

APPROVED ON 1-24-08

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING AND MEETING**

JANUARY 10, 2008

PORTSMOUTH CITY HALL

7:00 P.M.

Present: Chairperson Nancy Emerson, Jean Pecunies, Bob Layton, Lynne Langley, Algene Bailey, Constance Carmody

Absent: Vice Chairperson Dani Rooney (called), William Thorpe

Staff: David Moore, Assistant Community Development Director

Chairperson Emerson opened the public hearing at 7:00 p.m. and indicated that this was the second of two public hearings on the FY 2008-2009 CDBG Annual Plan and Budget. The purpose of the public hearing was to solicit input from the public about new projects eligible for CDBG funding

Ruth Griffin, Chair of the Portsmouth Housing Authority (PHA) Board of Directors, spoke in favor of the Lafayette School renovation proposed by the PHA. The project includes the creation of 10 units of affordable housing for the elderly (62 years of age and older) at the vacant Lafayette School. She thanked the committee for its past support of the Portsmouth Housing Authority.

Joe Couture, Executive Director of the Portsmouth Housing Authority, was recognized to speak. Mr. Couture provided information about the proposed Lafayette School renovation and requested \$150,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding. He indicated that the project was very similar to the rehabilitation of Connors Cottage, formerly known as the 1895 building, which also received CDBG funding for the creation of senior housing. Mr. Couture indicated that the building is in good shape and that the organization is currently seeking land use approvals and gathering funding commitments from various sources. He indicated that the PHA is seeking federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, which will require the PHA to maintain the affordability of the project for 30 years. The PHA has already secured \$467,000 in funding from the Federal Home Loan Bank. He indicated that units would be occupied by seniors eligible for section 8 rental vouchers and that 100% of the residents would earn below 50% of Median Family Income (MFI). He stated that 50% of MFI for a one-person household equals \$25,150; and for a two-person household 50% MFI equals \$28,750. Mr. Couture thanked the Committee for its past support of the PHA. During Mr. Couture's remarks, Mr. Moore distributed a letter from the PHA to the Citizens Advisory Committee submitted after the meeting packet was mailed out to members.

Ms. Emerson asked Mr. Couture how the Lafayette School renovation would impact the playground. Mr. Couture responded that there would be no encroachment on the playground as a result of the improvements. Mr. Moore indicated that he could provide a site plan for the project at a subsequent meeting so that the Committee members could learn more about the project. Chairperson Emerson indicated that she thought the pairing of senior housing with a playground was good for the community.

Deborah Stokel of the Community Child Care Center then sought recognition to thank the Citizens Advisory Committee for its past support of the agency through the Public Service Agency Grant

Program. She indicated that the agency would be coming forward to request funding for the FY 2008-2009 grant year.

Judy Bunnell, Community Services Director for the Portsmouth Housing Authority, was recognized and thanked the Committee for its past support of the PHA Senior Citizens Center. She said the Senior Center plays an important role in caring for the City's seniors.

Mr. Moore then reported to the Committee that he received a phone call from a resident who could not attend the public hearing but wished to provide input to the Committee. Walt Novak said residents who earn low or moderate incomes living along U.S. Route 1 would benefit from the construction of bus shelters and sidewalks beginning in the vicinity of Lang Road and continuing towards the downtown. Mr. Moore indicated that the proposed projects were not eligible for CDBG funding because they would not be located in census block groups where 51% or more of the residents earned low or moderate incomes. However, he indicated that at least some of the upgrades proposed by Mr. Novak are addressed in the City's Capital Improvement Plan and/or contemplated in the NH Department of Transportation 10-Year Plan. Mr. Moore indicated he would return Mr. Novak's call and inform him that he entered his remarks in the record.

Noting the absence of additional members of the public seeking recognition, Chairperson Emerson kept the public hearing open while the Committee moved on to the rest of its agenda.

