

**Meeting Minutes
State College Borough
CDBG/Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC)
May 5, 2020
Electronically Held Virtual Meeting**

The State College Borough Community Development Block Grant/Citizens' Advisory Committee (CDBG/CAC) electronic virtual meeting was called to order via the GoToWebiner system by Selden Smith, Chair on Tuesday, May 5, 2020 at 12:04 p.m.

Members Present

Selden Smith, Chair; Ian Boswell; Alexis Burke; David Gaines; Jason Olcese; Marcia Patterson; and Bruce Quigley

Others Present

Maureen H. Safko, Senior Planner; Ed LeClear, Planning Director; Elizabeth S. Eirmann, Planner-Housing Specialist; Isabel Storey, Planner; Denise L. Rhoads, Administrative Assistant; and Douglas Shontz, Assistant to the Borough Manager

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Olcese and seconded by Mr. Boswell to approve the March 3, 2020 minutes as submitted. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Chair Report

Selden Smith, Chair, had nothing to report.

Public Hour

No one from the public wanted to discuss items not on the agenda.

State College Borough Citizen Participation Plan Amendment

Ms. Safko stated that to expedite the delivery of CDBG-CV and ESG and FY 2019 and FY 2020 CDBG and HOME funds to address impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act permitted the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) authorized grantees to temporarily amend Citizen Participation Plans to allow:

- the comment period for Consolidated Plan Substantial Amendments to be reduced from thirty to no less than five days through December 31, 2020.
- Permitted remote, virtual hearings and meetings to be conducted for the purpose of social distancing.

Safko stated that a public noticed was published in the newspaper on April 21st, 2020 to notify the public that State College Borough would amend its Citizen Participation Plan (Plan) as allowed by the CARES Act. She stated that the revised Plan was available for comment in the State College Borough Police Department due to the closure of the Library and Planning Department, where items are usually available for review.

The CARES Act allowed grantees to adopt and utilize expedited procedures to prepare, propose, modify, or amend its statement of activities (consolidated plan) to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

A public notice will be published within 14 days of a public hearing. A second notice will be published not less than five days prior to the public hearing to inform the public of the proposed content of the Consolidated Plan. These will be available for inspection by the public at the State College Borough's Police Department and on the Borough's website.

During the time that national or local health authorities recommend social distancing and/or limiting public gatherings for public health reasons, the following procedures shall be in effect:

Access to copies of the proposed amendments would be available for as long a period as possible, but not less than five days prior to the public hearing, in the following manner:

- A paper copy would be available at the Police Department during regular business hours.
- Online at Borough's website: www.statecollegeuspa.us.

Public meetings and hearings would be virtual rather than in-person.

- Instruction and a link for public meetings would be emailed to CAC members and Council members, staff, and interested parties. This information would also be published in a public notice and made available on the Borough's website for all citizens to participate.
- Notices for public hearings with instructions and a link would be published at least two weeks prior to the date of the hearing. Written comments to be included in the public hearing would be accepted until the 5 p.m. the day prior to the hearing.
- In addition to written comments, the public hearings and meetings would be conducted using software that would allow attendees the opportunity to ask questions in real time, with answers coming directly from CAC members, elected representatives and staff to all virtual attendees.

Safko noted that the CARES Act permits concurrent amendments to the Citizens Participation Plan and the Consolidated Plan and that all other provisions of the Citizen Participation Plan that are not outlined above remain in effect and unchanged.

CAC's comments

- Ms. Patterson asked if there was a deadline for these changes. Ms. Safko stated by December 31, 2020 and when there is a federal, state or local order for social distancing.

A motion was made by Mr. Olcese and seconded by Ms. Patterson to approve the amendment. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Public Hearing on Housing and Community Development Needs and Proposed Use of Funds to Prepare for, Prevent and Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Ms. Safko stated the purpose of this Hearing was:

- To gather input on community needs resulting from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that could be used to inform allocation of \$305,713 in CDBG-CV funds as well as FY 2019 and FY 2020 CDBG and HOME funds that could also be reallocated to prepare for, prevent and respond to the growing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Preliminary efforts showed that the Borough could allocate a total of approximately \$550,000 for COVID related projects from CDBG-CV and FY 2019-2020 CDBG and HOME funds.
- Input from this hearing would be used to demonstrate the need to apply for additional sources of funding.

Eligible Use of CDBG-CV Funds:

- To prepare for, prevent and respond to the growing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- HUD removed the 15% funding limit on public service activities to route more funding through the community to meet the community needs.
- Must document benefit to income eligible people ($\leq 80\%$ of Area Median Income).
- HUD requested that funds be used strategically to respond to the immediate need as well as invest toward long term solutions to community needs

Fair Housing – Disproportionality:

Ms. Safko explained that HUD requested communities to consider how the virus impacts some groups more than others and how to strategically deliver funds to address inequalities. She asked that people consider all of the protected classes including: race, creed, age, ancestry, color, national origin, religion, sex, place of birth, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, source of income, disability or handicap, presence of a service animal or support animal, pregnancy, birth of a child or marital or familial status as well as those with low income and limited English proficiency.

