

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES**

**MARCH 27, 2002**

**PORTSMOUTH CITY HALL**

**5:15 P.M.**

Present: Robert Layton, Chairman; Cicero Lewis; Nancy Emerson; Vern Gardner; Lynne Langley; Jean Pecunies; and Dani Rooney.

Absent: Russ Van Billiard (notified staff); and William Thorpe.

Staff: Cindy Hayden, Community Development Director

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Chairman Layton opened the meeting at 5:15 p.m. and took up the first item on the agenda relative to approval of minutes. He called for a motion on the minutes of the March 6th meeting. Mr. Lewis made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 6th meeting as prepared by staff; Ms. Emerson seconded the motion; and all voted in favor. Ms. Pecunies made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 7th meeting as written; Mr. Lewis seconded the motion; all voted in favor. Ms. Langley made a motion to approve the March 13th minutes as written; Mr. Lewis seconded the motion; and all voted in favor.

Mr. Layton then turned to the second agenda item, regarding discussion of the draft FY 2002-2003 CDBG budget. He asked Ms. Hayden, Community Development Director, to provide an overview of the draft budget and potential projects list provided to CAC members in their packets. Ms. Hayden first provided a review of the potential projects that had been brought to the attention of the CAC. She said this was essentially the same list that had been discussed previously, however, staff had gathered additional information since the last CAC meeting when it was discussed.

Ms. Hayden proceeded to describe each project listed. She indicated that staff believe the improvements to Big Rock Park in Atlantic Heights can be completed with the funding already allocated for this line item in the current fiscal year, combined with contingency funds currently available. She said this project is out to bid, with bids to be submitted in the next few weeks. She also said the neighborhood had indicated they would like to see two additional benches placed in a shaded area in Hanscom Park. Ms. Hayden said that could potentially be added to the work to be carried out at Big Rock Park once the contract is awarded since both parks have the same type of bench.

Ms. Hayden said that the next item listed, additional Atlantic Heights streetscape improvements, was suggested for consideration for FY '02-'03 funding as shown in the draft budget. In response to questions regarding which street or streets would be improved next, she said the City has not yet determined that.

The next item shown on the potential projects list concerned a design plan, to be followed by improvements, at Hislop Park in Atlantic Heights. Ms. Hayden said this project is currently shown in the draft budget for consideration in a future budget year. Ms. Emerson asked if it would make sense to carry out the design phase in this coming fiscal year, and leave improvements until a later year, and asked how much a design plan would cost. Ms. Hayden suggested that \$15,000 would probably be sufficient for design work.

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With regard to the next potential project item, purchase of the Falkland Place parcel for a central bus stop in Atlantic Heights, Ms. Hayden said she had spoken with School Department staff about this. Based on this conversation, she recommended the neighborhood speak directly with the school regarding the best location for a central bus stop on existing public land.

Ms. Hayden said her understanding about the Atlantic Heights neighborhood's desire for an electric outlet in Maynard Park is for sound system use during periodic events such as National Night Out. She said, based on past experience with that location, the City has some concern about placing an outlet in that particular location due to the potential for misuse and/or vandalism.

The next item on the list, the raised bridge over South Mill Pond, is not eligible for CDBG funding Ms. Hayden pointed out, because it would benefit City residents as a whole, rather than primarily benefiting low and moderate income residents as required by HUD.

Ms. Hayden reminded members that potential funding for the rehab of the 1895 building for senior housing would not be needed until the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2003. She said the Portsmouth Housing Authority, working in partnership with the City, has submitted an application to the NH Housing Finance Authority to obtain tax credit financing for this project. She said local CDBG funds will play an important role in successfully obtaining those funds, and that she will keep CAC members apprised of the status of the tax credit funding application.

The next item on the potential projects list concerned consideration of sidewalk improvements that would benefit the Betty's Dream facility located off Maplewood Avenue. Ms. Hayden said there are a number of issues relative to this project, including topography and the specific needs of those that could benefit from such a project. She suggested CAC members consider funding a feasibility study in the coming year to determine project needs such as the best route of travel, potential project costs, and user needs.

With regard to the request for a handicapped accessible lift at the 72 building in the McDonough Street neighborhood, Ms. Hayden said the CAC has typically funded improvements such as this through the competitive Non-Profit Accessibility Grant Program that has been funded by CDBG periodically. Further, she said that the owners of this building were successful in obtaining a large grant from the Land Conservation and Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP). Ms. Hayden also said that while the building is privately owned, the owners have provided a historic preservation easement to the public gathering area which allowed them to be considered eligible under the LCHIP program.

The Portsmouth Economic Development Loan Program (PEDLP) was the next item shown on the projects list. Ms. Hayden said PEDLP was self-funding from monthly loan repayments for many years, however, since many loans have now been paid in full, the repayment stream is reduced. Therefore, if the CAC wishes to continue this program, staff believe additional CDBG entitlement grant funds need to be allocated. Ms. Hayden also said a \$45,000 PEDLP was recently made. Mr. Gardner speculated that it might be time to discontinue the program and he and Ms. Emerson requested additional historical information, including the number of jobs created over time and the number of active borrowers. Ms. Hayden said she would provide this at the next meeting.

