

APPROVED ON 1/28/04
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
CAC MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 14, 2004

PORTSMOUTH CITY HALL

6:30 P.M.

Present: Chairman Bob Layton, Vice Chairman Cicero Lewis, Dani Rooney, Jean Pecunies, Russ Van Billiard, Paul Staples, Lynn Langley, Nancy Emerson.

Absent: William Thorpe

Staff: Cindy Hayden, Community Development Director; David Moore,
Program Manager

Chairman Layton opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. by reporting to the Committee about his appearance before the City Council where the CAC received an award for its work on the Soldiers & Sailors monument in Goodwin Park. Ms. Hayden introduced new Community Development staff member David Moore and the board members introduced themselves.

The board noted their appreciation of the editorial in the Portsmouth Herald by Liz Kennedy, which praised the CAC for its work. The editorial also advertised the CDBG budget development process for FY 04-05.

Chairman Layton then moved on to acceptance of the November 17, 2003 minutes. Vice Chairman Lewis moved to accept the minutes. Ms. Emerson seconded the motion, and the board voted unanimously in favor.

Chairman Layton turned the meeting over to Ms. Hayden who discussed the memo regarding new eligible census block groups, which are based on Census 2000 information issued in 2003. The eligible block groups, are those in which the majority of the residents earn low or moderate incomes. Overall, two previously eligible census tracts will remain so for the next ten years, and one new tract (loosely defined as part of the Frank Jones Farm neighborhood) has been added to those eligible areas. Ms. Hayden also clarified that this is the first year the tract comprised of Atlantic Heights had been officially recognized through the Census. She reminded the board that a survey of residents in Atlantic Heights initiated by the City made that tract eligible for CDBG funding previously. Ms. Hayden took the time to also point out exactly which landmarks, developments, and roads comprised the new eligible tracts. She noted a portion of the Christian Shore neighborhood was picked up, and the Cabot and McDonough Street neighborhoods are no longer eligible census tract areas.

Mr. Van Billiard noted his satisfaction with the work completed in the Atlantic Heights neighborhood, which in his opinion gave way to wonderful events like the Garden Tour.

Mr. Van Billiard also noted the results of CDBG funded work were very welcome in the neighborhood and he was impressed by the several pocket parks which have improved the community.

Chairman Layton moved on to the meeting schedule for the CAC in 2004. Ms. Hayden noted the schedule provided to the committee earlier in the month is the same as the one presented to the committee this evening, only in a new format.

Ms. Hayden advised the Board that the public service agency grant program had been advertised and applications are due Friday February 20th and meetings are scheduled in March to review the applications and make decisions. The board then discussed the dates. Mr. Van Billiard stated he would be able to make all of the meetings. Ms. Emerson said she had travel plans but would make every opportunity to make the March meetings. Chairman Layton asked for more comments on the meeting schedule but there were none.

Ms. Hayden then began a project update of the current year's activities.

Ms. Hayden repeated that Public Service Agency Grant applications were sent out and told the Board CDBG staff was working on the criteria requested by Vice Chairman Lewis to assist in evaluating the public service grant applications during the selection process.

Ms. Hayden noted that work had begun on Hislop Park. The master plan for the Hislop Park improvements had been partially constructed by the Timberland Servapalooza event in October. Ms. Hayden noted CDBG staff was in the process of determining what work needed to be finished, noting money is still remaining in the Phase I budget. Phase II funding may be necessary for next year to complete the plan.

Ms. Hayden reported on the progress of the 20 unit senior housing conversion of the old Cottage Hospital (1895 Building). Electrical work, interior walls, lead abatement are being done internally and, externally, repointing and repair of mortar work is being completed. Ms. Emerson asked if the CAC could make a site visit. Ms. Hayden said that due to the site's status as a construction zone this probably was not possible, but Ms. Hayden did say she would provide some work-in-progress photos. Ms. Rooney inquired about the number of units, which would be created. Ms. Hayden said 20. Ms. Emerson asked if staff could put together a budget identifying the project's funding sources.

