

**Meeting Minutes
State College Borough
CDBG/Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC)
August 4, 2020
Virtual Meeting**

The State College Borough (SCB) Community Development Block Grant/Citizens' Advisory Committee (CDBG/CAC) virtual Zoom meeting was called to order by Selden Smith, Chair on Tuesday, August 4, 2020 at 12:01 p.m.

Members Present

Selden Smith, Chair; Ian Boswell; David Gaines, Vice-Chair; Jason Olcese; and Marcia Patterson

Members Absent

Alexis Burke and Bruce Quigley

Others Present

Maureen H. Safko, Senior Planner; Elizabeth S. Eirmann, Planner-Housing Specialist; Isabel Storey, Planner; Denise L. Rhoads, Administrative Assistant; Morgan Wasikonis, Housing Transitions, Inc. (HTI); Phil Jones, House of Care (HOC); Leanne Lenz and Elaine Seto, Centre Helps; Stephanie Fost, Habitat for Humanity; Tommy Songer, Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate; Mark Huncik, Redevelopment Authority member and Highlands Civic Association President; and other interested parties

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Patterson and seconded by Mr. Gaines to approve the July 7, 2020 minutes as amended. 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.

Public Hearing on Housing & Community Development Needs and Proposed Strategies for Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing

Ms. Safko's brief overview of CDBG Program Information for the 2021 Action Plan included:

- The program must benefit low- and moderate-income levels that were less than 80 percent of Area Median Income (AMI),
- Eligible Activities: 1) acquisition/rehabilitation/resale for first time homebuyers (funded with HOME), 2) public facilities such as water/sewer/parks/streetscapes/etc., 3) owner occupied housing rehabilitation, and 5) historic preservation to name a few,
- Must always be conscious of Fair Housing legislation in implementation of activities,
- If a CDBG or HOME funded activity results in displacement of residents, then the Borough must pay for the construction of comparable replacement units within the same vicinity within 3 years that must remain affordable,

- Goods and services for all CDBG and HOME funded activities must be procured with efforts to include Minority Business Enterprise/Women Business Enterprise, and Section 3 individuals and firms, and
- Matching funds are not required

Mr. Smith read a supportive testimony from Glen Plumley regarding the need for the services of the Out of the Cold (OOTC) organization:

“Out of the Cold Centre County has been providing the homeless with a safe place to shelter during cold and lonely nights since 2011. This year, they expanded their service by providing a place for those people to get out of the heat during the day in their Day Shelter. They have, so far, contended with Centre County’s homeless situation with the generous help of volunteers and area churches, but due to COVID-19 people are staying close to home and there are fewer and fewer members of the community to answer the call. They are also seeing an increased need due to the economic fallout of the virus.

Because of this, they have had to hire new staff in order to address the now 24-hour need for shelter, and this cuts into their yearly budget in ways that threaten to compromise their mission. For them to continue their services, they need to find new and creative avenues of funding. I hope that the Citizens Advisory Committee can be one of those avenues. The Centre County community relies on Out of the Cold to provide refuge to the homeless, and human services to help them find permanent solutions. With 24-hour services they can better extend the hand of hope and provide a sense of wellbeing to those who are in the direst of situations.

With a grant from the Citizens Advisory Committee, Out of the Cold can continue to touch lives in direct and meaningful ways. Please consider them as a public service in-line with the mission of the Committee and beneficial to the citizens of the county. Help them help the homeless by supporting their growing need with federal funding”.

The Chairman then asked the public in attendance via Zoom to provide input regarding community needs that can be addressed with CDBG or HOME funding. There being no input provided by the public, the Chair requested that members of the Committee offer their input on community needs.

- Mr. Olcese stated he would like to divert resources to give help prevent homelessness. He noted that the homeless gather daily at the corner of Pugh and Beaver and drink out of paper bags. He also noticed homeless outside of the Schlow Centre Region Library and no masks were being worn. He noted staff should choose a more specific direction to work toward a permanent shelter.
- Mr. Gaines stated he was curious to hear from the public regarding how they would respond to Mr. Olcese’s comments.

