

**CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES**

DECEMBER 6, 2001

PORTSMOUTH CITY HALL

7:00 P.M.

Present: Robert Layton, Chairman; Cicero Lewis; Nancy Emerson; Jean Pecunies; Peter Rice; and Dani Rooney.

Absent: Vern Gardner; Lynne Langley; William Thorpe; and Russ Van Billiard.

Staff: Cindy Hayden, Community Development Director

Chairman Layton opened the public hearing at 7:00 p.m. to hear comments from the public regarding amending the FY 2001/02 CDBG Budget as follows: to reprogram \$17,000 from the contingency line item to the existing activity titled Accessible Public Facilities. Ms. Hayden said the purpose of this amendment is to fund the purchase and installation of a new handicapped accessible lift to improve access to Portsmouth City Hall. She said that lift technology has advanced considerably since this lift was installed more than ten years ago, and that the new lift would have a larger (42" x 60") platform deck and be much more user friendly.

Chairman Layton asked for discussion from the CAC members present and, hearing none, he opened the hearing for public comment at 7:05 p.m. Judy Bunnell, Director of the Portsmouth Housing Authority's Senior Center said she thinks it is a great idea, particularly since people have had problems using the existing lift. Hearing no further comment, Chairman Layton closed the hearing at 7:08 p.m.

Ms. Emerson made a motion to recommend to the City Manager that the FY 2001/02 CDBG budget be amended such that \$17,000 is reprogrammed from the contingency line item to the existing activity titled Accessible Public Facilities. Ms. Pecunies seconded the motion. All voted in favor; Chairman Layton said he had Mr. Van Billiard's proxy vote in the affirmative. The motion passed.

Mr. Layton moved on to the next public hearing agenda concerning progress in the current fiscal year on CDBG-funded projects; an overview of CDBG project eligibility requirements; and input regarding what projects should be funded in the coming fiscal year beginning July 1, 2002. Mr. Layton asked Community Development Director Cindy Hayden to provide an overview of the eligibility requirements, budget process and projects status update.

With regard to the CDBG budget process and project eligibility, Ms. Hayden explained that CDBG funds are provided to the City by U.S. Housing and Urban Development each year in the form of an entitlement grant. Further, she said the main purpose of these funds is to carry out programs, projects and services that benefit residents of Portsmouth who earn low or moderate incomes. She went on to explain that this can take the form of benefiting individual families by, for example, providing low interest housing rehab loans to families earning low or moderate incomes; creating jobs through economic development loans or technical assistance; and carrying out public facility projects (such as streetscape or park improvements) in eligible neighborhoods.

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Ms. Hayden said the funds can also be used to carry out projects that benefit, for example, the residents of housing facilities such as Wamesit Place, Gosling Meadows and Ledgewood Apartments, where at least 51% of residents earn low or moderate incomes. In addition, CDBG funds can be granted to non-profit agencies that provide services (such as housing and health care) to Portsmouth residents who earn low and moderate incomes. Finally, Ms. Hayden said CDBG funds can be used to carry out projects that improve handicapped accessibility such as installation of accessible ramps in public buildings and curb cuts on City sidewalks.

Ms. Hayden provided a PowerPoint slide presentation to describe project progress on the following:

Kearsarge Way Streetscape Project & Hislop Little League Parking Lot Improvements – This \$514,000 project began early this summer and included replacement of water lines (not CDBG funded), paving, curbing, sidewalks, and tree plantings. At Hislop parking area, the gravel lot was paved and wooden guardrail installed. The project is essentially complete with only the tree plantings to occur in spring 2002. Neighborhood residents appear to be very pleased with the improvements.

Greenleaf Avenue Sidewalk – This approximately \$93,000 project involved the installation of curbing and sidewalks between the PHA-owned Wamesit Apartments family housing complex, and the Route 1 Bypass. The granite curbing has all been installed, and all preparation work completed for the sidewalks. The concrete sidewalks will be poured within the next week, with all project work to be completed this fall.

Soldiers and Sailors Monument – Chain link fence has been installed around the monument and the conservators (Daedalus, Inc. of Cambridge, MA), under contract to the City, are performing the testing necessary before they remove the monument to their workspace to begin restoration. Under the terms of the contract, Daedalus has until Spring 2003 to complete the restoration work, however, the City is hopeful the project will be complete next Fall.

She also highlighted the CDBG-funded Housing Rehab Program which provides low interest loans to eligible homeowners for code repairs; the Hometown first time homebuyers program which provides downpayment and closing cost assistance; and the Residential Accessibility Program which provides grants to homeowners for handicapped accessible ramps, bathroom modifications, and other accessibility improvements.

With regard to the CDBG budget making process for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2002, Ms. Hayden said that the Citizens Advisory Committee will gather input from residents over the next several months, prioritize eligible projects brought to their attention, and make recommendations for funding to the City Manager for approval. The budget must be complete and submitted to U.S. Housing and Urban Development for their approval by May 15, 2002. In closing, Ms. Hayden said that, each year, residents bring many worthwhile projects to the attention of the Citizens Advisory Committee, however, they can only recommend funding for eligible projects, and there are always more projects requested than there is available funding.

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Mr. Layton opened the public hearing at 7:20 p.m. to hear public input on community needs and potential CDBG projects for FY 2002/2003. Mr. Layton read into the meeting minutes a letter from Mr. Tom Belmont, President of the Atlantic Heights Neighborhood Association (attached). Ms. Jackie Cowell, Director of the Community Child Care Center, said she appreciates the Citizens Advisory Committee's ongoing support of her agency through the CDBG grant that has been provided for a number of years to benefit low and moderate income families. She said she looks forward to working with the CAC on this and other initiatives.

Hearing no further comments from the public, Chairman Layton closed the hearing at 7:25 p.m.

Following the close of the public hearing, Chairman Layton asked members to consider adoption of the minutes of the June 11, 2001 meeting and the November 27, 2001 meeting. Ms. Rooney made a motion that the meeting minutes for June 11, 2001 be accepted as written; Mr. Lewis seconded the motion. All voted in favor; Chairman Layton said he had Mr. Van Billiard's proxy vote in the affirmative. The motion passed. Ms. Rooney then made a motion that the meeting minutes for November 27, 2001 be accepted as written; Mr. Lewis seconded the motion. All voted in favor; Chairman Layton said he had Mr. Van Billiard's proxy vote in the affirmative. The motion passed.

Ms. Hayden said that staff is in the process of developing a meeting schedule for January through May and asked if there were any particular nights that should be avoided. The general consensus was that Monday and Tuesday should be avoided if possible. Ms. Hayden also provided color print copies of the Community Development portion of the City web site for the members that do not have web access. She said staff are always looking for feedback regarding the site if members see improvements or additions they would like.

Mr. Layton adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.