



TOWN OF WARE

Planning & Community Development

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Minutes from January 14, 2019

Community Development Authority

Meeting held at Town Hall, 126 Main Street, Ware, MA

Authority members present: P. Opalinski (Chairman), T. Opalinski, B. Cooper, J. Carroll, D. Souza

Authority members absent: none

Public: Ted Harvey, PVPC; Stuart Beckley, Town Manager; Dennis Ouimette; Sheila Cuddy, Director of QVDC; MEDIA: Eileen Kennedy and Emma Monahan of Ware River News/Turley Publications; Joy Cook

Chairman Opalinski called meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

1. Public Hearing – FY 2019 CDBG application

Chairman Opalinski opened public hearing at 6:30 PM. The hearing began with introductions of the CDA members and Ted Harvey of Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and reading the public hearing legal notice into record. T. Harvey explained the 2109 CDBG application process and this would be a small project (less money) application year for Ware which usually provides funding for a smaller scale project, some housing rehab and some social services.

Discussion pursued regarding the different options for Ware applying as a single community with a \$390,000 budget request vs. a regional application partnering with Hardwick for \$905,000. Warren has committed to doing a single community application for infrastructure. The state no longer requires towns to submit a written CD strategy nor requires BOS approval of said strategy; although T. Harvey recommended the continued public process; CDA members concurred transparency and community involvement was imperative. Chairman Opalinski stated we also sought public input via Survey Monkey when creating the current [2018] strategy.

Members reviewed and concurred to keep said priorities stated in the 2018 CD strategy for 2019:

1. Economic Development & Downtown Revitalization
2. Housing Rehab
3. Infrastructure improvements
4. Transportation Improvements
5. Social Services

The public was invited to offer input. T. Harvey said he discussed with DHCD whether they would consider awarding funding for a streetscape, sidewalk, and infrastructure improvement study for West Street in Ware. The CDA believed such a study would aid Low to Moderate Income (LMI) and ADA citizens in gaining access to fundamental needs such as Big Y. Unfortunately DHCD stated such a study would most likely not be funded because proof of benefiting “primarily” LMI and ADA citizens could not be proven based upon West Street being a common road. S. Beckley stated that the BOS just signed a grant request for Technical Assistance under Complete Streets Designation that will address the streetscape and sidewalk safety issues on West Street.

T. Opalinski and S. Beckley reported that pedestrian light poles, light fixtures, and a small water pipe replacement piece would not be covered by the existing Main Street TIP Grant. These items might be considered by the CDA for funding in the future.

T. Harvey stated that funding a part-time Code Enforcement position (19.5 hours/week) for \$30-35K would aid improvements associated with the Slum & Blight Designation as well as the CDA’s PARP housing study. Discussion pursued regarding the need to fund additional required legal costs to ensure Code Enforcement “had teeth” and could be brought to fruition.

S. Beckley and PVPC spoke to West Springfield to learn how they structured their Code Enforcement position. It was agreed that Code Enforcement could be overseen daily by the Building Inspector but that this position should be required to track and report on measurable results to both PVPC and CDA. It was also discussed that this Code Enforcement position be filled by an individual who is very experienced and savvy in Code Enforcement. Chairman Opalinski stated he would like to see a written plan, listing goals and description of what methods will be used to track measurable results of consistent code enforcement such as building permits, photographs and documentation. T. Harvey and S. Beckley agreed to present something for next CDA meeting. CDA board members and the public held lengthy discussion regarding code enforcement, the issues associated with tenant relocation costs, abandoned properties state grants, receivership, and sales of property.

Ms. Emma Monahan recently moved to Ware from Palmer and works at the Griswold Center. She stated that she would like the housing rehab program to be more visible and promoted locally. Chairman Opalinski stated the Town of Plymouth includes an insert with the town tax bills to all citizens to ensure everyone knows these opportunities exist. Members thought this was a terrific idea.

It was discussed to update the strategy statement, “prioritize funding housing rehab for “Owner Occupied” properties”. Out of the 26 current housing rehab units only 2 are not owner occupied. It was noted each unit can be awarded a maximum of \$35K i.e. two family owner occupied home could be granted a maximum of \$70K.

