

What is HCCDC up to these days?

By Frank A. Schersing

HCCDC is starting the journey to come back to Winnebago. We now have half of our staff located in the Woodland Trails Building. We currently have Joy Johnson, Jeremy Staab, Patricia Sheridan, Garan Coons, and Muriel Walker located there. I did this to move them closer to their areas of responsibility. Primarily it is the management of Little Priest Apartments, but our Commercial Development Branch is there as well to continue to develop the Village.

Patricia Sheridan has the responsibility of the apartments. Our numbers in Winnebago are 402-878-2192 or 402-878-2847. If you have any questions about the apartments contact her at those phone numbers first, or you can contact me at 402-846-5353. Our Commercial Branch can be reached at those same numbers.

My plan is to eventually get our entire office back to Winnebago. We are meeting some resistance from one of our grant funders about moving our entire office into Woodland Trails, because that was not the original intent of why the building was built. So we will regroup and write for another grant that can build an office building in Winnebago for us.

We are at the same time looking for something to do with the building we are currently located in Walthill. It was also

built with grant dollars and has some restrictions on how it can be used. It needs to be used for education or small business incubators, to start small businesses in the community. We have space to lease or if someone is interested in the entire building, it is also for sale.

HCCDC is going to refocus its efforts in the future on the Winnebago Community, Ho-Chunk Village, and the Economic Development of the region. We have written to HUD for a building grant that will build an assisted living facility for the community. We will find out in December if HUD grants us the go ahead on the project. We will use the grant as \$600,000 leverage for the \$7.5 Million project and fund the remainder with New Market Tax Credits. We will continue to focus on building the infrastructure in Ho-Chunk Village to work toward completing the project. We will continue to work on the housing issues in Winnebago. We will work on low income programs, housing down payment assistance programs and continue to make strides in serving the needs of Winnebago, especially the tribal membership. We are also branching out into the area of energy efficiency, as technology improves and more American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds become available we will write grants to bring that technol-

ogy to Winnebago. Another project that we will be exploring in the future is the Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). This can play a key role in developing individual tribal members' assets, as well as overall private economies on Indian reservations. I have sent three individuals to trainings already. Native CDFIs help to promote local economies by supporting the development of entrepreneurs and businesses, increasing homeownership, and empowering the community members to reach their financial goals.

I am in the process of changing the organizations by-laws, policies and procedures to reflect the purpose of our organizations Articles of Incorporation. Our seven Board Members will come from a broad spectrum of people in the community to get adequate community representation on our Board, and they will have much more involvement than they have had in the past. The organization will be more open. There have been some questions about staffing and native preference in the past. The Native American Employment preference is already in the policies and procedures of the organization and it will receive increased emphasis with special focus on hiring and retaining qualified Winnebago Tribal Members.

HCCDC recently went through a reorganization to separate grant writing and grant administration into separate areas of focus. This plan was partially done

with continued socially oriented focus in mind. Since the social programs are being deemphasized, the current organizational structure of HCCDC will be reevaluated, especially as the staffs funding issues are clarified. The way the organization will look in the future will depend on several factors and will be run by the Board of Directors before a final decision will be made.

The award winning Winnebago Community Development Fund has helped fund over \$3 Million Winnebago Projects in the past and is a critical link to a successful community. This fund can be used in providing matching funds for some of the community or tribal grant applications. The administration of this fund has been transferred to HCI at the Tribal Council's request.

Another project of mine is to have an openness policy to keep the community informed of what is going on in our organization and what we are doing around the community. This will be done through the article in the newspaper. Our newest announcement is that we have hired Keely Clark to take Patricia Sheridan's place in the Learn and Serve/ Meth Initiative Program. Patricia is our new housing Manager.

Feel free to contact me at any time with your thoughts or suggestions. You can reach me at 402-846-5353 or email at fschersing@aol.com or fschersing@hochunkcdc.org.