



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, May 16th, 2022

Select Board Room, Town Hall

CDA Members Present:

Danielle Souza, Chair
S.K. "Rob" Robinson
Rhiannon Gresty
Brandy Bruso (Remote)

CDA Members Absent:

John Carroll

Public:

Ted Harvey, Deputy Director of Comm. Development at PVPC (Remote)
Tiffany Menard, Planner at PVPC (Remote)
John Morrin, Select Board Chair
Anthia Elliot, Behavioral Health Network
Shannon Eldredge, Behavioral Health Network
Monica Moran, PVPC / Ware Domestic Violence Task Force
Judith Roberts, The Literacy Project (Remote)
RJ Ferullo, The Literacy Project (Remote)
Denis Ouimette, Member of the Public

Staff Present:

Stuart Beckley, Town Manager
Rob Watchilla, PCD Dept. Director
Laura White, PCD Dept. Administrative Assistant

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE

Chair D. Souza called the meeting to order at 6:29 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

D. Souza stated CDA member, Brandy Bruso, as well as Ted Harvey and Rob Watchilla, are participating in the meeting remotely via Zoom.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of meeting minutes from April 11th, 2022

Motion made by R. Gresty to approve meeting minutes from April 11th, 2022. Seconded by S.K. Robinson.

D. Souza	Aye
S.K. Robinson	Aye
R. Gresty	Aye
B. Bruso	Aye

All in favor. Approved 4/0/1.

REVIEW OF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

R. Watchilla gave a brief review of the account summaries through April 30th, 2022.

FY20 PUBLIC PERFORMANCE HEARING

T. Harvey gave an overview of the performance hearing, informing those in attendance, it is done to assess how the projects are going. FY20 was funded through an \$800,000 grant and consists of funding for the construction project on Bank Street, as well as three different social services; The Literacy Project, Domestic Violence Prevention, and Planned Approach to Community Health (PATCH).

The Literacy Project

J. Roberts thanked the Town for funding that has contributed to the adult education program. The Literacy project was able to start a night class over Zoom and is actively helping adults get the education they need in order to join the workforce. There will be a graduation ceremony in Grenville Park on Saturday, May 28th at 12:00pm and all are welcome to join.

R.J. Ferullo stated the goal for The Literacy Project is to educate more residents in order to strengthen the community as a whole. The project works closely with the Behavioral Health Network (BHN) in order to reach as many potential students as possible. They were also able to donate bags, with the project name on it, to the local food pantry. This effort benefitted the food pantry, while raising awareness for The Literacy Project.

Planned Approach to Community Health (PATCH)

S. Eldredge stated PATCH provides those in need with access to food, housing, healthcare, addiction treatment, domestic violence services, continuing education, and career guidance.

A. Elliott stated the program was able to work straight through the pandemic.

S. Eldredge stated the program is currently working with at least thirty-three (33) adults, and forty (40) children.

Domestic Violence Prevention

M. Moran gave background information on the Ware Domestic Violence Task Force, stating they look for resources for victims at the local and state level to try to help as much as possible. The Task Force also participates in community outreach to get as many people involved in the community as possible. In April of 2021, the Domestic Violence Task Force launched a helpline for those who are using abuse. The helpline has since received over 260 phone calls and has since grown into a statewide program. The helpline runs from 10:00am to 10:00pm, seven days a week.

M. Moran thanked BHN and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, as well as Town Manager, Stuart Beckley for helping get the helpline up and running.

D. Souza closed the public hearing portion of the performance hearing at 7:08pm.

CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) UPDATES (Ted Harvey)

FY2020: Bank Street

T. Harvey stated \$496,515 was budgeted for the Bank Street construction project, not including the engineering aspect. At the same time, Park Avenue, from Bank Street to North Street, was having sewer problems, and was combined with the Bank Street project, when putting the project up for bid. Additional funding of about \$43,000 will be needed to complete the project on Park Avenue. ARPA (the American Rescue Plan Act) funds were considered, but were found to not be available for this project. T. Harvey asked the CDA if they would consider using \$30,000 of the CDA cash fund and an additional \$13,000 could be used from Chapter 90 money.

