

APPROVED ON 2-15-05
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 25, 2005

PORTSMOUTH CITY HALL

6:00 P.M.

Present: Chairman Bob Layton, Vice Chairman Cicero Lewis, Nancy Emerson, Dani Rooney, Lynne Langley, Jean Pecunies

Absent: William Thorpe

Staff: Cindy Hayden, Deputy City Manager; David Moore, Program Manager

Chairman Layton opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. Chairman Layton then moved on to the first agenda item, which was acceptance of minutes from the January 11, 2004 public hearing and meeting. Vice Chairman Lewis moved to accept both sets of minutes and was seconded by Ms. Emerson. All voted in favor.

Chairman Layton then recognized Cindy Hayden who discussed potential projects raised to date for FY 2005-2006. Ms. Hayden began by describing the neighborhood projects raised at the previous public hearing. See attached handout with comments on each project raised to date.

Ms. Hayden specifically addressed the project ideas raised by the Frank Jones Farm Neighborhood and the Atlantic Heights Neighborhood. She said Atlantic Heights noted their interest in ongoing streetscape work on Preble and Crescent Ways and on the interior streets. She said many of the ideas proposed in the Frank Jones Neighborhood are in the beginning stages of planning. She said the CDBG staff would work with the neighborhood to determine what projects were eligible and feasible.

Chairman Layton read two letters into the record regarding proposed accessibility improvements. The first letter from Judy Bunnell of the Portsmouth Senior Center discussed the Center's need for railings along two long corridor's of the Senior Center. Ms. Hayden said that this activity would likely be eligible. Ms. Bunnell requested \$7,630 for this project. Chairman Layton also discussed the letter sent to the CAC from Patricia Lynch, Executive Director of The Music Hall. The letter outlined the plan for rehabilitation and enhancement of the accessible bathrooms planned for the Music Hall. Funds are needed to fund the design costs of the bathroom modifications. The rehabilitation of the bathrooms are expected to cost \$250,000. Ms. Hayden explained how the CDBG program had funded accessibility requests in the past through the Non-Profit Accessibility Grant program.

Ms. Hayden said that the Housing Rehabilitation program has been very successful with significant demand for assistance in the past six months.

Ms. Hayden noted that the HomeTown 1st Time Homebuyers program was no longer funded with CDBG funds, but that Community Development staff time was used to administer the program.

The next item discussed was the Affordable Housing Challenge Grant. Ms. Hayden discussed the program eligibility guidelines and explained what could be funded for housing projects according to HUD regulations. Ms. Hayden said that no application had been received for the funds since funds for the program were first budgeted in FY 2000-2001. In that fiscal year the program was funded at \$50,000, and is budgeted at \$25,000 in the current fiscal year.

Ms. Hayden then discussed the Portsmouth Economic Development Loan Program. She said the economic climate has changed significantly since the program was first initiated and that the banking climate is very competitive, in terms of interest rates, etc., without the strings that come with federal money. Approximately, \$68,000 could be re-programmed to other CDBG-eligible projects if this program is not continued. She said the committee should discuss if it makes sense to continue to offer CDBG-funded economic development loans. Ms. Emerson asked who was on the PEDLP loan review board. Ms. Hayden said she would provide a roster of board members.

Ms. Hayden said that the maximum amount of funding for the Public Service Agency Grant Program, in the next fiscal year, is \$117,000 to \$120,000 due to HUD's 15% spending cap. Ms. Hayden provided another handout explaining the calculations for the 15% public service agency cap as well as the 20% general administration cap in spending. Ms. Hayden said that the general administration line item would be very tight this year in order to stay within the cap.

Ms. Hayden provided another handout showing the amounts that would be needed to fund ongoing multi-year programs and to finish the construction phase of the Preble-Crescent streetscape improvements in Atlantic Heights.

Chairman Layton then recognized Ms. Emerson who discussed the public/private partnership the City established with the Greek Orthodox Church to build a park to benefit the residents of Winchester Place Apartments. She said she has been asked about the progress of the project. Ms. Hayden explained that this is a public-private partnership in terms of funding for park development. Ms. Hayden said she would follow up with Father Pappas to inquire about the project's standing, and provide the CAC with correspondence regarding this proposal.

A general discussion ensued about what projects could be funded in the next fiscal year given the demand and amount of funds available for FY 2005-2006. Chairman Layton observed that there seemed to be general consensus on supporting the Portsmouth Senior Center's appeal for accessibility enhancements.

The CAC expressed interest in a project for the Frank Jones Farm neighborhood but noted the tight funding and whether the potential projects raised were eligible and/or feasible. Ms. Hayden said that various transportation related improvements in that area. She spoke with John Burke and he will call Lenore Bronson-Weiss directly to discuss these items. Ms. Hayden also reminded CAC members that CDBG funds had been spent in the neighborhood at Gosling Meadows playground and were allocated in this Fiscal Year for the Betty's Dream rehabilitation project. She said that CDBG staff would contact the neighborhood to learn more about their proposal to acquire land for a neighborhood park.

Ms. Emerson asked about the traffic study had been completed previously for the Atlantic Heights neighborhood. Ms. Hayden explained that the study Ms. Emerson referred to was carried out in 1999 and looked at on and off street parking supply and demand, traffic volumes and various conceptual alternatives. Ms. Emerson asked about the feasibility of moving forward with the Atlantic Height's request for a planning study for the remaining interior streets. Ms. Hayden cautioned against completing a planning study so far in advance of when construction funding would follow due to the potential for changes in property ownership and resident opinions over a period of a year.

General comments were made about funding Preble and Crescent Way. Ms. Hayden estimated that about \$365,000 to \$400,000 would be needed to finish the project, but that the actual bid prices for the first half of the project (currently funded in this fiscal year) would not be known until later this winter.

Ms. Hayden said that staff would follow up with the Music Hall to learn more about their request. Ms. Hayden will report back to the committee on February 15th and provide various budget scenarios.

Chairman Layton reported that Ms. Hayden and he had discussed possible new CAC members. Chairman Layton stated that he hoped new members would begin their service on the board by the meetings in March.

Chairman Layton adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m.