standard way of collecting information and analyzing information that go back directly to support how those programs need to function under the Code of Federal Regulations.

So we will be using the Econ Plan beginning this year, which is our very first year, but now until forever, until HUD so chooses to change it. So if you hear us talk about
the Econ Plan, that's what we're talking about, is the electronic submission to HUD. But it's identical to the written version, with some just functionality of a database. So some of the populated data in the tables come pre-populated in the Econ Plan for us, so we've integrated that into our Word document to create that consistency in the version that you see and then also what we submit to HUD.

There are five sections of the Five-Year Con Plan, and they are, as required by HUD, Executive Summary, Needs Assessment, Market Analysis, Strategic Plan. And you can find our Con Plan and our Annual Action Plan on the website that you see on the screen in front of you. What I'd like to point out about those five sections is that the Executive Summary obviously is what it says it is, which is an overall summary of what we found in regards to what we've identified as needs based on the needs assessment, the market analysis that we've performed for the state, and then also the strategic plan, which is really implementing the Five-Year Consolidated Plan.

So as you go through the Con Plan, you'll see that the main heading of those sections is apparent. And then there are specific questions that HUD requires us to respond to, so you'll find the narrative as those subsections refer to, to inform the idea of the grand
section that you see of those five sections.

The 2015-2016 Annual Action Plan is also part of the Econ Plan Suite, and so we will be submitting that as well. And then also, what you'll see this year for the action plan, because it's part of the five-year plan, probably will be slightly different than next year, because the five-year plan won't have those answers in it. So we'll have a little bit more robust annual action plan for the next four years after we complete this five-year plan. More information about that for next year. But we will be completing the Econ Plan every year and then going through this similar process to provide a Word document for public review and then submitting to HUD electronically.

There is only one section this year of the Annual Action Plan, but there are 15 subsections, and we'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute. And again, you can find the Action Plan on the Con Plan website.

So CDBG and HOME and ESG are part of the 2015-2016 Action Plan, and I wanted to point out these sections because this is really something that's going to be ongoing. And it supports how we use and allocate those funds, but primarily based on the analysis from the needs assessment and also the analysis from the market assessment and how that then, again, goes back to
supplement or support our strategic plan.

So the first -- And these are just some select sections. I'm not going to go through all 15. There's an Annual Goals and Objectives section, and this is important because it identifies the goals for the programs, each of the programs. It also identifies needs that will be addressed with those funding sources. It also establishes funding to meet those goals, so how much money is being set aside to meet those goals and objectives, and what those indicators of meeting those goals look like; how do we know that we're successful. This section is more of a table-like setting as part of what is available in the Action Plan, so I'd encourage you to look that up, and that will definitely inform how the State intends on using its funds.

Allocation Priorities. The section identifies how funds are prioritized for individual programs.

Method of Distribution identifies how the funds will be distributed by program. Which the Allocation Priorities and Method of Distribution is something you'll probably remember if you've looked at our action plans in prior years that we already had as part of our action plan. The setup will definitely look different to follow along with what the Econ Plan looks like.

Barriers to Affordable Housing. So this morning we
had a public hearing about the Analysis of Impediments to
Fair Housing Choice in Montana. And Barriers to
Affordable Housing identifies those action items that
we've identified in our Analysis of Impediments and
translated those into the Action Plan to identify what
action items the Department is going to implement to
address those housing barriers. So there's a supplemental
document, although it's definitely a stand-alone document,
called the Analysis of Impediments that informs a lot of
this information. So I'd encourage you to look at the AI,
the Analysis of Impediments document.

There's also Program Specific Requirements, which is a
great little section to find out more about what specific
programmatic requirements are discussed to implement the
programs. So there are some specific requirements in the
Code of Federal Regulations that HUD requires us to
include in our Consolidated Plan, and these program
specific requirements are discussed more at length in that
section.

So who can you contact to talk about the Consolidated
Plan and the Annual Action Plan? At Department of
Commerce, you can call Kelly, myself, or Allison; and then
at Department of Public Health and Human Services, Jamie,
Kane, or Julianna, who is definitely an available resource
here in the room, too.
So our public comment period is open for these two documents. If you have any comments during this webinar, please definitely chime in. We'll make the webinar functional so that you can speak through the conference call and provide your comments verbally. And as I said, we have a court reporter here today, and so if you could please state your name and spell it, and the organization you're representing, if you're representing an organization.

