

**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2024 AT 6:30 PM

**CONFERENCE ROOM A
PORTSMOUTH CITY HALL, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE**

CAC members present: Hannah Meade, Chair; Kirsten Barton; Kelly DeCourcy; Susan Durling; Annelise Hartley

CAC members absent: None

Staff: Elise Annunziata, Community Development Director; Caitlin Hart, Community Development Program Assistant

Public present: Jim Avrett, Chief Executive Officer, Greater Seacoast Community Health; Melissa Caldwell, Executive Director, Seacoast Community School; Helen Kostrzynski, Operations Director, Rockingham Nutrition & Meals on Wheels; Ann Strachan, Director, Seacoast Pathways; Whitney Brown, Director, Safe Harbor Recovery Center

Chair Hannah Meade called the meeting to order at 6:36 pm.

Staff Elise Annunziata gave a brief update on the status of federal funding, noting that the proposed budget includes a cut to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, so Portsmouth's FY 25 award may be less than its FY 24 award. The amount and date of receipt of FY 25 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for the City of Portsmouth are still unknown.

Chair Meade recognized the following individuals to discuss their agency's application for the FY 2025 Public Service Agency Grant Program. Each agency also described the needs facing their clients, their agency operations, and the overall community development challenges for the coming year.

6:40 pm – Greater Seacoast Community Health (Jim Avrett)

6:55 pm – Seacoast Community School (Melissa Caldwell)

7:10 pm – Rockingham Nutrition & Meals on Wheels (Helen Kostrzynski)

7:25 pm – Granite Pathways – Seacoast Pathways and Safe Harbor Recovery Center (Ann Strachan and Whitney Brown)

Mr. Avrett of Greater Seacoast Community Health (GSCH) described the health services that GSCH provides, including the dental services for which the organization has requested funding. Challenges for GSCH clients include affordability of healthcare. A particular challenge for GSCH as an agency is the recruitment and retention of dental staff, which impacts their ability to provide dental services at a capacity that meets the community's needs.

Ms. Caldwell of Seacoast Community School (SCS) described the childcare and related services the school provides, as well as the scholarship (tuition assistance) program for low-income families for which SCS has requested funds. Challenges for SCS families discussed included housing and transportation. Housing was also mentioned as an issue for SCS staff, as was recruitment and the early childhood education pipeline.

Ms. Kostrzynski of Rockingham Nutrition & Meals on Wheels (RNMOW) described the services that RNMOW provides, including the meal delivery services to homebound elderly and disabled persons. RNMOW has experienced an increase in clients and in number of meals requested by clients in the last year. The agency hopes to add a sixth route to their Portsmouth delivery services in FY 25. Challenges for RNMOW clients and the agency discussed include the cost of living and, in particular, the increased cost of food.

Ms. Strachan of Granite Pathways – Seacoast Pathways (SP) and Ms. Brown of Granite Pathways – Safe Harbor Recovery Center (SHRC) described the services provided by their respective programs. SP offers peer support mental health recovery services and SHRC offers peer support substance use disorder recovery services. Challenges for SP as an organization discussed include the inability to be reimbursed for peer support services. Challenges for SHRC clients discussed include covering routine costs (rent, childcare, etc.) for the duration of recovery treatment.

Similar to the needs and challenges expressed during the March 7 Public Service Agency Grant Program presentations, the lack of affordable and workforce housing was highlighted, as were transportation access, and staff cultivation and retention.

The Public Service Agency Grant Program presentation portion of the meeting ended at 8:00 pm.

The CAC discussed the contents of and procedures for the next meeting in April.

Chair Meade called for someone to motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 pm. Kirsten Barton made a motion to adjourn. Annelise Hartley seconded the motion. All voted in favor.