

APPROVED ON 1-22-09

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING AND MEETING**

JANUARY 8, 2009

PORTSMOUTH CITY HALL

6:00 P.M.

Present: Chairperson Nancy Emerson, Vice Chairperson Dani Rooney, William Thorpe, Bob Layton, Lynne Langley, Constance Carmody

Absent: Jean Pecunies, Algene Bailey

Staff: David Moore, Assistant Community Development Director

Chairperson Emerson opened the public hearing at 6:00 p.m. and indicated the purpose of the public hearing was to solicit input from the public about new projects eligible for CDBG funding. She then recognized Mr. Moore to provide an explanation of CDBG eligible projects and examples of past projects. Mr. Moore indicated that staff was not yet aware how much entitlement grant funding the City would receive in the next fiscal year. He also reviewed the budget development process. After this evening's public hearing staff will review the project requests for eligibility and report back to the Committee at its next meeting. He said the Committee would develop its Annual Plan and Budget over the next few months and recommend the budget to the City Manager.

Chairperson Emerson then opened the public hearing to members of the public.

George Shea, Principal of New Franklins School spoke in support of the letter he sent to the City regarding a proposed project for New Franklin School. He indicated that improvements surrounding the school building were needed to improve the building as a community center and welcoming place. He indicated that 38% of the students participate in the free and reduced lunch school program and that the school serves students who live in the three CDBG eligible neighborhood areas. Mr. Shea said the school is used for both Recreation Department programs and after school activities, he said some accessibility issues in the back of the building also need to be addressed.

Deborah Bartley, Community Services Director for Info-Link, was recognized and thanked the Committee for its past support of the agency through the Public Service Agency Grant program and indicated she would be submitting an application for the FY 2009-2010.

Maggie Burke, Seacoast Visiting Nurses Association, indicated that her agency was providing the foot care clinics which had previously been carried out by Compass Care. She indicated that she was supportive of past CDBG efforts to expand senior housing in Portsmouth and other efforts to provide healthcare services in the units. She indicated that it is important to keep seniors in their homes and to provide needed services.

Phil Cohen, Co-Chair of the Atlantic Heights Area Neighborhood Association was recognized and thanked the Committee for its past support of projects which have recently benefited the neighborhood. He listed three projects he hopes the Committee will support in the upcoming and future fiscal years. Specifically, he requested that the Committee recommend CDBG funds be utilized for the final two phases of the Raleigh Way Streetscape Improvement project. He noted that

both phases are designed and he hoped they could be constructed at the same time. He indicated this was the neighborhood's highest priority project. He also hoped that the Committee would support future funding to support design for the remaining two streets in the neighborhood, Concord Way and Porpoise Way. In addition, he pointed out the need for improvements to existing neighborhood parks including a request for swings in Hislop Park and improvements to the basketball and tennis courts underneath the I-95 bridge as well as needed fencing for this park to improve its usefulness for residents with dogs.

Mary Ellen Dunham, Executive Director of the Mark Wentworth Home, was recognized and spoke generally about the recent merger of senior services currently provided at Parrott Avenue Place under the auspices of Wentworth Connections a new initiative of the Mark Wentworth Home. Details of the merger were provided in a letter to the City of Portsmouth, which was provided to the Citizens Advisory Committee. She indicated that this new service model for seniors could be a model for the whole country. She advised that the partnership includes Living Innovations, the Portsmouth Housing Authority, Compass Care and Portsmouth Hospital's H2U program. She advised that the Wentworth Home would be taking over Parrot Avenue Place and that some building improvements would be needed in the future.

Neil Ouellette, President and CEO of Living Innovations, spoke about the merger of senior services generally and also spoke about the need for building improvements, which include service to the roof as well as landscaping improvements at the building entrance at Parrot Avenue Place. He also noted the need for operational funding support for staff including a Recreation services person.

Dan Rawling, resident of Portsmouth and landscape architect, was recognized to speak about his idea for landscaping improvements at Margeson Apartments on Middle Street. He said he did not speak with the Housing Authority about his ideas, but he indicated that he believes enhanced landscaping around the building will provide more options for the residents to enjoy the building.

Tawnee Walling, Executive Director of Big Brothers/Big Sisters, was recognized and thanked the Citizens Advisory Committee for its past support of the agency. She indicated that Big Brothers/Big Sisters was not a current recipient of CDBG funds, but that the agency planned to apply for the upcoming fiscal year. She indicated that 25% of children served through the program come from Portsmouth. She indicated that the agency is successful in leveraging volunteer hours and is able to provide services to children at a cost of about \$900 per child per year.

Catherine Edison, Development Director at Community Child Care, was recognized and thanked the Committee for its past support of it agency. She said the agency will be applying for the Public Service Agency grant program and requesting support for operational costs. She indicated the agency is working to expand it summer program.

Sandy Beaudry, Child and Family Services, was recognized and thanked the Committee for its past support of the agency and expressed her hope that the agency would be successful in requesting funds through the Public Service Agency Grant Program.

Seeing no other member of the public wishing to be recognized, Chairperson Emerson recognized Mr. Moore to provide additional comments from the public he received via e-mail and telephone.

Linda Cunningham, a volunteer with a local domestic violence non-profit organization, suggested that CDBG funds be used in the future to support the development of additional transitional housing for victims of domestic violence and their children. No specific project was requested.

Joanne Paradis, a Portsmouth resident, suggested that CDBG funds be used to redevelop and improve the Connie Bean Center in Portsmouth. She indicated that several of the buildings users, including the City's youth, come from households which earn low or moderate incomes. She said she was responding to local newspaper accounts about the condition of the property.

Frank Cook, a Portsmouth resident, suggested that CDBG funds may be used to better prepare the City for power outages during weather emergencies. He suggested the City work to provide emergency power sources throughout the City in the event of a major weather event, such as that which occurred in December 2008. Mr. Moore added that the City provided, and will provide, an emergency shelter for residents during weather emergencies.

After the conclusion of the public comments, Chairperson Emerson closed the public hearing and moved on to the next item of business which was the consideration of the minutes from April 24, 2008. Mr. Layton moved to accept the minutes and Ms. Langley seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

Mr. Moore then advised the Committee that during the week of January 12th he planned to send out the Public Service Agency Grant Program materials. There was consensus from the Committee that the structure of the program used in past years would be suitable for the next fiscal year. Mr. Moore also asked the Committee if Thursdays remained a preferred meeting night. There was general consensus that the preferred meeting night would not need to be changed.

Chairperson Emerson then recognized Mr. Moore to provide project updates. He indicated that the Cross Roads House Redevelopment project was underway and slated for completion in the summer of 2009. He also indicated that he had visited the Lafayette School Senior Apartments project earlier in the week and took some in progress photos which he will share with the Committee at a future meeting. He said that this project is also slated for completion for summer 2009.

A general discussion ensued about the CDBG annual plan and budget development schedule and projects suggested to date.

Chairperson Emerson adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.