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| Jennifer Hall to receive the 2016 Barbara Wykes Recognition Award at Annual Meeting June 16. Keynote speaker Rhonda Weathers Executive Director, SOS Community Services | County Board finalizing an RFP for former Juvenile Center Site on Platt Rd. Purple Rose Benefit June 23 AmazonSmile <i>page 5</i> | Considering Tiny Houses <i>page 2</i> ADU's Permitted in Ann Arbor <i>Page 4</i> | MAP extends Services for Vets Housing Bureau for Seniors Grant <i>Page 3</i> |
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Good News for SOS

SOS Community services recently received a funding award through the Ann Arbor Housing Commission to implement a new eviction prevention program. Last October the RAAH board decided to include SOS in our current capital campaign. RAAH pledged to raise \$40,000 for SOS to help tenants at risk of losing their Section 8 housing vouchers. There are fewer of these federally funded vouchers than the number of families who qualify for this particular housing assistance. A family may be eligible for this program due to low income, disability, or veteran status, but the long waiting list for the vouchers and the limited number of landlords with available housing units make the voucher extremely valuable. No family wants to lose it as, once disqualified, they are out of the program, permanently. Each month in Ann Arbor, however, from eight to twelve families lose their housing subsidy and are evicted from their homes.

How can SOS prevent families from losing their Section 8 voucher? With a new coordinator trained to spot the reasons vouchers are in jeopardy, SOS can work with tenants and landlords to resolve problems, and if needed provide help at grievance proceedings. SOS anticipates serving 100 families over the next two years.



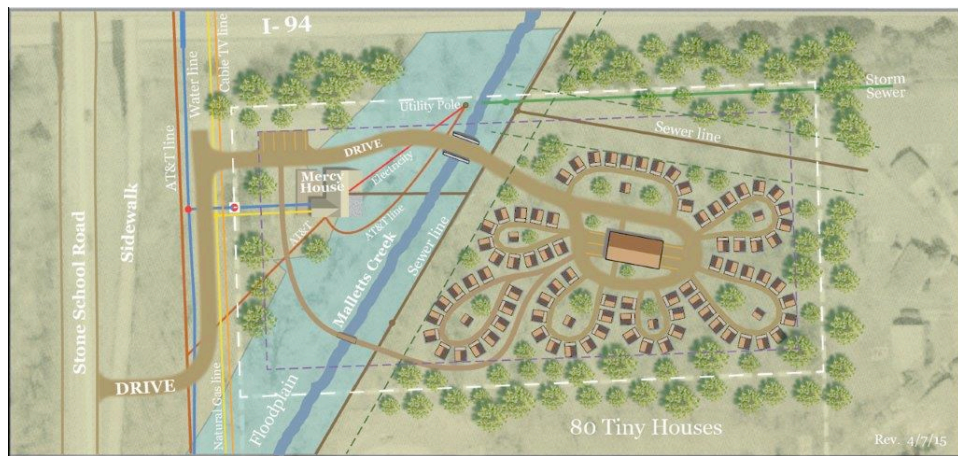
Falling behind on utilities is a major cause of eviction, but there are assistance programs to deal with this issue. In many cases an eviction could cost both tenant and landlord more than working out a payment schedule, or reducing utility usage through repairing leaks, or replacing older appliances and poor insulation. The SOS coordinator can advise the tenants on how to handle utility expenses, and help them to find available resources.

Another reason for losing the voucher is the recipient's failure to complete paperwork needed to recertify participation in the Section 8 program. Tenants need to update changes in their financial situation, family size, and other personal information to retain their vouchers. Locating the necessary documents can be difficult for families who have moved frequently, experienced homelessness, or had legal challenges. RAAH is pleased that we can contribute to SOS to provide supportive services to help families retain their Section 8 vouchers and maintain a stable home environment.