Chairperson Emerson asked for a motion for approval of the minutes from the December 4, 2007 meeting. Ms. Langley moved to accept the minutes as presented and Mr. Bailey seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

Chairperson Emerson then turned the meeting over to Mr. Moore to provide some additional information about the FY 2008-2009 budget. Mr. Moore advised the Committee that staff was expecting level funding or a small decrease in funding in the entitlement grant from U.S. Housing and Urban Development for FY 2008-2009. Last year the entitlement grant was \$672,397. Mr. Moore indicated that more information about the budget would be available at the next CAC meeting on January 24th, but that preliminary budget numbers indicate there will be limited funding for additional CDBG programming beyond the on-going programs including the Residential Accessibility Grant, Housing Rehabilitation, and Public Service Agency Grant programs, as well as housing rehabilitation administration and general administration line items. He reminded the Committee that additional funding for the Raleigh Way Streetscape Improvement project would also be needed in order to construct the later phases of the project. A portion of the funding required to complete the newly designed improvements for Raleigh Way was budgeted in the FY 2007-2008 Annual Plan and Budget.

Mr. Moore then moved on to provide an update on CDBG projects and programs. He indicated that activity has increased in the Residential Accessibility Grant program and that additional funds may be required to meet demand in the program. He indicated that the City has received some loan payoffs in the Housing Rehabilitation program. As a result, Mr. Moore indicated that staff would likely request a budget amendment and public hearing to reprogram some funding from the Housing Rehabilitation line item to the Residential Accessibility Program. If this is necessary, the budget amendment and public hearing would likely be held during the January 24th meeting,

Mr. Moore then provided an update on the Cross Roads House Renovation Project. He reminded the Committee that \$100,000 in CDBG funding was budgeted for this project in FY 2007-2008. He

indicated that Cross Roads House is currently seeking land use regulatory approvals and securing additional funding for the project. He indicated that the agency is hoping to begin construction during the summer of 2008. He reminded the committee that the agency is applying for State CDBG funding and is securing private donations through a capital campaign. Ms. Carmody asked if the CDBG funds budgeted for this project would need to be spent prior to July 1, 2008. Mr. Moore responded that the City is not required to spend its entire CDBG funding allocation within the fiscal year. He added that HUD does review annually the ratio of funds spent vs. total funding but the City has always been in compliance with these spending thresholds.

Mr. Moore then provided an update on the Raleigh Way Streetscape Improvement Project. He reminded the committee that the design for the improvements is complete and funding has been allocated for a portion of the improvements in the FY 2007-2008 Annual Plan and Budget. He said that staff is preparing to bid out phase I of the improvements early this spring, but cautioned that the ability to construct the improvements would be determined by the pricing received from contractors. He said that staff are exploring ways in which two phases of the Raleigh Way project could possibly be constructed in 2008, utilizing new entitlement funding which may be budgeted in the FY 2008-2009 Annual Plan and Budget.

The Committee then discussed the FY 2008-2009 Public Service Agency Grant round. Mr. Moore indicated that staff was preparing to advertise the grant program in the next week and gave an overview of the grant application process. He reminded the committee that last year the committee requested some changes to the public presentation portion of the application process. Recalling last year's conversation, the committee discussed some of the changes they would like to see. In general, the committee wanted each agency representative to speak about their agency's goals and discuss the impact of its programs and services on individuals and families. The committee discussed the usefulness of anecdotes describing the impact of the services offered by the agencies. The committee also pointed to the usefulness of agency prepared materials (annual reports, brochures) which might be used to guide the discussion about current agency challenges and initiatives. The committee also wanted agencies requesting funds for staff to provide specific information about the duties and activities of those staff members. Mr. Moore indicated that he would use this input from the committee to structure a new questionnaire for the agency presentations.

Chairperson Emerson indicated that, in the past, CD staff have shared some of the materials used to administer the Public Service Agency Grant program including the program grant application, quarterly invoices, and monitoring forms. Mr. Moore indicated that he would provide this information to the Committee and inquired if it would be acceptable to provide this at the February 7th meeting. The Committee said that it was.

Seeing no other member of the public wishing to be recognized, Chairperson Emerson closed the public hearing and adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.