

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING**

MARCH 17, 2016

**PORTSMOUTH CITY HALL
CONFERENCE ROOM A**

6:00 P.M.

Present: Chair Lynne Langley, Alison Hamilton, Judy Bunnell, Hannah Dahlgren,
Jonathan Sandberg

Absent: Jamie Baker, Vice-Chair Dani Rooney

Staff: Elise Annunziata, Community Development Coordinator

Chair Langley called the meeting to order and recognized the following individuals to discuss their application for the FY 2016-2017 Public Service Agency Grant Program. In turn, each agency also described the needs facing their clients, their agency operations and the overall community development challenges over the next five years.

6:00 – 6:15	AIDS Response Seacoast Richard Wagner, Executive Director
6:15 – 6:30	Cross Roads House Martha Stone, Executive Director
6:30 – 6:45	New Heights: Adventures for Teens Tracey Tucker, Executive Director and Janice Hastings, Director of Development
6:45 – 7:00	PHA Housing Development LTD, MC3 Karley Lapierre, Program Director, MC3
7:00 – 7:15	Rockingham Community Action Keith Bates, Community Services Director

Mr. Wagner discussed AIDS Response Seacoast’s plan to grow its board and expressed satisfaction with the agency’s current office space, noting that confidentiality is critical. He stated that while HIV/AIDS cases have remained stable in number, there is great concern over the rise in Hepatitis C. He expressed that the challenges facing community development in Portsmouth and his clients in particular is housing, transportation, mental health services, substance misuse, food security and insurance coverage. He stated that transportation in particular is an issue with insufficient COAST stops to City Hall and taxis unwilling to travel in/out of the City. He states that as with confidentiality necessary for HIV/AIDS support services, confidentiality is important for substance misuse and alcohol treatment facilities.

Ms. Stone stated that demand for shelter beds increased this year, particularly during the winter. She noted that this may have been due to Brewster Street housing closing unexpectedly. The average length of state in FY 15 was 61 days, but the range is wide – varying from a few days to a year or more. The agency faces hiring challenges in terms of recruiting skilled workers with MSW degree. She also spoke to housing needs and

preventing homelessness as challenges over the next five years. In particular, insufficient affordable housing and permanent supportive housing for families and individuals.

Ms. Hastings described the New Heights program and the scholarships provided to Portsmouth youth. She pointed to transportation and funding sustainability as critical challenges for the program. She described the decrease of critical funding support from the Foundation for Seacoast Health which is expected to decrease to zero beginning with this year.

Ms. Lapierre described the Portsmouth Housing Authority's MC3 Program aimed primarily to benefit children from Gosling Meadows. She stated that 8% of all Portsmouth school aged children are from public housing. The agency provides a late bus transportation from the program site at New Franklin School. Summer programming will include on site program at Gosling Meadows and scholarship slots at Camp Gundalow. Ms. Lapierre noted that mental illness among children is a concern, as well as affordable housing for families. She pointed to housing challenges for Portsmouth families that are PHA-ineligible.

Mr. Bates discussed the Rockingham Community Action homeless prevention program that provides financial assistance to tenant families struggling to stay in their homes. The program offers financial counseling and wrap around services to provide stability for low-income families in need. He indicated that housing supply would continue to be a challenge in the coming years and that rental subsidies for families in temporary financial difficulty will be a critical support, which he advocated continuing.

Chair Langley adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.