

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING**

JANUARY 15, 2013

**PORTSMOUTH CITY HALL
Conference Room A**

6:00 P.M.

Present: Chairperson Nancy Emerson, Algene Bailey, Constance Carmody, Bob Layton, Lynne Langley, Alicia Weaver

Absent: Vice Chairperson Dani Rooney (excused), Jean Pecunies (excused)

Staff: Dave Allen, David Moore, Adam Cannon

Chairwoman Nancy Emerson called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Following the call to order, David Moore, Community Development Director, introduced a new member to the committee, Alicia Weaver. After introducing Ms. Weaver, David also introduced Ms. Alison Hamilton, a new committee member under consideration by the City Council.

Next, the committee unanimously approved the minutes from previous Citizen's Advisory Committee meeting on April 18, 2012.

Mr. Moore then proceeded to introduce the three public hearings on the agenda. The first public hearing was for the approval of revisions to the Citizen Participation Plan to address Fair Housing regulations. The second public hearing is for seeking input on the Review of Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing and potential impediments. The third and final public hearing was to seek input to plan for the FY 2013-2014 Annual Plan and Budget and provide updates on existing projects.

Mr. Moore gave a presentation on the revisions to the Citizen Participation Plan, which are designed to incorporate Fair Housing regulations into the Plan. Chairwoman Emerson then opened the public hearing. The revised Plan was made available on the City's website. No comments were received. Ms. Lynne Langley motioned for approval of the revisions of the Citizen Participation Plan and Ms. Constance Carmody seconded the motion. The committee unanimously approved the revisions to the Citizen Participation Plan.

Chairwoman Emerson then recognized Mr. Moore to introduce the second public hearing. Mr. Moore briefly introduced Fair Housing and reminded the CAC of past discussions and the City's partnership with New Hampshire Legal Assistance. Mr. Moore then invited Mr. Dan Feltes of New Hampshire Legal Assistance to give a presentation on Fair Housing law. Mr. Feltes discussed examples of discriminatory practices that sometime take place in the housing setting. He noted that Portsmouth is doing a good job of working to address impediments to Fair Housing. Mr. Moore noted that the Community Development Department will be working on updates in the coming months and the identified impediments to fair housing within Portsmouth that are addressed in the 2010 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing. In the past, HUD placed a strong emphasis on public sector impediments, but is now asking municipalities to more strenuously investigate private sector impediments. The target for research on these impediments is during the spring of this year. Mr. Moore announced that the presentation along with other housing resource sites will be placed on the Community Development page of the City website. Chairwoman Emerson then opened the second public hearing and seeing no comments closed the hearing.

In advance of the third public hearing, Mr. Moore then gave a presentation on the history of the CDBG program, the charge of the Citizen's Advisory Committee, past projects and eligibility for new projects. Mr.

Moore also reminded attendees that the first-time homebuyers program, HomeTown is still being offered. After this presentation, Chairwoman Emerson opened the final public hearing and invited comments.

Ms. Kelly Weinstein of the Goodwin Park Neighborhood Association requested a renovation of Cater Park and also requested accessibility along Islington Street to shopping centers. She noted that the elderly have trouble getting to the grocery and drug stores because of the limited sidewalks within the neighborhood. According to Ms. Weinstein, there are also seventeen families with children under the age of 3 and a half years old. Noting that many improvements have been made to City parks and sidewalks she said she was interested in ensuring equalization of municipal services.

Mr. Camden Mitchell of the Goodwin Park Neighborhood Association also requested a renovation of Cater Park and streetscape improvements within the neighborhood.

Mr. Byron Grant of Operation Blessing spoke next to request a backup generator for the non-profit facility. Operation Blessing recently received a donation of a freezer and walk-in cooler for meat storage. The organization has been distributing this meat to fourteen other smaller food pantries. Mr. Grant stated that a backup generator would help keep food from spoiling during large storms and power outages.

Ms. Stephanie Krenn of the Atlantic Heights Neighborhood Association updated the committee on the community garden. She noted that neighbors received a donation from a Wal-Mart in Maine that included 500 bulbs to plant in the neighborhood. Ms. Krenn requested several projects for the neighborhood. First, she asked for the completion of streetscape improvements on Ranger Way. Ms. Krenn also asked that improvements be made to Maynard Park in order to return the park to a serviceable condition. One of the specific items she requested is an enclosure to the vestibule in the dog park. She noted that there is an escape risk. She would also like the City to add a water spigot to the park and add a trash can at the dog park to be serviced year-round by the City. Next, Ms. Krenn requested light poles to be installed along the sidewalks where they were originally planned. She stated that this would create safer walking for families and those with mobility impairments. Finally, Ms. Krenn asked for an engineering study to look at alternate access routes out of the neighborhood and a way to re-route oil trucks on Ranger Way away from the residential areas.

Ms. Becky May of ServiceLink Resource Center stated that she was considering applying for funds. ServiceLink helps people who earn low incomes, seniors and disabled people to find helpful resources and save money on services. She briefly discussed how the organization is saving eligible individuals \$104 per month in costs.

Mr. Craig Welch of the Portsmouth Housing Authority introduced himself as the new CEO of the PHA. Mr. Welch recounted the mission of PHA to increase affordable housing and expand permanent affordable housing. He noted that he is willing to help the City with their goal to expand affordable housing. Currently, PHA is examining small scattered sites to expand housing offerings.

Mr. Dennis Labbe of New Hampshire Legal Assistance introduced himself as an attorney who represents people who earn low/moderate incomes for housing issues. He said that he is concerned with the overarching housing affordability problem in Portsmouth. He noted there is a lack of rental and shelter housing and that the wait list for housing is extremely long. He also stated that the Cross Roads House is completely full.

Mr. Byron Grant added that Operation Blessing is next to the Cross Roads House and that many people come to Operation Blessing seeking shelter. They try to put those people in hotels in coordination with Catholic Charities and that a lot more people come the colder it gets.

Mr. Craig Welch spoke again and discussed expiring mandates for affordable housing on some properties. Some properties are reaching the end of their affordability. Other properties are in transition and permanent affordable public housing contracts are running out.

Ms. Hannah Dalgren, a Portsmouth resident, stated that she often refers people to ServiceLink from the Social Security Administration.

Seeing no more comments, Mr. Cannon proceeded to discuss completed and in-progress projects during the current fiscal year. After this brief discussion, Mr. Moore informed the committee about the work on senior services and of the City's new Senior Services Coordinator, Brinn Chute. He noted that HUD is very happy to spend time on seniors. The presentation completed with Mr. Moore reminding the group about core CDBG programs including residential accessibility, housing rehabilitation, and HomeTown.

Chairwoman Emerson asked if there were any more questions.

Mr. Moore then distributed the meeting schedule and calendar. He informed the committee that the January 29th meeting may not be necessary but he would work with the Chair to determine that closer to the meeting.

Ms. Langley asked what the Goodwin Park Neighborhood Association members were referencing for improvements. Mr. Moore answered that they were referencing Cater Park; however, that particular neighborhood is ineligible for CDBG funds.

Ms. Hamilton asked if the Goodwin Park representatives were aware that their neighborhood was not eligible. Mr. Moore answered that he will follow up with them on the topic.

Chairwoman Emerson asked if the committee could have a copy of the latest income limits used by public service grant beneficiaries along with a new member list with addresses and e-mails of committee members. Mr. Moore said he would send this out.

Ms. Lynne Langley asked who is currently working in housing rehabilitation program. Mr. Moore replied that an hourly employee familiar with residential construction is performing duties previously performed by the Housing Specialist.

Chairwoman Emerson adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.