

**Meeting Minutes  
State College Borough  
CDBG/Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC)  
July 7, 2020**

The State College Borough Community Development Block Grant/Citizens' Advisory Committee (CDBG/CAC) virtual Zoom meeting was called to order by Selden Smith, Chair on Tuesday, July 7, 2020 at 12:05 p.m.

**Members Present**

Selden Smith, Chair; Ian Boswell; Jason Olcese; Marcia Patterson; and Bruce Quigley

**Members Absent**

Alexis Burke; and David Gaines

**Others Present**

Maureen H. Safko, Senior Planner; Elizabeth S. Eirmann, Planner-Housing Specialist; Isabel Storey, Planner; and Denise L. Rhoads, Administrative Assistant

**Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made by Ms. Patterson and seconded by Mr. Quigley to approve the May 21, 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.

**Draft Policy and Procedures for CARES Act Emergency Housing Retention Program of State College**

Ms. Safko drafted guidelines incorporating the Committee's previous comments for distribution of the CDBG, CDBG-CV and HOME funds from FY 2019 and 2020 to provide financial assistance and mediation to prevent homelessness for residents of State College Borough (SCB) who experienced a significant loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

First discussed: **Statement of Program Purpose (Prevent Homelessness)**

The purpose of the COVID Emergency Response Homelessness Prevention Program was to:

- Minimize the number of people who experienced homelessness as a result of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

- Prevent the homelessness service provider network of SCB and Centre County from being overwhelmed.

Next discussed: **Authorizing Act and Budget**

Ms. Safko noted the SCB, through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, received \$305,713 in Supplementary CDBG-CV funds to prepare for, prevent and respond to the impacts of the Pandemic. Housing and Urban Development also authorized the FY 2019 and FY 2020 CDBG and HOME Entitlement funds could be reallocated for COVID related eligible activities.

She also noted on June 1, 2020, after an extensive public involvement process, Council voted to approve the Consolidated Plan and Action Plan amendments that made \$187,403.45 in FY 2020 HOME funds available for an emergency Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) Program and that reallocated various prior year CDBG budgets to make a total of \$515,155.41 in CDBG funds available for a homelessness prevention project, including \$155,870.89 from FY 2019 CDBG, \$114,713.52 from FY 2020 CDBG and \$244,571.00 in CDBG-CV funding.

Next discussed: **Anticipated Program Impact**

Ms. Safko noted it was anticipated the proposed CDBG project funded with \$515,870.89 would prevent homelessness by providing funds for rent and utilities for at least:

- 80 tenant households by providing up to a maximum of \$1,200 per month for three consecutive months (\$288,000). She stated it could be retroactive to March 14, 2020.
- 30 homeowner households by providing up to a maximum of \$2,000 per month for three consecutive months (\$180,000) using CDBG funds.
- Tenant-Landlord Mediation for 100 rental households (\$30,000).
- The proposed HOME TBRA (Tenant Based Rental Assistance) Program funded with \$187,403.45 would prevent homelessness for at least 15 tenant households by providing up to a maximum of \$1,200 per month for rent and utilities for as many as 10 months beginning with March 14, 2020 and concluding prior to December 31, 2020. Rental Mediation for TBRA Program participants would be funded through the CDBG Program.
- While not currently budgeted to be paid for by CDBG funds, the project would result in referral to other agencies for case management and budget counseling for an estimated 300 households.