Considering Tiny Houses

A new and innovative initiative could help solve the problem of inadequate housing in our community. Tiny houses are affordable to very low income citizens and also provide a sense of community and inclusion to people who are often treated as outcasts. The model of tiny house suggested is a simple sleeping and living area of 120 square feet, with electricity and heat, but not running water. Bath and eating facilities are provided communally. This design would offer residents the benefit of safe shelter, privacy, and positive social interaction in the shared group and washing and dining spaces. A number of cities find this plan can improve dwelling conditions for their most disadvantaged residents. The cost of the houses will range from \$5 to \$8 thousand.

Needless to say, in Ann Arbor none of the current local building or zoning ordinances were written to accommodate this kind of housing, so waivers from existing laws must be sought. Who is urging our local officials to undertake this task? MISSIONa2 has established a special committee to work through the regulatory and political hurdles. MISSION is a non-profit, tax-exempt private corporation dedicated to providing a path toward permanent housing for those experiencing homelessness. This has been done through establishing self-governing tent communities in cities across the country. In our town MISSION operates Mercy House on Huron Street as a center for meals, rest and laundry as well as Hill house out on Stone School Rd. Hill House is adjacent to several acres of vacant land across Mallett Creek. While a tent camp is not permitted on this property, MISSION sees a tiny house community as a new approach to fulfilling the mission of the organization. MISSION recognizes that the homeless are empowered through self-governance and care for one another and is dedicated to providing a voice for those who typically do not have one in our society.



The committee, in addition to MISSION leaders includes David Esau, architect for Avalon Housing, Scott Munzel real estate attorney experienced in working with the city on development projects, Jason Busse, engineer, Charles Cicerelle, architectural designer, and Ron Gregg, advocate with ICPJ. The committee has met with city staff and council members and the

response has been cautious but encouraging. Modifying existing construction requirements will be a difficult road. Public support is essential to convince Ann Arbor citizens and officials that a tiny house community can provide safe housing to those unable to afford or find a home in Ann Arbor. As we move along funding will become an increasingly important issue and RAAH can be a critical component in the campaign.

Ron Gregg



MAP Extends Veteran Services

Michigan Ability Partners or MAP has developed a new program to provide supportive services to homeless veterans and their families who have been ineligible for VA housing. Last year the RAAH board pledged to raise \$30,000 for this MAP program. This spring their new project received an “Emerging Solutions Grant” from the county’s Continuum of Care Board. with funding from the federal community block grant program dedicated to rapid re-housing. Members of RAAH celebrate this community award to support MAP’s work with veterans facing greater challenges.

MAP has helped veterans and people with disabilities for over thirty years to find jobs, housing, healthcare and access to various benefit programs. Some veterans, however, do not qualify for assistance through the usual VA-supported programs or Supportive Services to Veterans’ Families. Now MAP will provide extended case management for 28 of these individuals and their families over the next two years. This includes employment services with job counseling, help accessing medical services, and assistance in finding permanent housing. MAP will also provide furnishings and household supplies for up to fifty clients. In addition beds and mattresses, they supply bedding, cleaning supplies, and kitchen tools. MAP is always happy to receive donations of client care items at their offices at 3810 Packard Rd.

Staying At Home

The Housing Bureau for Seniors came to RAAH seeking a \$5,000 grant for their revolving Washtenaw County Loan Fund. This modest request would support a significant program to help senior citizens remain in their homes. HBS can provide loans to older folks who have not kept up with their property taxes, and in delinquency, risk losing their homes to tax foreclosure. Taxes may go unpaid as an older person forgets payments, has a personal loss, or experiences a decline in income. The Bureau can work with the individual homeowner to keep them from falling behind in their taxes, and provide financial counseling, help accessing utility assistance, and even roommate matching. Home sharing is only undertaken after thorough checking and an extensive application process.

The Housing Bureau is a branch of the University of Michigan Health System headed by Janet Hunko. In a recent article in the May copy of *Groundcover News* she remarked that many people don’t realize that housing truly is a health care issue.