We'll be receiving comments until August 12th, 2015. 5:00 p.m. is when we need them. And I'll give you some information on where you can send them. But it's important that we receive that so we can finalize the document, submitting it to HUD, but definitely considering your comments as we finish the draft document before sending it off.

So I appreciate, again, all of your time today. And I will open up the floor for any public comments. So anybody here in the room yet?

(No audible response.)

MS. OLSON: Stephanie, do you have anybody in webinar?

MS. CRIDER: Not yet, but I will unmute everybody now.

MS. OLSON: So we're going to work on unmuting,
and I will give Stephanie just a moment to do that. And while she's working on that, I'd just like to discuss that beginning on page 137 of our Consolidated Plan is our Strategic Plan, which provides a more specific analysis -- or rather, excuse me, intention what the departments plan on doing in regards to the use of those funds. The information on page 1 through 136 is also important, but provides more of an analysis of what we have seen from our data collection in order to make these decisions and whatnot. So I would encourage you to turn to page 137 and look through the document, but definitely the whole of it is important.

Lastly, I wanted to point out there are several appendices as part of the Consolidated Plan, the five-year plan, and the Annual Action Plan that provide you supplemental information that was collected in order to inform the decisions. May not be specifically in one of the subsections that are part of the Econ Plan Suite; however, definitely provided the Department information to make those selections and come up with the goals and objectives that we did.

MS. CRIDER: Michael had raised his hand.

MS. OLSON: So Michael, I think you have a question, and I think your phone is live.

MR. O'NEIL: Thank you, everybody.
Michael O'Neil, with AWARE. I just wanted to make a comment. I would encourage the State to adopt as an additional priority to housing needs persons with disabilities who are in higher levels of care, institutional care and nursing homes, and provide those folks an opportunity as a priority to live in the community, or those at risk of being institutionalized or at higher levels of care.

Under the Supreme Court Olmsead decision is an obligation of the states to provide, to provide those citizens with even some of the severest disabilities the opportunity to live in the community. And the programs that are covered by the Consolidated Plan have been identified by the federal government as tools states should use in addressing and implementing their Olmstead plan.

There's a number of, you know, certainly ongoing -- in almost all the disability divisions of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, in every one of them, they identify that the lack of affordable, accessible, quality housing is the primary barrier to living in the community. And so that becomes a major barrier in terms of the State's obligation to help these folks live in the community. And I would encourage that that be identified in the Consolidated Plan as a priority.
In addition, some of the priorities which are identified, such as helping homeless persons, I would also encourage, since persons with disabilities make up a large number of the homeless population, that you would identify that subgroup within that priority population as well.

So with that being said, my comments are completed.

Thank you.

MS. OLSON: Thank you, Michael. I appreciate your comments.

MS. CRIDER: John has a comment.

MS. OLSON: John, go right ahead. It sounds like you have a comment.

MR. FIREHAMMER: Yes. This is John Firehammer. I'm a consultant to the Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program. And I would urge you to include some language regarding smoke-free housing in the State's qualified allocation plan which is used by the Housing Division.

There is some language in there that is a threshold requirement of all funded projects. Multiunit housing projects funded through that plan must be smoke-free. And that's something that's in the latest update of that document, and it seems like it would make sense to include a similar requirement for housing funded through this plan as well. And I'd add also that at the local level, Missoula and Billings, within the last year, have also
adopted the threshold requirements for smoke-free housing in their five-year plans.

MR. BUZZAS: This is Bob Buzzas. I have horrible feedback. Are you okay? Can you hear me on that end?

(A brief discussion was held off the record.)

MS. OLSON: Go right ahead.

I think we can hear a little background noise, but I'm not hearing any comment, but please go ahead and take your time.

Any other comments?

Again, I appreciate your time today. It's important to receive all your comments. If you cannot provide a comment today or need more time to review the document in order to provide the comment, we understand that, and the comment period is open until August 12th, 2015. We're happy to receive your comments in the next couple of weeks and consider them as we finalize our draft.

It looks like we lost --

MS. CRIDER: He's back on.