Ms. Safko asked those speaking during the hearing to let staff know what disproportionate impacts are being experienced in the community due to the COVID-19 virus and how those needs could be met.

Public Comment

Mr. Smith opened the public hearing by asking those on the call to speak.

Charles Tierney of the Centre County COVID19 Community Response (4CR) shared some team comments:

- Provide more infrastructure for immigrants (i.e.) language, legal services, access to Centre Helps and health care.
- Support for personal protective equipment and testing for those that start to go back to work.
- Expanded testing and tracing
- Continued support for the Out of the Cold (OOTC) program

- Support for food distribution through the State College Area School District (SCASD) and the YMCA.
- Additional support for mental health services, the formerly incarcerated, and those with drug and alcohol dependency.
- Would urge negotiations with local landlords and local management companies to provide rent relief.

Andrew Wilson, English as a Second Language teacher for SCASD for 25 years spoke on behalf of a group of teachers assisting families of students and others with Limited English Proficiency.

- Students that are healthy, well fed, safe, secure and housed are ready to learn. Support is needed for SCASD children to make sure they and their families were fed, housed and healthy.
- Help with rent relief, find creative ways for families to stay in their homes and stay connected to their teachers.
- These are some of the most vulnerable to the virus.

Amy Rumbel, Centre Safe Director of Residential Services presented the following update and community needs.

- Not using their shelter currently to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Need more funding for non-congregate housing in shelters. They provided basic needs to these persons and some others as well. Need continued help with utilities, rent, food.
- Moving forward, going back to what was a prior practice may not be as safe as it would have been because of communal living in shelters.
- Had an increase in calls during the last two weeks from those who were not victims of domestic violence.

Cheryl White, Executive Director of Centre Volunteers in Medicine stated that funds are needed for:

- 87 active patients who lived in the Borough along with a significant population of elderly and immigrants including Limited English Speaking population.
- Interested in becoming a COVID 19 testing site.
- IT infrastructure upgrades are needed to provide telemedicine services, which are especially needed for social distancing.
- Personal protection equipment is needed to protect volunteer medical service providers.
- Possibility of testing all dental patients who come into their facility.

Roger Walker, another member of 4CR, asked what the timeline was of spending the money. Ms. Safko stated Council will act on the budget at their meeting on June 15, 2020. She added the following schedule outline:

May 18 - Council would act on the Citizen Participation Plan amendment

June 1 - a notice would be published

June 2 - CAC would meet to discuss the Consolidated Plan (CP)

June 4 or 5 – a notice would be published to outline the spending plan of the CP

June 15 – Public hearing and Council meeting to approve the CP

Sarah Potter, Out of the Cold Shelter Manager, has an immediate need for funds for operational purposes.

- OOTC is serving the most individuals they have ever served – 43 guests per night are housed in local hotels to prevent the spread of the virus
- the season which would have ended on May 5th had to be extended to be able to serve the homeless community through this period of the virus.
- Funding needed for: hotel fees, and miscellaneous expenditures.

Phil Jones, Director of House of Care (HOC), and board member of OOTC spoke:

- Funds needed for: Shelter for the OOTC
- Continued need for an actual shelter for the homeless in the OOTC program
- Hotel funding was costly, and the goal was to keep the homeless sheltered.
- He also spoke about the HOC needs: his residents were high risk and his request would be small: need funding to increase staffing and provide protective equipment for staff and needed food supplies as well to provide hot meals to his residents for at least the next 3 months (approximately \$4,500 to \$5,000).

Matt Milliron, County CDBG Program

- The County will conduct a similar hearing to identify proof of unmet needs.
- Community needs related to COVID-19 in the county and borough overlap; and coordination is needed.

Ms. Safko reported that there were no written comments received that were not already presented by someone who spoke during the hearing.

Upcoming Meeting

Mr. Smith informed all of the next meeting date: Tuesday, June 2, 2020 at Noon

Mr. Olcese referred to the specific dollar amount that HOC requested. He suggested sending an email to the public service agencies for more specific short-term requests. Ms. Safko stated staff would be reaching out to those who spoke today.

Mr. Boswell suggested looking into some vacant properties to be considered for the current homeless situation. Mr. LeClear stated staff was considering using vacant fraternities for this purpose. Additionally, staff would be reaching out to landlords.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 12:53 p.m. by Mr. Shontz.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise L. Rhoads
Administrative Assistant