

## **Backus residents asked to submit letters of intent by Feb. 7**

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Gail Levenson of the Cass County Economic Development Corporation held an informational meeting in Backus for property owners interested in seeking a small cities grant.

At the Feb. 3 meeting, Levenson and others gave information to home and business owners interested in applying for small cities grants to improve their properties. It was explained that the cities of Backus and Longville are combining their efforts to receive grant funds from the Small Cities Development Program. By combining, the cities have a better chance of receiving approval than if they were acting alone.

Levenson said there were 78 communities that submitted pre-application. Backus and Longville were among 36 pre-applications that were accepted, though not all 36 pre-applicants will be approved during the final application. The more applicants a community has, the better chance that community has of being awarded the grant funds.

Grants are to be used to rehabilitate properties within the city or designated commercial districts within the cities of Backus and Longville. Only property owners will be eligible for grants, and the funds must be used to improve property in energy efficiency, health and safety.

Popular rehabilitation has included new furnaces, roofing, insulation and doors. Businesses using this grant have purchased new marquis and have made their properties more ADA accessible.

Applicants who receive funds will have a seven-year lien on their property in exchange for the grant amount. That grant amount will be forgiven by 1/7 every year for those seven years. If the property is sold before the end of those seven years, they will be expected to pay the amount that has not been forgiven before a sale can be completed. The city of Backus will be the lien holder.

Though final details may change, the current proposal for the grants would make home owners responsible for 0-20 percent of the cost of rehabilitations on their homes depending on income. Residential applicants must be low to moderate income households. Commercial property owners of all income are accepted for application, though they are expected to match their grant amount.

Bi-County Community Action Programs is working with the EDC on the small cities grant, so people who depend on Bi-County Cap for assistance may qualify for additional assistance for weatherization and other projects if awarded a grant.

Final applications will be due Feb. 28, though letters of intent are due Feb. 7. If you do not submit a letter of intent, you may still apply for a grant; however, your community as a whole is more likely to be awarded the small cities grant if more letters of interest are received.

The EDC has forms for letters of interest to make them quick and easy to fill out.

Interested parties should contact the EDC for letters of interest and more information at 218-947-7522.

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