Ms. Hayden also updated the committee on plans for handicapped bathrooms at Leary Field. She noted CDBG staff was currently working on the design, and plan to put the work out to bid in the spring.

Ms. Hayden said the design and engineering services for the latest streetscape project in the Atlantic Heights has been contracted to CLD of York Maine (branch office). Ms. Hayden said the first public meeting and field day were held and both went smoothly. A lot of valuable public input was received, which helped identify drainage, parking, and

other issues and concerns of residents. The next public meeting and field day will be on February 12th and 14th respectively. Ms. Hayden stated that \$200,000 was available for the bricks and mortar portion of the project. She explained that phasing would be necessary for the construction portion. She reminded the CAC that Saratoga Way cost \$300,000 and Kearsarge Way cost \$500,000. She noted work including drainage, curbing, and sidewalks is very expensive.

Ms. Hayden said that accessibility curb cuts were to be constructed in the downtown area in the spring.

Ms. Hayden reported that two non-profit accessibility projects were under way. The Pearl project is complex due to ownership intricacies and current unrelated design work in progress. The plan is to design improvements to make the upper sanctuary and bathrooms accessible. The board may consider funding Phase II in the coming fiscal year, which would be for the actual construction of the improvements.

Ms. Hayden noted that work is continuing on Housing Rehabilitation projects. She highlighted one project, a duplex with two affordable units. She noted that it is unusual to have owners of multi-family units participate because the affordability requirements do not appeal to owners.

Chairman Layton asked about traffic issues at Woodbury and Market Street Extension. Ms. Hayden responded that pedestrian and traffic improvements for Market Street Extension are included in the City's Capital Improvement Plan.

Ms. Rooney inquired about the rent levels required for participants in the Housing Rehabilitation loan program. Ms. Hayden noted Fair Market Rents are used as the basis and said she would provide information to the CAC about the specific rent levels.

Mr. Staples asked about the work being completed down near Betty's Dream. Ms. Hayden stated that streets in that neighborhood are slated for pavement improvements through the City general fund. Mr. Staples asked if the Board of Directors of Betty's Dream had secured funding for the improvements on the building. Ms. Hayden said she would find out. Ms. Hayden reminded the members that the CAC funded a study to look at the best route of travel from Betty's Dream to the Woodbury Avenue and Market Basket intersection. She said that work would include grade changes when the streets are repaved. Mr. Staples said there were no sidewalks in the neighborhood, and asked if they were even necessary because of traffic volume. Ms. Hayden said sidewalks had been discussed previously and residents of Betty's Dream said they weren't a very high priority.

Ms. Rooney inquired about more information for the Housing Rehabilitation rent and program requirements. Ms. Hayden said she would provide it.

Ms. Hayden gave an update on the new HUD income guidelines. She communicated some scenarios, for example, a one-person family making \$37,500 or less is considered as having a moderate income.

Chairman Layton asked if there was any other business.

Mr. Staples asked when those particular income guidelines were issued. Ms. Hayden said they were issued in February of 2003 and that she expected new income guidelines this February. She noted these income figures guide accessibility programs, housing rehabilitation, and the first-time homebuyer program (if CDBG funds are used versus HomeTown's non-CDBG resources). Ms. Rooney asked what the median income was and Ms. Hayden noted it depended on family size. Ms. Hayden again provided some examples.

Ms. Hayden also reminded the CAC that the first-time homebuyer funds were largely provided by the PHEF (Portsmouth Housing Endowment Fund) trust fund. Recently, that board made a decision to increase downpayment and closing cost subsidies awarded to eligible applicants because housing costs in the area continued to be unreachable for people even with HomeTown assistance.

Mr. Van Billiard asked Ms. Hayden if the amount of the entitlement grant for FY 04-05 was known. Ms. Hayden said it wasn't final, but indicated it would probably be about the same.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m., and immediately opened the Public Hearing.