



TOWN OF WARE

Planning & Community Development

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Minutes from December 17, 2015
Community Development Authority

Authority members present: Dave Gravel, Chairman, Paul Opalinski, Tracy Opalinski

Authority members absent: Bill Adams, Brenda Cooper

Staff present: Karen Cullen, Director of Planning & Community Development
Judi Mosso, Assistant to the Director

Public: none

D. Gravel called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

1. Administrative

- a. Minutes of October 15 – **Motion** by P. Opalinski to accept the minutes as presented. Seconded by T. Opalinski. So voted unanimously.
- b. Financial Report – Judi distributed and reviewed the financial report. The Housing Rehabilitation recapture account is less than \$35,000 this year, so unless we receive a significant loan payoff in the next two weeks, we will be able to transfer the funds to the local cash account.

2. New Business

- a. DV Shelter – A woman inquired about opening a local shelter for domestic violence survivors. We referred her to PVPC and invited her to tonight's meeting but she had to cancel. K. Cullen spoke to Monica Moran, facilitator of the DV Task Force in Ware, at length about the possibility of a shelter in Ware including budget, needs, programs, feedback, logistics and safety. There was brief discussion about: the potential intentions behind opening a shelter; the proponent's goals seem to differ from CDBG goals (possibly combining DV and animal abuse); the proponent has no experience in DV or running a shelter and no funding to hire professionals to run it.
- b. Citizens' Institute on Rural Design (CIRD) Program – This organization offers a grant program every other year for approximately \$50,000 which provides a two and a half-day workshop for downtown design needs. Karen has been working on the application since mid-November which focuses on a section of Main Street (unrelated to the wayfinding project). This grant could help with façade concepts, storefronts, signage and ultimately modifications to regulations. T. Opalinski stated

that the WB&CA has been working on something similar and have already spoken to a consultant about possible “shoestring” improvements such as façade improvements and painting. There was brief discussion about downtown businesses or property owners not having any money to invest in improvements. Therefore, even if a CIRD grant offered potential improvements, there is no money for implementation. K. Cullen stated that in order for downtown businesses to be successful, the owners need to not only repair their buildings but modernize them with high speed internet, etc. She also stated that, in light of the discussion, the P&CD staff will not pursue the grant.

- c. Demolition / Spot Blight determination – The town had the opportunity to purchase the blue house next to town hall (to demolish and make a parking lot). We explored the potential of using CDBG funds to help with the demolition costs, but DHCD indicated that it was not a high priority for them and questioned whether the project would meet national objective. Unfortunately, the town does not have the money to pursue the project on its own.
- d. Training on the CDBG Housing Rehab Program – This will be postponed and Judi will provide the training in January or February.
- e. FY16 CDBG Application and recommendation to BOS – application is due February 16. The BOS public hearing is set for January 19 with January 26 as a snow date. The CDA will provide a recommendation to the BOS after its January meeting. K. Cullen distributed the draft budget for the proposed activities:

Prospect Street improvements, contingency and delivery:	\$635,000
Bank and Spring Streets engineering and delivery:	\$39,500
Social Services:	\$20,500
General Administration (local and PVPC):	<u>\$105,000</u>
	\$800,000

3. Updates

- a. Property Pride – B. Adams and B. Cooper have agreed to take this on. Since neither is in attendance tonight, this is postponed until February. The Board of Health and Building Inspector are critical partners in this initiative however the BOH is currently consumed with the Tri-County hearings. Danielle Souza has created a website “Buy Ware Now” and may incorporate some of the Property Pride information on the site and for new property owners.

There was brief discussion whether the PARP list of properties should be fluid in order to open it up to other interested investor-owners or static in order to reflect the initial list when we were funded. K. Cullen recommends that it remain static until current funds are expended and some units are completed; then we can review the list of 173 properties from the original survey and choose from there.

There was brief discussion about a receivership program with the Attorney General's office. Interested parties who inquire with the department must first make their own determination if it is financially feasible before we become involved.

b. FY14 CDBG

- i. High Street Improvements – nearly completed; road lines to be painted.
- ii. Prospect Street design – not complete yet; cost for actual construction will likely modify design.
- iii. Social Services – K. Cullen met with M. Moran re budget and timely expenditure for the DV Task Force. Due to the important work the TF does, it cannot afford to be closed, even for short (unfunded) periods. Money has been expended cautiously over the past few years in order to address future shortfalls yet keep the TF and advocacy work in operation.

c. FY15 CDBG – Ware River Valley

- i. Housing Rehabilitation – J. Mosso distributed the latest update from PVPC. Projects were reviewed; explanations will be clearer after the training.
- ii. PARP – letters have been sent to owners; we are hopeful about participation and what we are able to expend on these projects.
- iii. Social Services – discussed above.

d. Program Income Funds

- i. Monroe Street Brownfield – staff are waiting for information from environmental consultant so that we can prepare an article for town meeting.

e. Other Initiatives

- i. Main Street TIP – waiting for comments from DOT; they will hold a public hearing in spring 2016. There was brief discussion about whether the state will require owners to make all storefronts ADA-compliant; and where public space becomes private. The Town, will have to apply for variances and DOT may not support all of our variance requests.

There was also discussion about the rail trail. The stone dust is not down yet and it will only be applied in certain areas because the original rail bed is in good condition. The committee is considering building a bridge across the Ware river to Laurel Drive as opposed to continuing the trail on Route 32. There was brief discussion about what activities are allowed on the trail.

4. Other (any discussion and action may be postponed until next meeting) – none.

5. Adjourn – **Motion** to adjourn by T. Opalinski at 7:55 p.m. Seconded by P. Opalinski.

*Respectfully submitted by Judith P. B. Mosso
Assistant to the Director*