

**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2024 AT 6:30 PM

**CONFERENCE ROOM A
PORTSMOUTH CITY HALL, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE**

CAC members present: Hannah Meade, Chair; Susan Durling; Annelise Hartley

CAC members absent: Kirsten Barton; Kelly DeCourcy

Staff: Elise Annunziata, Community Development Director; Caitlin Hart, Community Development Program Assistant

Public present: Tamara Leibowitz, Executive Director, AIDS Response Seacoast; Emma Boniche, Director, Making Classroom and Community Connections; Tammy Joslyn, Executive Director, Operation Blessing; Sandra Beaudry, Program Director, Cross Roads House; Patte-Anne Ardizzoni, Communications Director, Rockingham Community Action/Southern NH Services; Mark Lentz, Facilities Director, Portsmouth Housing Authority.

Chair Hannah Meade called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) reviewed the minutes from the public hearing and meeting on February 8, 2024. Susan Durling made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Annelise Hartley seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Staff Elise Annunziata gave a brief update on the status of federal funding, sharing that the Transportation-Housing and Urban Development (THUD) bill passed earlier in the week. The amount and date of receipt of FY 25 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for the City of Portsmouth are still unknown.

Chair Meade recognized the following individuals to discuss their agency's application for the FY 2025 Public Service Agency Grant Program. Each agency also described the needs facing their clients, their agency operations, and the overall community development challenges for the coming year.

6:40 pm – AIDS Response Seacoast (Tamara Leibowitz)

6:55 pm – Making Classroom and Community Connections (Emma Boniche)

7:10 pm – Operation Blessing (Tammy Joslyn)

7:25 pm – Cross Roads House (Sandra Beaudry)

7:40 pm – Rockingham Community Action/Southern NH Services (Patte-Anne Ardizzoni)

Ms. Leibowitz of AIDS Response Seacoast (ARS) described the case management services that ARS provides to persons living with HIV/AIDS. The cost of living (housing, food, utilities, transportation) has increasingly become a challenge to ARS clients. In the past year or so, as COVID-related support through other entities has ended, ARS has responded by expanding its services to include, for example, food pantry access. ARS is expected to move from their current office in the City Hall complex (7 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth) to Community Campus (100 Campus Drive, Portsmouth), likely by the summer. With this move, their rent will remain reduced at a nonprofit rate.

Ms. Boniche of Making Classroom and Community Connections (MC3) described the summer program that MC3 hopes to offer, targeting youth at Gosling Meadows public housing. MC3 offers an affordable youth enrichment program during the summer, which includes transportation, meals and snacks, clubs, and field trips. Challenges discussed included the rising cost of materials and services to provide programming. In the past, MC3 has been funded by a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant; however, they did not receive the grant for the current fiscal year (FY 24) and are waiting to learn if they have received the grant for FY 25. They expect to know early to mid-June.

Ms. Joslyn of Operation Blessing (OB) described the Warming Center activities that OB manages. The OB Warming Center offers homeless persons a place to safely spend the night in events of winter weather and extreme cold. Additionally, after a CDBG facility improvement grant for plumbing last spring, the Warming Center provides indoor toilet and sink and offers homeless guests the opportunity to shower. Ms. Joslyn observed that the Warming Center has sheltered more women as well as a few elderly couples this year, which was a change from previous years. She confirmed that no children are permitted.

Ms. Beaudry of Cross Roads House (CRH) described the emergency shelter, transitional shelter, and housing services that CRH provides to homeless persons. Ms. Beaudry observed that CRH has sheltered more elderly folks this year compared to previous years. Challenges to CRH clients discussed include waiting lists for bottom bunks and accessibility as more disabled and elderly persons shelter at CRH; successfully navigating Medicaid and assisted living placement for disabled, sick, and elderly persons; and housing placement and availability in general.

Ms. Ardizzoni of Rockingham Community Action/Southern NH Services (RCA/SNHS) described the short-term rental assistance subsidies, as well as other wraparound services, that RCA/SNHS provides to low- to moderate-income and precariously-housed persons. Challenges to RCA/SNHS clients discussed include the effects of the end of federal COVID-related support and the cost of living, which has in turn significantly increased the demand and need for short-term rental assistance.

Overall, presenters for public service agencies mentioned the lack of affordable and workforce housing, which makes it challenging for their clients to stay in their existing housing and/or be placed in stable and sustainable housing. Other community challenges discussed included transportation access, and staff cultivation and retention (some of which is made difficult due to the affordable and workforce housing issue).

The Public Service Agency Grant Program presentation portion of the meeting ended at 7:57 pm.

Chair Meade recognized Mark Lentz, Facilities Director for Portsmouth Housing Authority (PHA), to discuss PHA's 5-year Capital Fund Plan for the years 2024 through 2028.

Mr. Lentz provided a list of potential capital projects, estimated costs, and the year in which PHA expects project completion. The CAC and Mr. Lentz discussed some of the projects listed. The CAC requested that Mr. Lentz curate the list further to present projects for FY 25 funding consideration based on PHA's priorities, which projects will be shovel ready, and which projects are not weather dependent (i.e., could be completed indoors at any point during FY 25).

The CAC discussed the contents of and procedures for the next meeting, which will consist of Public Service Agency Grant Program applicant presentations.

Chair Meade called for someone to motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 pm. Annelise Hartley made a motion to adjourn. Susan Durling seconded the motion. All voted in favor.