



TOWN OF WARE

Planning & Community Development
126 Main Street, Ware, Massachusetts 01082
t. 413.967.9648 ext. 186 / f. 413.967.9642
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Meeting Minutes from
Monday, January 13, 2020
Select Board Room, Town Hall

CDA Members Present: Paul Opalinski, John Carroll, Danielle Souza, & Brandy Bruso

Guests: Ted Harvey (PVPC), Monica Moran (DVTF), JAC Patrissi (BHN), Judith Roberts (The Literacy Project). Sheila Cuddy (Hardwick Outreach)

Staff Present: Rebekah DeCoursey, Director of Planning & Community Development; Stuart Beckley, Town Manager

Public in Attendance: James Baird, Denis Ouimette, Melissa & Pedro Esteves, RJ Ferrullo, Anthia T. Elliott.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman P. Opalinski called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Administration

a. Meeting Minutes

D. Souza made a motion to approve the minutes of November 12, 2019. J. Carroll second, no discussion. Approved 4-0.

b. Recommendation of Appointment: James Baird to the CDA

James Baird of Walter Drive in Ware introduced himself to the CDA. He has worked as Town Counsel in Ware, Palmer, West Brookfield, Warren and currently in Barre over the course of his career as an attorney. Mr. Baird stated he saw the opportunity to volunteer with the CDA as interesting and intriguing. It is an opportunity to learn something new and he hopes his experience as an attorney can also bring something to the table.

On a motion from J. Carrol and second by D. Sousa, a letter will be submitted to the Board of Selectmen to recommend the appointment of James Baird to the Community Development Authority. Vote 4-0.

2. Public Hearing.

a. **Proposed FY 2020 CDBG Application.** The Community Development Block Grant application will seek funds for the following projects: Bank Street Improvement Projects, Public Social Services. The legal notice was read. Requests for Proposal to fund social services through FY 2020 CDBG funds were received by The Literacy Project, Behavioral Health Network, Ware River Valley Domestic Valley Task Force, and Hardwick Outreach Program. Social Services that have received funding in the past through CDBG funds

were made aware that there will not be as much funding available in FY2020 as has been available in past years.

- b. Domestic Violence Task Force.** Monica Moran presented. Ms. Moran thanked the Town for years of support for the Task Force. Over 20 years of coordinating with Warren and Hardwick have occurred through this social service program. The Task Force is comprised of volunteers of critical people in town – in schools, on the police force, and with local public health officials. They have begun a successful Interfaith Initiative – a chaplain program to help victims and survivors of faith. They have developed a Community Call in Line. People can call the phone number, leave an anonymous message, and the Task Force will follow up with the concern. The High School DVTF is very active and the 5th annual DV Awareness Walk this fall had a huge turnout. Ms. Moran runs a weekly support group at BHN. If they don't receive the \$70,000 requested for this social service they would have to cut back programs immensely. They are already stretched very thin. They already share grant funding with other social services in the area to make every dollar they receive go as far as possible in the community.
- c. Behavioral Health Network (BHN).** JAC Patrissi, Director of Domestic Violence Services for BHN presented. BHN provides hands on help for community members impacted by domestic violence. They have 55 people are a target number, and hit that last year. They helped additional people from outside communities. They tap into as many other funding as possible including, but not limited to: Department of Public Health, Country Bank, United Way. BHN cut their request of \$47,000 last year to \$40,000 this year. If they lost their funding, they would also lose matching funds of \$30,000. There are very large financial implications of losing the CDBG social services funding. Ms. Patrissi suggested if possible, the CDA could vote to apply a percentage of the funds to each RFP presented here tonight. The groups already share staff and funding to stretch the funding as far as possible and expressed thanks for the funding they receive through CDBG. Rather than cutting funding to 3 out of the 4 programs, each program will still be able to keep running in some manner with at minimum a percentage of the available funds. The other presented in the room expressed support of splitting the available funds at an equal percent.
- d. The Literacy Project.** Judith Roberts presented. The Literacy Project is a service that helps community members complete their high school education. She thanked the CDA for their commitment to the town's social services for so many years. Activities of The Literacy Project includes reaching out to K-12 parents in the school system, bringing more awareness the service. The classes students take educate them to pass their high school equivalency test (HiSET) that will lead them into Holyoke Community College training programs and classes. The Adult Learning Center acts as a community center with the students of the program. Ms. Roberts asked a student, Pedro, to speak to the CDA about his experience in the program. The HiSET test has five subjects. In 2019, the program had 52 total students. Nine of these passed the full test, 12 took and passed sections of the full test. The five subjects are tested separately. If this program does not receive the social services funding, they will have to cut the guidance counselor position and some classes.
- e. Hardwick Senior Outreach Program.** Sheila Cuddy, from QV CDC, presented. Ms. Cuddy thanked the CDA for previous funding this newer program in Hardwick. Last year they asked for around \$13,000 and they have cut that request in half. This program does food delivery and wellness checks on the elderly in Hardwick, some of who live in the rural

