

APPROVED ON _____ April 7, 2005 _____
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
CAC MEETING MINUTES

MARCH 24, 2005

PORTSMOUTH CITY HALL

6:00 P.M.

Present: Chairman Bob Layton, Vice Chairman Cicero Lewis, Dani Rooney, Jean Pecunies, Lynne Langley, Stephen Lichtenstein

Absent: William Thorpe, Nancy Emerson (notified staff), Barbara Driscoll (notified staff)

Staff: Cindy Hayden, Deputy City Manager (first part of meeting); David Moore, Program Manager

At 6:00 p.m. Chairman Layton opened the meeting. He noted that each agency would have 15 minutes to present information about their applications. He asked that the presenters address the questions on the handout, which they had been sent.

Mr. Moore then introduced Chris Sterndale of Cross Roads House, an emergency and transitional shelter for the homeless. He reported that demand is stable and Cross Roads has served just over 700 people in the past year (35,000 night stays). He attributed the stability to a softening in the rental market and many clients who are not staying as long as they have in the past. Mr. Sterndale expressed concern over future funding of the CDBG program at the federal level and said that decreased funding for the program would be problematic for his agency. He also said that the agency's FEMA funding has decreased and other federal funding has also shrunk. In addition, Mr. Sterndale says that the agency also relies on funding from local towns and that he expects this to decrease as well. Ms. Hayden asked where clients go when they leave Cross Roads. Mr. Sterndale said that many move into Portsmouth Housing Authority subsidized housing, others move into privately owned non-section 8 rentals in town, and others move to locations in Northern Strafford County. Mr. Moore asked how the agency's implementation of the Homeless Management Integration System (HMIS) was working. Mr. Sterndale said that this implementation was proceeding according to plan and that he thinks it has the potential to be a useful statewide tool. Ms. Hayden then asked where the clients at Cross Roads come from. He said that the clients use many options open to them first, including sleeping at the homes of friends and family. Ms. Rooney asked if Cross Roads House still offered an after-school supervised program with children. Mr. Sterndale said that this program was still running and was very popular. The program provides constructive time for children through activities such as tutoring, and arts and crafts. As there were no further questions, Chairman Layton thanked Mr. Sterndale for his presentation.

Mr. Moore then introduced Christine LaVallee of New Hampshire Legal Assistance's (NHLA) Fair Housing Project. Mr. Moore explained that the CDBG program has previously funded NHLA through the administrative line item. He said that the decision was made to have NHLA apply through the public service agency grant program because of the nature of the FY 2005-2006 general administration budget for the CDBG program.

Ms. LaVallee described the Fair Housing Project and regular program of NHLA. The Fair Housing Project helps educate tenants and landlords about fair housing law and represents clients who may have faced discrimination in rental housing settings. Ms. LaVallee explained that tenants cannot be discriminated against on the basis of marital status, mental or physical disability, or whether or not a tenant has children. Mr. Moore asked what would happen if the Fair Housing Project did not receive funding this year. Ms. LaVallee said that the Fair Housing Project would not aggressively conduct outreach efforts in Portsmouth and that no Community Education Forums would be held and numbers served would go down. Mr. Lichtenstein asked where clients would go if not to the Fair Housing Project. Ms. LaVallee said that there were no other similar organizations in the state that did not charge for their services. Mr. Lewis asked what agencies made referrals to the Fair Housing Project. Ms. LaVallee said that referrals were regularly received from the Portsmouth Housing Authority, other service providers, a statewide help-line, and client referrals. As there were no further questions, Chairman Layton thanked Ms. LaVallee for her presentation.

Chairman Layton then asked Carole Hicks and Bradley Russell from Planned Parenthood of Northern New England (PPNNE) to begin their presentation. Demand for services is expected to be level for the next year. Their clientele is primarily women and teens, but they provide services to all. In describing their networking strategies, they pointed out their collaboration with Families First, but also noted how their services are different. Mr. Moore asked how their services differed from agencies like Families First. According to PPNNE, Families First does not provide birth control supplies, nor do they have walk-in hours for teens. Ms. Russell said the organization would not revert to an abstinence only approach, even though their federal funding sources have been advocating this approach. Ms. Russell noted they expected funding consistent with previous levels from their local, state and federal funding sources. Ms. Russell added that a decrease in federal monies available may occur because of the current focus on abstinence only programs. Ms. Rooney asked what percentage of clients served are from Portsmouth. Ms. Hicks said that Portsmouth clients make up 23% of all clients, but that clients come from all over, including Southern York County in Maine. As there were no further questions, Chairman Layton thanked Ms. Hicks and Ms. Russell for their presentation.