**CAC Comments**

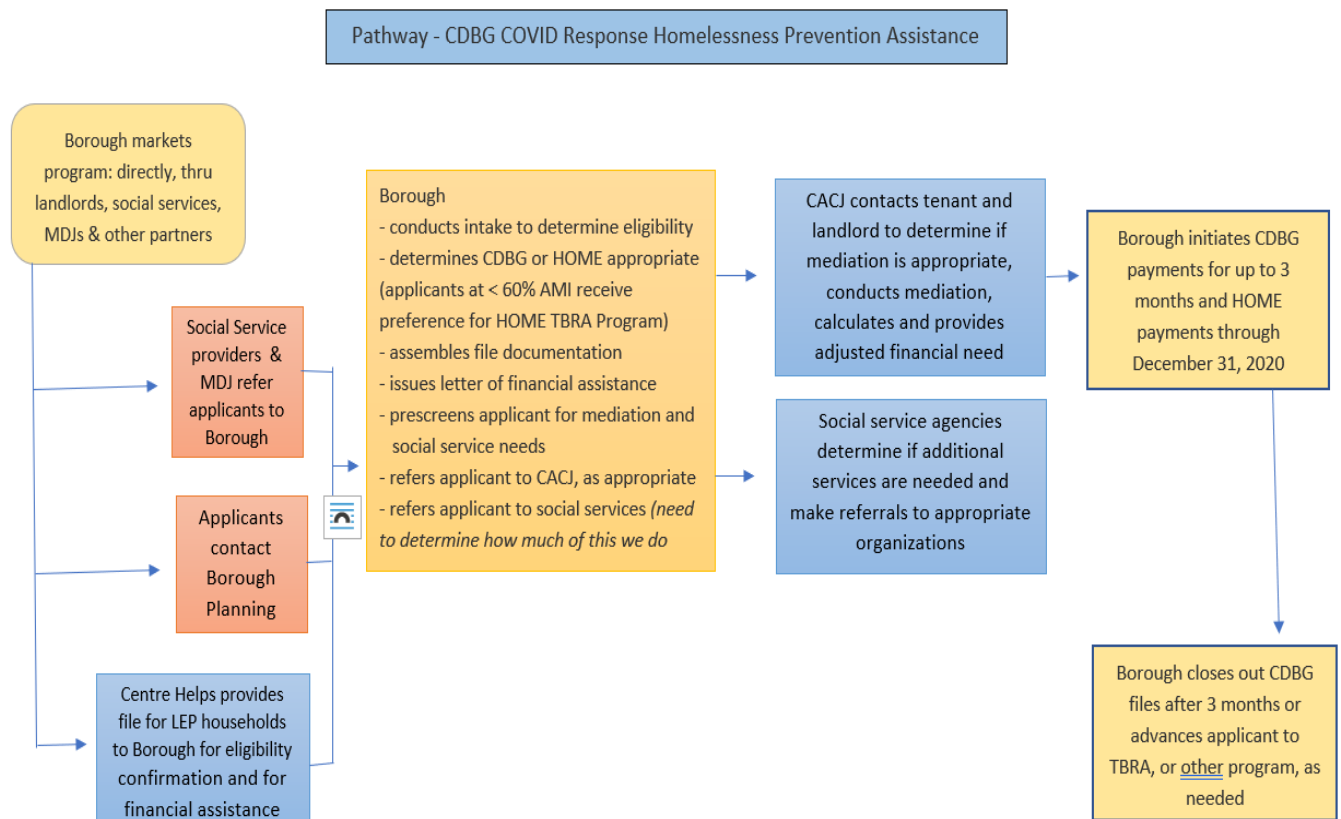
- Mr. Smith asked what percentage of the 80 tenant households in the Borough were in need of assistance with rent and utilities. Ms. Safko stated there was no data, currently available to determine that. Mr. Quigley stated the need would spike at the end of this month. He also noted his county program was not seeing a need for those funds because of the CARES Act assistance that people already received. Mr. Quigley noted those in need were those who were not receiving any assistance previously. Ms. Safko stated staff researched employment data for clues to the number of households in need and noted it was not very helpful because available employment data was from a pre-COVID period in the first quarter of 2020. She noted Out of the Cold program had

organized a weekly remote meeting with other housing agencies to track trends in requests for assistance. Most agencies had relatively low levels of calls for assistance.

- Mr. Quigley suggested persons should apply to the Housing Choice Voucher program. He also suggested using Fair Market rents as a guideline.

Next discussed with a diagram: **CARES ACT Emergency Housing Retention Program Flow Chart**

The process outlined below illustrated coordination between the SCB and some of its partners in housing service providers and the court system.



Ms. Safko noted due to the evolving nature of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic and related needs and resources, it was anticipated additional partnerships, policies and practices may develop as the CDBG and HOME programs were implemented and as other potential funding sources, needs, community partners, deadline extensions and HUD waivers emerge.

Next discussed: **Marketing**

SCB Planning Department staff would work with Borough Administration staff to design a marketing effort targeted to reach those at most risk of homelessness due to the impacts of the COVID crisis. In the design of the marketing effort, staff would consider the need to limit the risk of virus transmission through the passing of printed advertising materials.

HUD clarified to staff, for the purposes of Fair Housing compliance, it was necessary the programs be widely publicized to the public, adding that it was not permitted for the programs to be available to residents solely through referral from social service agencies.

Active marketing efforts would begin on or about July 20, 2020 and would be routed through the following partners:

- Social service agencies serving SCB and Centre County,
- Magisterial District Justice,
- Landlords and property management companies,
- SCASD,
- Direct marketing to property owners,
- Churches, and civic and social non-profit organizations,
- Employers and small businesses, and
- SCB Council; Administration; Authorities, Boards and Committees, Community Outreach Staff and other staff of the SCB.

Some of the tools considered for the distribution of program information would be as follows:

- SCB website and social media,
- C-Net,
- Radio advertisements,
- Direct mail of postcards to residential property owners within SCB,
- A flyer designed to be distributed widely electronically by email and in printed form to community stakeholders, particularly to those most vulnerable and disproportionately impacted segments of the population, and
- Reach out to our elected state and federal governments officials.

Next discussed: **Non-discrimination Policy**

The Committee discussed disproportionate needs and equity extensively. Ms. Safko stated no person would be excluded from participation in the CARES Act Emergency Housing Retention Programs, or otherwise discriminated against, on the basis of actual or perceived 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.

