



TOWN OF WARE

Planning & Community Development

126 Main Street, Ware, Massachusetts 01082

t. 413.967.9648 ext. 120

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Meeting Minutes from

Monday, December 13th 2021

Select Board Room, Town Hall

CDA Members Present:

Rhiannon Gresty (Remote), S.K. "Rob" Robinson,
John Carroll (Remote), Brandy Bruso

CDA Members Absent:

Chairman Danielle Souza

Public:

Staff Present:

Rob Watchilla, PCD Director,
Alex Ziter, PCD Assistant (Remote)
Stuart Beckley, Town Manager

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE

Acting Chairman Brandy Bruso called the meeting to order at 6:36 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADMINISTRATIVE

- Approval of meeting minutes from November 8th, 2021

Motion made John Carroll to approve the meeting minutes from November 8th, 2021. Seconded by Rob Robinson.

All in favor. Approved 3/0/2

REVIEW FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

- Brief review of account summaries through November 31st, 2021.

Motion made by J. Carroll to approve the financial accounts. Seconded by R. Robinson.

All in favor. Approved 3/0/2

CDBG UPDATES

- **FY2019: Ware and Hardwick: reallocation of funds- update on projects**

Rob Watchilla informed the board that the CBDG updates will no longer be going over the FY19 projects, this is due to the funding being fully allocated to the new streetlights which are going to be installed in downtown.

- **FY2020: Bank Street**

R. Watchilla informed the board that the Bank Street project had conducted its bidding process on November 18th, 2021 for a spring construction time. There were nine bids total, with the lowest bid coming from Caracas Construction Company out of Ludlow, MA for bid amount \$496,160 dollars. This project was initially expected to cost \$607,000, the project consists of Bank Street and the sewer main on Park Avenue, the street immediately adjacent to Bank Street. Federal ARPA funds were expected to cover the Park Avenue portion as it was not specifically identified in the CBDG grant.

R. Watchilla informed the board of the remaining amount of funds within the CBDG FY20 account, stating that there is \$496,515 dollars remaining. He stated that this bid was very competitive with lots of close applicants.

Board member Rhiannon Gresty joined the meeting remotely at 6:41 p.m.

- **FY2020-CV: Social Services & Microenterprises**

R. Watchilla informed the board that the only update for the Covid-19 grant was an extension until June 30th, 2022 to allow for continuance of the domestic violence taskforce help line.

- **FY2021: Façade Improvement program**

R. Watchilla informed the board that this grant was submitted two months ago now, and that they likely won't have any updates until after the New Year. Stating that the State tends to take a long time on these types of grant applications.

OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

- **Hardwick Housing Rehab Corrective Action**

R. Watchilla informed the board that PVPC has found alternative funding to cover the corrective action costs, and that the town will not have to provide any funds.

- **RRP Funding Resource Assistance**

R. Watchilla informed the board that the state's department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has given communities the chance to apply for funding assistance requests. The DHCD provided the town with contacts to further assist in locating funding resources and opportunities for the recommended RRP's.

R. Watchilla informed the board that town staff has recently met with two members of the engineering consultant company Stantec, to discuss these funding resources. He informed the board that the project chosen for this assistance was "Connecting Downtown Ware". This project consists of mainly wayfinding & signage to improve the connection of the West Street commercial corridor with the Main St downtown area, through increased pedestrian & cyclist accessibility and safety improvements, as well as minor sidewalk repair and construction.

The Stantec consultants are currently developing a report for the town regarding this project and will have further updates as this progresses into the New Year.

R. Watchilla informed the board that the deadline for a second project funding request is due on December 17th. He asked the board if there were any ideas for an additional project. He suggested that they choose one of the three projects outlined in the LRRP presentation which was discussed at the last meeting.

The three projects which R. Watchilla suggested are a general design guideline for downtown Ware, a cultural events program, and a parking implementation & wayfinding strategy. He suggested that the board state any other project ideas which they might have so that they can apply for funding requests before the deadline.

Brandy Bruso asked if there could be a project that prioritizes pedestrian safety, and lighting improvements throughout the West Street corridor, citing the current lack of crosswalks of crossing signals. She stated that the early mornings and nights are the most dangerous for school aged children, and lack of light exposure.

Stuart Beckley stated that he thought this was a good idea, and that pedestrian crossing lights can vary in price due to their operation, and functionality (wired into underground can be more costly). He stated that other areas in town such as the public pool and Grenville Park could benefit from including these pedestrian signage and crossing lights.

R. Watchilla suggested that this be incorporated into the current "Connecting Downtown Ware" project, and that he would do some research to see the costs of different crossing lights & signs.

R. Robinson requested more information on the funding guidelines for this RRP, and wanted to know if they could be more open ended in their project ideas.

R. Robinson stated that he was speaking with a local resident who expressed their interest in the town increasing its amount of treatment centers and services for recovering addicts and rehabilitation.

R. Robinson stated that there was public interest to increase areas of funding for single occupancy homes, whether it be for veterans, persons returning from incarceration, where a portion of their stay is subsidized. Similar to silver housing, where there are programs for members of the community who are vulnerable within the housing market.

R. Watchilla stated that he would do further research on this to see if there were existing funding avenues for this type of housing project, and that the RRP resource assistance was geared toward projects which did not have direct grants or funding programs connected to them.

R. Watchilla stated that the DHCD's role is to better refine the project to best identify areas for funding which match the selected project's scope and purpose.

ANCILLARY DISCUSSION

- **Chapter 121A –Urban Renewal Corporations**

R. Robinson provided background and an overview of what urban renewal corporations are. They are a single purpose projects geared towards development in many sectors. Many types of entities are qualified for this including non-profits, LLC's, venture groups and more. The process goes through the DHCD, to the town selected officials, back to the final review by the DHCD and approved by the Secretary of State.

R. Robinson's reasoning for wanting to discuss this topic with the board is due to his thoughts on the many blighted and slum properties, as well as the low availability of affordable housing within town. He stated that there is a large amount of REO's – bank owned properties within town, which can make development and redevelopment a much slower process.

R. Watchilla added that the municipality is essentially giving a tax break to these types of entities, which enters into two separate agreements, one with the state, and one with the municipality. He stated that there are three different types of payments for urban renewal corporations, all of which have different criteria which can be negotiated with each entity and the municipality.

R. Watchilla informed the board that Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a more prominent use, and the town has a TIF Committee.

S. Beckley stated that there were two recent cases within town which were using TIF, one of which failed, while the other is ongoing. He stated that he hasn't worked with urban renewal