“If you don’t have housing, what else do you have? It’s that roof over your head that isn’t about to be taken away from you. It makes everything else that much easier when you have that place. It really is the foundation of health for older adults.”

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ADUS in Permitted in Ann Arbor

After lengthy discussions City Council has received a proposal from the Planning Commission to allow more Accessory Dwelling Units in the town. The RAAH board has discussed ADUs, sometimes called “granny flats”, for a number of years and spoken at city meetings in their favor, but approval of more dwellings in single family districts was limited due to fears of too many renters, too much traffic and too cramped quarters on city lots. The shrinking number of affordable rentals in the city and the increased interest on the part of homeowners paying city taxes has led to reconsideration of this issue. More groups have spoken out and city and county officials have come to see the possibilities of a greater supply of less expensive housing units. The cautious allowances of the previous ordinance requiring a special exemption for construction of ADUs have been dropped. Homeowners are now permitted to construct a separate rental unit within their houses or in existing garages or carriage houses subject to certain restrictions.



There are restrictions on size, location of the separate entry, and parking, as well as the rule that the owner live on the property at least half the year. All of these were discussed at over a dozen meetings hosted by the city and various neighborhood associations. A great effort was made to emphasize preserving the character of neighborhoods in limiting the number of new tenants to one family or person.

Some participants at the meetings expressed an interest in being able to house an elderly relative in a semi-independent situation in the tradition of “granny flats” or mother-in-law apartments, the traditional rationale for modifying family living quarters. However a more recent awareness of smaller family size and aging homeowners has helped Ann Arborites recognize ADUs as a solution to the twin problems of a housing shortage and the high costs of homeownership. When football parking no longer covers the tax bill, the rent of an ADU could contribute to such payments. Construction of an ADU with separate cooking and bathroom facilities and a new entry will not be cheap, but could provide some financial security to the homeowner. Other benefits could come from the presence of another person or family to help keep up the house or assist the homeowner in other ways.

The city has studied ordinances from around the country to craft the proposed changes. While new ADU construction will not solve the affordable housing crisis in Ann Arbor, members of RAAH feels vindicated that the city is taking some steps in a direction they have long supported.

County Commissioners move towards support of Platt Road Mixed Development

Several years after plans were first proposed for the old Juvenile Detention Home site on Platt Rd. Washtenaw County Commissioners are refining a request for proposals(RFP) for a development incorporating a varied range of housing. The county will not undertake a housing project itself as it lacks a housing authority to manage such a project, but it can establish guidelines and requirements for the new development.

At the March 2016 planning session a few voices were raised in support of leaving it as a park, or green space, but the commissioners are taking into consideration community support for affordable housing. The plan that has emerged from public input and county, city housing specialists would include some units with subsidies for a range of lower incomes, some market rate units and some senior apartments, with a community center, all using green technology.

The board recognizes the dire need for affordable housing in the county and their responsibility to use county resources to deal with the problem. Even before the Juvenile Detention Center, in the 19th century, the Platt Road property housed the County Poor House. The commissioners hope construction in this area close to shopping and transportation will help provide needed housing in an thoughtfully planned development.

Purple Rose Theater Benefit on June 23

Join us at for a play in Chelsea on Thursday, June 23 at 8PM. *Morning's at Seven* is a gentle comedy set in a small Midwestern town in 1938. The story, which revolves around four sisters, was written by U of M grad Paul Osborn. It first ran on Broadway in 1939 and appeared again in two Tony award-winning revivals in 1980 and 2002 as well as several television productions. This favorite of community and regional theater companies, is directed by Michelle Mountain at The Purple Rose Theatre. Your RAAH board members are selling tickets for the evening performance. They cost \$30 with \$14 of each ticket's purchase benefitting RAAH, Religious Action Affordable Housing.

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Many thanks!

R A A H

Religious Action for Affordable Housing

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RAAH Annual Meeting
June 16
at 1st United Methodist Church
120 S. State St., Ann Arbor
6:30 pm refreshments, 7:00 meeting