The program design of the CARES Act Emergency Housing Retention Program would address the disproportionate needs identified in the 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan and the 2020-2024 Fair Housing Analysis update as well as those experiencing disproportionate adverse impacts from the COVID health, and economic crisis as identified through national and statewide studies.

Per the 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan, "A disproportionately greater need existed when the members of racial or ethnic group at a given income level experienced housing problems at a greater rate (10% or more) than the income level as a whole.

With regard to the four housing problems (lacked complete kitchen facilities; lacked complete plumbing facilities; more than one person per room; and cost burden greater than 30%), a disproportionate need had been identified, with:

- 90% (35) of American Indian, Alaska Native households,
- 89% (85) of Hispanic households with an income 0%-30% AMI,
- 100% (100) of Black/African American households,
- 100% (275) of Asian households with an income 30-50% AMI, and
- 100% (15) of American Indian, Alaska Native households with an income 50%-80% AMI.

Next discussed: **Utilization of HUD Waivers**

Ms. Safko noted the CARES Act provided authorization for the U.S. Department of HUD to waive numerous CDBG and HOME statutory and programmatic requirements to expedite delivery of housing retention activities to prepare for, prevent and respond to the growing health and economic crisis related to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. SCB notified HUD of the intent to utilize waivers related to an expedited citizen participation process.

Additionally, the TBRA Program would utilize the HUD waivers that were available through December 31, 2020. For this reason, it was the intent of the SCB to expend FY 2020 HOME funding for this TBRA Program through the end of 2020.

Next discussed: **CDBG & HOME Terms of Assistance**

Ms. Safko stated Housing retention assistance would be provided in the form of a grant and was not subject to recapture or repayment to the SCB. No amount of the assistance must be returned, EXCEPT in the case of fraud or the intentional misrepresentation of any eligibility determining factor.

Ms. Safko asked for CAC comments regarding those applicants that would not want to participate in mediation but wanted to receive funds.

**CAC comments**

- Mr. Smith stated perhaps applicants would feel the landlord would not be willing to participate.
- Mr. Boswell noted the SCB should help the homeless even though their landlord might not want to participate in mediation.
- Mr. Olcese noted his current experience with his landlord was not helpful.
- Mr. Quigley asked what Ms. Safko thought and she stated the SCB would want to make things as flexible as possible with the fewest barriers to participation and for this reason would prefer that mediation not be mandatory as a condition of receiving assistance.
- Mr. Quigley noted the advantage of mediation was that it would not be adversarial.

Ms. Safko noted payments would be made directly to the mortgage holders, landlords, property management companies and/or utility providers on behalf of program participants.

In order to be eligible to receive assistance, tenant applicants should be encouraged to engage in mediation services paid for by the CDBG funds to further reduce the potential of eviction. If the tenant applicant agreed to mediation, which was determined to be infeasible for some other reason, the applicant cannot be barred from receiving financial benefits on this basis.

Next discussed: **CDBG Funded COVID Emergency Response Homelessness Prevention Program**

Ms. Safko stated every Monday at 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., staff would take up to a maximum of 20 calls per week and the funds could last for approximately four weeks. To bring equity to the program there would be one slot for each of the following six criteria reserved for participation each week. Any slots available each week after these six are filled, would be allocated on a first come first served basis from calls received during the two call times listed above.

- Households with children under the age of 19 living in the assisted dwelling at the time of application,
- English as a Second Language Student family,
- Household with person of a population more vulnerable to the health impacts of the COVID-19 virus as identified by the CDC website on July 1, 2020 (racial and ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, people with developmental and behavioral disorders, pregnant people),
- Racial and ethnic minority populations identified as disproportionately impacted by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic,
- Populations identified as having disproportionate housing needs according to the 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan, and
- Those households that could document having lost income due to the COVID-19 pandemic and had become re-employed in a new job (either as supplemental income or new primary employment) that still paid less than their previous employment.

CAC comments

- Mr. Quigley suggested looking at the language of the first bullet point. He stated it was a bit unclear and suggested removing the word “assisted”.
- Mr. Olcese stated it was a “solid shot: at trying to be fair”.

Ms. Safko stated the CACJ was a great asset in our community. She noted District Justice Hahn was very supportive of this mediation program.

- Mr. Quigley stated he would like to see more families be subsidized in the SCB.

It was noted to add “undergraduate” to the student eligibility based on the income of the household in which they were claimed as a dependent and those households must be living with the SCB.

A motion was made by Ms. Patterson to approve the draft policy and procedure document as discussed with Committee comments and seconded by Mr. Boswell. The vote was unanimously in favor.

## **Upcoming Meeting**

Tuesday, August 4, 2020 at Noon

## **Adjournment**

With no further business, Mr. Quigley made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:17 p.m. and Ms. Patterson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise L. Rhoads  
Administrative Assistant