Ms. Jodi Richardson of the Child Advocacy Center then began her presentation. The Child Advocacy Center acts as an advocate for child victims and assists law enforcement in carrying out prosecution of cases involving children. The center coordinates the interview process with law enforcement officials and ensures effective interviewing for prosecutorial purposes. The Center's other goal is to provide comfort to the child witness or victim. Last program year, the Center received CDBG funds to create a training and informational video. She said the agency is seeking funds to increase education and outreach. In the future, they are hoping to incorporate more programming for prevention of child victimization and support services for families of victims. As there were no further questions, Chairman Layton thanked Ms. Richardson for her presentation.

Chairman Layton then recognized Warren Daniel of the NH Small Business Development Center (NH SBDC). Mr. Daniel described the workshops and business counseling that his agency provides to clients. He said his organization serves clients involved in both start-up and existing business. Mr. Moore mentioned that the NH SBDC receives funding from the City of Rochester CDBG and asked what services they provided as part of that funding. Mr. Daniels said that he personally was working to provide business counseling services to a variety of businesses in Rochester. Mr. Moore asked how NH SBDC's services are different from Micro-Credit NH. Mr. Daniels said that NH SBDC has a niche with one-person operations. He said that Micro-Credit has its own funding to loan to micro-enterprises, whereas NH SBDC can provide technical assistance and refer businesses to funding sources. As there were no further questions, Chairman Layton thanked Mr. Daniels for his presentation.

Gordon McCollester then began his presentation on behalf of Area HomeCare Services Inc. He indicated that demand had increased with no increase in funding. Increased demand is due to an increase in the number of seniors. Mr. McCollester said that the outcomes his agency produces relate directly to the agency's mission, which is to help seniors remain in their homes. Mr. McCollester also said that for the first time the agency has begun a waiting list. Ms. Langley asked why there was not more money to fund agencies who perform the agency's work. Mr. McCollester said there is a conservative fiscal approach at the State level when it comes to serving populations in need. Ms. Rooney asked who trains the homemakers. Mr. McCollester said that the agency trains the homemakers using videos and testing. Ms. Langley asked where residents receive assistance for their medical needs. Mr. McCollester said that the homemakers are usually the first "rung" of service and that as issues become more complex and medically involved, certified nurses assistants and then visiting nurses fill needs. As there were no further questions, Chairman Layton thanked him for his presentation.

Mr. Craig Sparkowich then began his presentation on behalf of Operation Blessing. He described the services provided by his agency and indicated the CDBG funds would be used to support the furniture program of the organization. He said the furniture program is the most complex and also the most unique to the area. He said that recently the organization had leveraged donations for a new truck for the furniture program. The demand for services is always increasing and they are not able to meet the need. He noted that typical clients consist of single-parent households, former Cross Roads clients moving to permanent housing, and working families. He said he receives referrals from the court system, schools and the social security office. Mr. Lichtenstein asked who would provide this service if Operation Blessing did not exist. Mr. Sparkowich said that no-one else would. Ms. Langley asked about payments on the expenditure side of the agency's budget. Mr. Sparkowich said that the agency makes a payment to a separate entity owned by he and his wife, that operates the housing where some of the agency staff live. As there were no further questions, Chairman Layton thanked Mr. Sparkowich for his presentation.

Paul Fitzpatrick then began his presentation on behalf of SeaCare Health Services. Mr. Fitzpatrick indicated that demand for the agency's services had increased because of the increasing number of unemployed and uninsured people in the community. The typical clients are adults because there are programs that serve uninsured children such as Healthy Kids. Mr. Fitzpatrick noted that SeaCare's services are well known and word does travel by word of mouth, especially among low-income communities. As there were no further questions, Chairman Layton thanked Mr. Fitzpatrick for his presentation.

At the conclusion of the presentations David Moore asked the committee how they would like to proceed with selection night on March 31st. Mr. Moore handed out a series questions to assist the committee in their deliberations about funding recommendations. After a discussion, the committee decided to submit comments to CD staff during the upcoming week. They requested that staff compile the recommendations And provide funding scenarios. Mr. Moore said that staff would gather the committee input and provide the requested scenarios.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.