

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

**MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING ON COMMUNITY NEEDS  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2025 AT 6:30 PM**

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

**CAC members present:** Hannah Meade, Chair; Kirsten Barton; Kelly DeCourcy; Susan Durling; Annelise Hartley

**CAC members absent:** None

**Staff:** Elise Annunziata, Community Development Director

**Public present:** Will Arvelo, Executive Director Cross Roads House; Mark Lentz, Facilities Director Portsmouth Housing Authority; Tammy Joslyn, Executive Director, Operation Blessing; Louise Ferrari HAVEN, Helen Kostrzynski, Meals on Wheels; Kathie Comeau CAPHR; Mike Wilson, Seacoast Mental Health, Lindsay Lincoln, NH Legal Assistance

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Chair Hannah Meade called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm. This is a rescheduled meeting and public hearing from Feb. 6.

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) reviewed the minutes from their meeting on January 16, 2025. Susan Durling made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Annelise Hartley seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Elise Annunziata presented on CDBG eligibility requirements, the process and requirements for the FY 2026-30 Five Year Consolidated Plan and FY26 Action Plan, the status of FY 2025 public services and public facilities projects, and the anticipated FY 2026 allocation and timeline.

Status of current FY25 projects include significant efforts at: Four Tree Island ADA restrooms almost complete; will have a ribbon cutting in the late spring; Cross Roads House shelter building/facility improvements; and Families First community health center building facility improvements.

Concerning the FY 2026 allocation, Ms. Annunziata noted Congress's continuing resolution, which will delay the City's receipt of its FY 2026 allocation amount.

The Public Hearing portion of the meeting began at 6:47 pm. Before hearing from those who came to speak, Ms. Annunziata emphasized the value of agencies identifying priority housing, infrastructure, and transportation projects that would be shovel-ready for FY 2026.

Will Arvelo, Cross Roads House (CRH) Executive described the services and clientele at CRH. He noted that recently that are seeing more women, first time homeless, elderly, and persons with disabilities seeking transitional shelter. CRH has over 200 people on the waitlist for beds. Priority near term facility improvements/expansion projects include: 1) reconfiguring the shelter space to add 10 more beds in the main building; and 2) Rebuilding a new family structure to increase up to 20-24 families and improve ADA access. Projected project cost at this time is \$8-10M. FY 25 projects were not raised by CRH at this time.

Mike Wilson from Seacoast Mental Health explained the agency's services and that the majority of their clients are on Medicaid. The agency will be looking to make facility improvements to address water leakage issues.

Mark Lentz, Facilities Director for Portsmouth Housing Authority (PHA), spoke next. He gave updates on a delayed FY 2024 project, the exterior lift at Connors Cottage—which is now back on track. He discussed the FY 27-28 major project at Sherburne School site for new housing and the renovation of the school building into usable space. Ms. Annunziata mentioned that there could be funding at the state and/or municipal level for rehabilitation of the school into a community center, with reminder that CDBG cannot be used for new housing construction under the current rules. Mr. Lentz also mentioned that an accessible/sensory playground is a need and a siting for such a playground could be explored at one of the PHA sites or possibly at Greenleaf Recreation Center (city-owned).

Louise Ferrari, HAVEN Domestic Violence Shelter Program Director spoke about the significant increase in domestic violence since COVID and that shelter needs/beds for persons surviving domestic violence are continuing to increase. The Lafayette Rd. Little Blessing property and rehabilitation project with the church is facing delays due to legal issues. It is their hope that it will get on track for a new shelter, housing and HAVEN central operations facility construction.

Tammy Joslyn, Executive Director of Operation Blessing and Resident Services Coordinator for PHA spoke about the Warming Center and her observations about an increased incidence of more elderly and women coming to the emergency warming center shelter (~40% women and 60% men). The facility is currently in need of roof and siding renovations. The agency is looking ahead to expanding the Warming Center to add 6 more beds to help meet increasing demand. The agency also provides services to emergency shelter guests and will hope to coordinate those services with Cross Roads House. Regarding Greenleaf Recreation Center, Ms. Joslyn mentioned that they are seeing more persons with disabilities and autism and reiterated the needs for a sensory playground or a splash pad that was raised last year. She also mentioned the lack of a bus stop on Holiday Drive/Greenleaf Ave. The CAC, CD staff, and agency attendees discussed the idea of adding such a playground or extending the existing playgrounds in the Wamesit neighborhood to enhance opportunities for play for youth who may be neurodivergent or disabled. Ms. Joslyn confirmed that the Greenleaf Recreation Center skate park was still being regularly used for skateboarding. for youth residents of Wamesit Place.

Kathie Comeau of Rockingham CAP (now called CAPHR – Community Action Partnership of Hillsborough and Rockingham) spoke about their homeless prevention program and emergency rental assistance. She mentioned that previous programs funded through the state including security deposit assistance are now gone, but the need is great. She noted that more people are living “on the edge” from paycheck to paycheck and their programs are intended to help in the short term to prevent eviction. Ms. Annunziata inquired about financial literacy and other fair housing trainings. Ms. Lincoln from NH Legal Assistance spoke up and offered that NHLA does provide fair housing assistance, some in coordination with social service agencies.

The public comment portion of the meeting closed at 7:45 pm.

The CAC discussed the expectations procedures for the upcoming March meetings, which will consist of Public Service Agency Grant Program applicant presentations.

Chair Meade called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 pm. Kelly DeCourcy made a motion to adjourn. Susan Durling seconded the motion. All voted in favor.