Public Comments

- Mr. Songer stated the need for improved broadband coverage. He added that no affordable housing projects had been completed in a long while. He stated his company found that each municipality was doing their own part regarding affordable housing and asked if more regional coordination would be possible to accomplish larger, more impactful projects. Mr. Songer stated some local municipalities, University Area Joint Authority (UAJA) and Centre Region Code Administration (Codes) were not willing to reduce their fees to help reduce the cost of developing affordable housing. Ms. Safko stated that CDBG and HOME funds can be used to pay for these fees for affordable housing projects. Ms. Safko and Mr. Smith stated that this Committee lacks the authority to set tap fees, permit fees and other development related review fees. She added that tap fees are based on a state regulated calculation based on the debt, operations, number of customers, etc. for each specific system. Mr. Songer also stated the need was for both affordable rentals and owner-occupied home buyer projects. Ms. Fost stated that a significant quantity of people with incomes below 40 percent AMI

reach out to the Centre County Habitat for Humanity to apply for home ownership opportunities.

- Ms. Wasikonis stated it was common for the homeless to be on the streets during the day especially during the summer. She noted both HTI and OOTC have done things that they hadn't normally done before to help the homeless population to be sheltered and have the ability to practice social distancing to reduce the spread of disease in the community. She noted both organizations worked together this summer and stated it had been quite a success story. One of the other ways to recognize this issue was to tap into other resources such as the Centre County Adult Services office. She noted the SCB Planning Department had allocated a lot of funding to help as well.
- Mr. Jones, a representative of both the Out of The Cold shelter and the House of Care shelter, noted that SCB had been very supportive of efforts to serve the homeless during this pandemic. He also stated there were several hotels that were supportive. He shared that while OOTC had operated a day shelter in the Meeting House on Atherton Street and it had become impossible to keep the shelter open because of not being able to keep enough paid employees and volunteers. Their focus had been trying to keep the group on Pugh Street off the streets during the night by sheltering them at the Meeting House on Atherton Street. The night shelter position is being funded with CDBG-CV funds. He noted the local businesses and the library were closed due to the pandemic. So, there really was no other place for them to go. Mr. Jones stated it was probably not possible to eliminate homelessness completely because there was a small population that chose to live that way. He stressed the greater need for a permanent emergency shelter for this community and stated that property was hard to come by to establish this emergency shelter.

There being no further input from the public or discussion from committee members or staff, the public hearing portion of the agenda was closed.

CDBG Proposal

Ms. Safko noted Centre Helps submitted a proposal to SCB to create a Basic Needs Case Management position to be funded through the FY 2020 CDBG Program funds that were reserved for Food and Shelter Services. The additional staff support was needed due to a rise in call volume due to the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 coronavirus. The proposal outlined that half of the cost associated with this full-time position would be funded with \$25,000 from the SCB's CDBG program, while Centre County, the United Way and other sources provided the remaining funds needed for the new position. Staff services would be divided equally between county residents living inside and outside of the Borough of State College.

Ms. Safko noted Centre County Adult Services gave the SCB a letter of support for the full-time Basic Needs Case Management position for a 12-month period.

A motion was made by Mr. Boswell to recommend to Council to approve the amended FY 2020 Annual Action Plan to fund the Centre Helps Basic Needs Case Manager position with \$25,000 in CDBG funds. The motion was seconded by Mr. Olcese. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Mr. Olcese asked if there could be a staff member that worked with tapping fees, etc. that could attend a future meeting to share what the process for developers would look like. Ms. Safko noted the process would also require involvement from other agencies such as UAJA, The Centre Region Codes Office, etc.

Upcoming Meeting

Tuesday, August 18, 2020 at Noon

Adjournment

With no further business, Ms. Patterson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:04 p.m. and Mr. Boswell seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise L. Rhoads
Administrative Assistant