

THE SUN-GAZETTE

Farmersville seeks funding to build housing project

November 4, 2020

By: Ben Irwin

Self-Help Enterprises ready to apply for \$3 million for 108-unit Los Arroyos affordable house development

FARMERSVILLE – The city of Farmersville and nonprofit Self-Help Enterprises is set to apply for up to \$3 million in funding for the 108-unit Los Arroyos affordable housing project on Farmersville Boulevard, a joint effort approved Oct. 26 by the Farmersville city council.

The application was approved unanimously, with the exception of councilman Paul Boyer stepping out of the room. He is an employee at Self-Help Enterprises and voting on the project would have been considered a gross conflict of interest. If awarded, Self-Help Enterprises would receive the funds from the state's Permanent Local Housing Allocation program for non-entitlement local governments.

Self-Help Enterprises—ranked No. 45 in May among the nation's top 50 affordable housing developers—works to provide affordable housing throughout the San Joaquin Valley. Farmersville Mayor Greg Gomez said the city has a great partnership with the nonprofit.

"They've been really valuable in terms of helping us with housing and managing our grants," Mayor Gomez said. "It's just a wonderful partnership we have with them. I just look forward to finally getting Los Arroyos into the city and providing a place for our families to settle down."

PLHA applicant housing developments must serve individuals at or below 60% area median income—the 2020 AMI for a four-person household in Tulare County is \$71,600—a mark Los Arroyos meets. The development is also intended to house individuals formerly experiencing homelessness. According to a Kings/Tulare Homeless Alliance survey, unincorporated Tulare County has 992 people struggling with homelessness in 2020, a 22% increase from 2019 and a 60% increase since 2011.

Mayor Gomez said the application is to cover their bases to make sure the project is funded.

"We're all desperate for housing," Gomez said, "and we're trying to do everything we can just to increase the amount of housing available for our residents."

COVID-19 and the effects the pandemic has had on residents has not gone unnoticed by the city.

"We've noticed a big crunch with everyone staying home," Gomez said, "that's been putting an additional burden on our city, we really need to look at different ways to make housing more available to people."

Gomez said he understands the urgent need for affordable housing in Farmersville, and pointed out that the last significant subdivision approval was in 2017—the 18-unit Trujillo development on the

south side of Petunia street, west of Farmersville Boulevard—a project that has yet to begin, sidelined until recently due to FEMA floodplain requirements.

Along with 108-units of affordable housing, Los Arroyos is slated to provide a slew of on-site services, from job training and medical services to after school programs and financial and homebuyer education.

“It’s just invaluable. I think it’s just an awesome service that they are going to be providing to those residents,” Gomez said of the proposed on-site services.

He added that the main hurdle remains trying to get the funding together for Self-Help Enterprises to move forward. Farmersville city manager Jennifer Gomez agreed with Mayor Gomez’s sentiment, also reassuring that Los Arroyos was not contingent on receiving the \$3 million in PLHA funds.

“Any additional funding we can get certainly helps, and can move the project along faster,” city manager Gomez said, “Self-Help Enterprises is trying to find various funding sources, so they are committed to doing the project.”

City of Farmersville and Self-Help Enterprises filed a different application for \$589,562 in PLHA funds to go to Self-Help Enterprises for the Los Arroyos development in July, but has yet to receive approval from the state. As of now, city manager Gomez anticipates construction for Los Arroyos to start around November 2021.