Discussion pursued regarding social services RFP due date January 17 and on February 11 social services will be allowed to give 5-minute presentations. The CDA is allowed to fund a maximum of 20% towards social services of the total awarded CDBG grant. A regional application with Hardwick of \$905K would in turn support \$181K of social services. S. Cuddy expressed concern that the Town of Warren is filing a single community CDBG application for infrastructure only which will impact regional social services for Warren’s citizens in need. Ms. Cuddy was concerned whether or not Warren understood the ramifications of not including regional social services with their single community application and if regional nonprofits were also aware.

S. Beckley requested a cost estimate for PVPC estimated fees for the FY2019 CDBG grant. T. Harvey estimated 13% approximately \$110,000. Chairman Opalinski inquired if there were any other comments or concerns from the public; there were none.

Motion by D. Souza to close the public hearing portion of the meeting at 7:32 PM
Seconded by T. Opalinski. So voted 5/0/0.

2. Administrative

- a. Approve meeting minutes from December 10 – **Motion** by D. Souza to accept the minutes as presented. Seconded by T. Opalinski. So voted 5/0/0.
- b. Distribute Conflict of Interest information - It was noted there is an online test requirement and said COI is good for two years. J. Carroll, T. Opalinski and D. Souza have completed and submitted to Judi Mosso said documentation. P. Opalinski and B. Cooper need to return their paperwork by next meeting.
- c. 2019 CDA meeting calendar - No changes were noted.

3. Updates (note any significant discussion and any expenditures)

- a. CDBG
 - i. FY2016 Prospect Street/Bank & Spring. Ted Harvey of PVPC reported this grant is all paid up today.

- ii. FY2017 WRV / HR (w Warren & Hardwick) Ted Harvey of PVPC reported committed funds of \$530,740. Contractors are spending down to reach 80% expenditure and nice weather is helping. Ted Harvey reported Social Services awarded to BHN's PATCH program. BHN underwent IT system problems which prevented the organization from updating budgets prevented correct reporting therefore funding granted by CDA was not spent as committed. PVPC together with PATCH found a suitable replacement that meet funding requirements on which to spend awarded CDA funds.
 - iii. FY2018 Ware Ted Harvey, Engineer, and TOW DPW Gibby Sorrell to review together on site prior to engineer attending CDA March meeting. Bids will begin now.
 - iv. FY2018 WRV /HR (Warren as lead) Ted Harvey reports Warren is the lead community. There are 2 housing rehabs in Ware and social services.
 - v. FY2019 application discussion Ted Harvey states he expects approximately 6 housing rehabs to be possible, PT code enforcement position and funds for legal fees associated with code enforcement.
- b. First Time homebuyers program. CDA is waiting to hear from Valley CDC about their program and administration costs to compare to Way Finder's Program administration costs. Buy Ware Now Program members would have liked to be able to bring awareness to these first time home buy citizen grants at their first time homebuyers event at the end of January. Danielle Souza is willing to reach out to Valley CDC for J. Mosso. J. Mosso was seeking information from S. Beckley for Wayfinders. It was determined by members whether or not Valley CDC presents at our next meeting or not, a vote should be taken to fund these important citizen grants in time for the spring housing market from CDA's program income fund.
4. Quaboag Connector (QC)
T. Harvey stated the QC was not eligible for CDA funding as there was a lack of documentation proving primarily LMI ridership. There was discussion on QC 9 towns

usage. Ms. Cuddy clarified current MA DOT grant pays for 50% of costs and funding priority is for citizens aged 60+ or disabled followed by social determinants of health. She also shared impactful stories on how QC has changed lives for the better by providing stable transportation to employment. In addition, all Ware senior dispatch is now going through the QC which has resulted in significant usage increases by the elderly resulting in 250 more calls than usual. It was noted that social service organizations do indeed track LMI citizens and most utilize the QC. It was agreed by CDA members to give a one-year notification to social service organizations that are awarded CDA grants that we are asking their organizations, as community partners, to consider budgeting an annual funding amount to help sustain the QC beginning in 2020.

5. Other - none.

6. Adjourn – Motion by T. Opalinski to adjourn at 8:03 PM. Seconded by Brenda Cooper.

Documents reviewed:

- Meeting minutes from December 10
- CDBG budget for FY2019

Documents received:

None

Respectfully submitted by
Judi Mosso, MPA, Assistant to the Director