outreaches of town and have limited socialization as they age in place. The food deliveries are very important. The program had 21 clients last year that used the mobile food pantry. This program helps people age in place and still receive fresh food and vegetables on a regular basis. Overall, there is a very small budget for this program because there is very little overhead.

The CDA discussed with those present that the idea of the equitable funds sharing – it sounded amenable to all. This would give an equal percent to each RFP and everyone would get a share allowing them to keep a part of the program that would need to be cut if funding isn't found. The programs rely heavily on grants as it is, and they knew this cut in funding was coming. The programs should not feel the deficient until January 2021 with the timeline of the CDBG funding. They already are and will continue to look for additional funding sources and ways to restructure to keep the programs running. They thanked the CDA and departed the meeting. P. Opalinski and B. Brusco expressed that The Literacy Project is quite a valuable resource for the Town of Ware because it is further educating adults in this town and is a smaller operation than BHN, for example, that has additional funding options. It was also discussed that the Hardwick Outreach has a small operating budget and perhaps CDA could fund some of that program out of Program Income to stretch funding as far as possible.

On a motion from D. Souza and seconded by J. Carroll, the committee voted 4-0 to close the public hearing on FY2020 Community Development Block Grant funding.

3. Updates

a. CDBG

T. Harvey discussed the prices for Bank Street reconstruction. Wright-Pearce has completed the estimates for the project. Cost estimates seem a little high and hopefully can be adjusted. PVPC will go over the project numbers and be sure we have police detail and sewer lines included, and have a more accurate determination how much the project will cost.

b. Review Financial Accounts

i. DHCD Program Income

PVPC is getting pressure from the state (DHCD) for a plan for the CDA Program Income Fund. DHCD would like the Town to spend the money as quickly as they can. This will make it difficult to save for big projects, but T. Harvey did state that we can make a Program Income Plan and as long as we have a plan for the money (like demolition) it should be fine to hold onto it. There was some discussion on using additional program income money to fund social services. There is \$7,000 committed to Wright-Pearce from the Spring Street Project.

ii. First Time Homebuyers Program

This money is earmarked as committed in Program Income Funds. Hopefully the upcoming selling season will bring applications. The CDA will start sending out flyers and reminding different groups about the program.

iii. West Main Street Demolition

A quote has been obtain from Western Mass Environmental for \$53,400 to demo the building, add \$18,000 to that for prevailing wage if the town demolishes it ourselves. We have another quote of \$70-90,000. The Building Inspector is submitting the grant to the AG's office and there is a good chance the town will be awarded that. The CDA would like to know how much the land is worth. That

information will be brought to the next meeting. R. DeCoursey will put together the appraised value of the land, demolition costs, and the difference that might need to be donated by CDA. The CDA can contribute at least \$25,000 from Program Income or Miscellaneous Income when the time comes.

c. Reed Municipal Pool

A community survey regarding public use of Reed Municipal Pool was opened this past summer and closed at the end of the year. Over 300 people took the time to fill out the survey either online or on paper. The CDA was presented with a copy of the summary of results and were asked to read over the pages of comments in their free time. The overall feedback showed the pool provides a valuable resource to the residents of Ware. It gives kids a safe place to spend time in the summer, it provides swimming lessons and socialization. There was a desire to see longer hours and also longer season. Improvements to amenities including seating and shade were also noted. Next steps will include looking into the PARC grant and connecting with Chicopee, who was a recent recipient of the PARC grant. Consider reaching out to a YMCA and DCR as well.

4. Adjourn

J. Carrol made the motion to adjourn, D. seconded, no further discussion, All in Favor 4-0.
Adjourned at 8:48 pm.

Next meeting is scheduled for February 10, 2019 at 6:30 pm.

Minutes from January 15, 2020
Respectfully submitted by,

Rebekah L. DeCoursey
Director

Minutes Approved on: _____	
Opalinski	_____
Carroll	_____
Souza	_____
Bruso	_____