Ms. Hayden highlighted the final potential project that had come to the attention of CDBG staff in the last several weeks. She said NH Legal Assistance is seeking a CDBG grant to fund fair housing education workshops and materials. She reminded CAC members that CDBG had funded a similar effort by this agency several years ago.

Ms. Hayden then provided a summary of the draft CDBG budget that was before them dated March 18, 2002. She reminded members that this year's HUD entitlement grant would be \$829,000, and then proceeded to give an overview of how those funds, as well as the revolving loan funds, were allocated in the draft budget. She said the first item, the Public Service Agency Grant Program, reflects the CAC's vote several weeks ago to recommend funding in the amount of \$121,734.

With regard to the Housing Rehab Program, she said rehab assistance to homeowners is expected to total just over \$100,000 in the current fiscal year, and that the program, including administrative costs, continues to be self funding based on loan repayments. The next line item, the Residential Accessibility Program, is proposed to be funded at a total of \$35,000 from existing line item balances and some program income from housing rehab.

No additional funds are needed for the HomeTown, First Time Homebuyers Program, or the Affordable Housing Challenge Grant. The funds allocated in previous years remain earmarked for these programs. Ms. Emerson asked if the Housing Challenge Grant funds had to be spent within any particular time period. Ms. Hayden said there is no requirement to spend project funding by any date certain, rather HUD evaluates overall spending ratios as of April 30 of each fiscal year, and that we remain well within those spending ratios. She said the last line item under housing is the final Section 108 loan repayment for the Osprey Landing Redevelopment.

Mr. Gardner said he remains concerned about the affordability of housing in Portsmouth and questioned whether there was more we could be doing in this area, particularly on the private sector side. Ms. Hayden provided a quick overview of the many things the CAC is doing with CDBG dollars including HomeTown which is targeted to first time homebuyers, the Housing Challenge Grant which is intended as gap funding on larger projects devoted to developing affordable housing, the \$1.2 million in funding to the redevelopment of Osprey Landing over an eight year period, and the Housing Rehab and Residential Accessibility Programs that are intended to keep homeowners in their homes. In addition, she said Community Development staff have worked closely with the Portsmouth Housing Authority with regard to the development of affordable senior housing in the 1895 building and several project with The Housing Partnership over the years that have not come to fruition, as well as HUD, the Housing Authority and the owners of Ledgewood Apartments to retain that affordable housing stock. She said that Ledgewood's owners' refinancing did not come through as quickly as hoped, but the refinancing and renovations are expected to move forward later this year, and that one goal of all parties involved remains continued affordability of those apartments for existing residents.

In response to a question, Ms. Hayden provided CAC members with an update on the proposed park on the land owned by the Greek Church adjacent to Ledgewood Apartments. Ms. Hayden said the design plan is complete, and now in the hands of the Greek Church to use for fundraising purposes. She said the project remains in the City's Capital Improvement Plan with an FY '04 start date, with partial funding anticipated from CDBG.

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Ms. Hayden moved on in the draft budget before the Committee to give a brief overview of the ongoing Microenterprise Assistance Program, PEDLP, and the Non-Profit Loan Program which has annual loan repayments of approximately \$18,000 per year. She said General Administration includes both the Fair Housing education already discussed, as well as salaries, benefits, office supplies, travel, etc.

Neighborhood projects shown in the draft budget include another phase of streetscape improvements in Atlantic Heights, and the funding of the final plantings to be placed in Goodwin Park following the restoration of the Soldiers and Sailors monument later this year. Ms. Hayden said the final draft budget line item shown is for general contingency.

Chairman Layton said he wanted to verify that Big Rock Park was funded in this current fiscal year, and Ms. Hayden confirmed this. Chairman Layton asked if there were any further comments or questions from CAC members. Ms. Emerson asked why funding for handicapped accessible curb cuts was not included in the draft budget. Ms. Hayden said there is approximately \$12,000 in funding for this in the current fiscal year, and bids will be sought in early April; she said rather than showing additional funding for accessible curb cuts in the draft FY '02-'03 budget, the sidewalk feasibility study was included for the Betty's Dream facility. She said the CAC could certainly fund curb cuts in the coming year as well if that was their desire.

Mr. Lewis asked how many more years Osprey Landing is required to keep units at affordable rent levels. Ms. Hayden said she would report back at the next meeting with the precise time frame. Mr. Lewis said affordable housing projects such as the 1895 senior housing project are important ones for CDBG to participate in.

With regard to the last agenda item, Other Business, Ms. Hayden told CAC members that the Department's CDBG audit for FY '00-'01 was complete and gave CDBG a clean bill of health. She also let members know that the week of April 1 through 7 was national Community Development Week and provided copies of the press releases that the Department was issuing relative to this. She said the Mayor would read a proclamation regarding Community Development Week at the April 1st City Council meeting, and that Chairman Layton would be there to speak on behalf of the Citizens Advisory Committee and present the Mayor with a framed CDBG poster. Ms. Hayden mentioned that the Department would also be putting up a display in the 1st floor hallway of City Hall in honor of Community Development Week, and provided copies of the CDBG poster to those members who wanted one. Finally, Ms. Hayden reminded members that their next meeting would be on Wednesday April 3rd at 5:15 p.m.

Hearing no further comments, Mr. Layton adjourned the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Hayden  
Community Development Director