MS. OLSON: He's back on. Great. We'll just give him a minute to sign back in.

So I think what I'd like to do is also point out that the Annual Action Plan, like I said, does have the 15 sections, and you'll find that that looks very similar to the former documents that we prepared and probably will
be very familiar to you as you read it. So I also encourage you to make any comments about the Annual Action Plan, but you can combine them as well for both documents.

    Bob, go right ahead.

    Bob, if you have a comment, the phone is live, and so you can go ahead and speak into your phone.

    Bob, if you're having trouble, you definitely can type your question in as well, and Stephanie can read it from the webinar queue. We'd be happy to accept your comment or question there.

    MS. CRIDER: He says he will send in written comments because we can't hear him.

    MS. OLSON: Okay. Thank you, Bob. We will definitely accept your written comments. Just please make sure to get it to us before August 12th -- or by August 12th. I apologize for the technical difficulty.

    Any other thoughts or comments?

    And also, for Bob and everyone, you can send your written comments about the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and 2015-2016 Annual Action Plan to the Department of Commerce at P.O. Box 200523, Helena, Montana 59620-0523. And please put it attention to Consolidated Plan, and we'll be sure to collect it as part of the record; or you can also e-mail those comments to DocConPlan@mt.gov.

    MS. CRIDER: Michael has another comment or
question.

MS. OLSON: Okay. It sounds like Michael has a question. Go ahead.

MR. O'NEIL: Just one additional comment on the public hearing format that's been adopted in recent years. Again, I've made this comment a few times in recent years. I don't find the new style where -- I think the public participation is greater if you can allow yourself to answer some questions from the public. Certainly, in the public comment, I can understand taking just the pure public comment. But there's information I think these hearings -- that people participate in these hearings with the hope of gaining some additional information in terms of the program. And today is not as good an example as some of the other public hearings that are required in the programs. But it's just kind of a general style that's been adopted, I think, based on legal advice. But I think it has a tendency to limit meaningful, collaborative interaction between the public and the guys that's administering or managing these programs.

So I just wanted to make that as a general process comment. Thank you.

MS. OLSON: Thank you, Michael.

So again, the documents are available on our website and also this PowerPoint presentation, along with the
PowerPoint presentation for the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice in Montana is also available on our website. Happy to help anyone who has trouble accessing that information. But you can definitely review that, and those might help inform your comments, as well as the documents.

And again, please do visit our repositories. We have a specific section on our website that lists all the repositories and their addresses around the state. So we not only appreciate that, but hopefully that will be more accessible. And if anybody has comments about those locations or their accessibility in regards to reading and reviewing the Consolidated Plan, we're more than happy to accept those as well.

Stephanie, any other comments?

MS. CRIDER: I'm just asking right now if there are any others.

MS. OLSON: Okay. We'll give them a minute.

And I'll take this time to also note that the development of the plan, as you recall, began last year, as we worked with several of the focus groups and provided an opportunity for people to be involved in those focus groups to help with the development of the plan; additionally, general public meetings in order to collect information and responses to develop the plan. So we
appreciate all of that time and energy and comment that we received as we were developing the plan. That definitely helped inform the decision-making process. And we hope to continue in that realm with encouraging greater public involvement in the development of the plan so that, as you see it finalized, it is more representative of how the comments are reflected within the goals and objectives established.

Anybody have comments in the room?

Seeing none, I just want to thank everyone for attending the public hearing. Again, please definitely feel free to submit all of your comments to the Department of Commerce by August 12th at 5:00 p.m. We're happy to receive them. Again, if you find you have one last comment and it's on August 12th, you can always e-mail that, so you don't have to worry about sending it through postal mail, at DocConPlan@mt.gov.

I really appreciate everyone's time today, and I encourage you to look at the draft documents, if you have not already, and provide any comments that you might have as we move into our next five-year cycle. So thank you so much, and have a great day.

(The proceedings concluded at 2:07 p.m.)
I, CHERYL ROMSA, Court Reporter, residing in Helena, Montana, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing proceedings were reported by me in shorthand and later transcribed into typewriting; and that the -22- pages contain a true record of the proceedings to the best of my ability.

DATED this 7th of August, 2015.

s/Cheryl A. Romsa
CHERYL A. ROMSA