FY2019

T. Harvey stated there are currently four (4) Housing Rehab projects outstanding that are currently being worked on. He stated he may need a final extension on these projects, but it won't affect the next round of funding. There is also an outstanding payment for the downtown lighting, which will be processed soon. It was previously requested this be funded with CDBG money.

FY2021: Façade Improvement

T. Harvey informed the CDA the environmental review and contract aspects of FY2021 are moving forward. However, PVPC's contract with Ware is being reviewed by the State, which could affect the social service programs funded by this. The Design Review Committee will hold their first meeting sometime in late May / early June.

D. Souza asked how many applicants are currently on the Housing Rehab waitlist. T. Harvey stated there currently are around ten (10) applicants on the waitlist.

D. Souza asked how the applicants are prioritized. T. Harvey stated, before work can begin, a full inspection is done on the house to see what needs to be done to bring the house up to code. He also stated, in FY2021, funding was up to somewhere around \$50,000 to \$55,000 to be divided between all the different projects, so they have to prioritize projects based on health and safety.

R. Watchilla requested Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) review the Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) for Ware and update the list as needed for the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

T. Harvey stated he would collaborate with Shirley Stephens and look into it.

S.K. Robinson asked how long Housing Rehab (HR) clients had to pay off the loans.

T. Harvey stated the loan is for 15 years and he will email the HR program description to the members of the CDA for anyone interested in learning more about it.

S. Beckley clarified, although it's a 15-year loan, it becomes a grant if not paid off within the 15 years, as long as the recipients does not sell their home in that time.

NEW BUSINESS

New Projects

D. Ouimette asked the CDA what new projects they plan to work on.

The Board discussed some of the new projects they're working on, including the Cottage Street Design Project, the Façade Improvement Project, and the inventory of vacant / available commercial properties in Ware.

S.K. Robinson stated he has finished creating the inventory of commercial properties and would like to discuss his report with R. Watchilla, and present his findings to the CDA at the next meeting.

R. Watchilla added that one of the articles for the Town to vote on at the Annual Town Meeting is to include a vacant and blighted structure bylaw.

S. Beckley clarified, "blighted" will not be part of the wording of the proposed bylaw.

R. Watchilla stated he and Building Commissioner, A. Marques, will be working on an inventory of vacant and blighted properties to add to the inventory of commercial properties S.K. Robinson created. The inventory would be updated once a month, as needed, and could help to market vacant properties to potential investors as well as potential homeowners.

S. Beckley stated the proposed bylaw would require all vacant properties to be registered with the Town and contact information should be given so, if the property is not being maintained, the Town can reach out to them about resolving the issue.

Town Carnival

J. Morrin stated he is looking for funding for a proposed annual carnival for the Town at Memorial Field. The carnival would feature rides and local vendors, as well as local services and would take place June 23rd, 24th, and 25th 5:00pm - 10:00pm. He stated the rides would give the Town a percentage of their sales, but the Police Department, Fire Department, transportation, etc. is what he needs funding for.

S. Beckley asked T. Menard to see whether the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Cash Account could be used for this. T. Menard stated she would look into it.

R. Watchilla informed the CDA there may be other obligations for the money in the Cash Account.

S. Beckley stated there may be additional funds coming in for the next fiscal year.

J. Morrin stated he is looking for \$4,000.

R. Watchilla suggested the CDA wait until funds are available to make a motion.

B. Bruso suggested holding a special meeting prior to the carnival to look into granting funds.

The CDA agreed to meet again prior to the carnival.

Senior Resource Alliance

D. Souza informed the CDA, she and R. Gresty are putting together a Senior Resource Alliance. It will be hosted at Cedar Brook Village and will meet monthly. It will provide resources to residents with aging parents.

New Projects

D. Ouimette asked what the CDA plans to work on next.

The CDA discussed this and decided to discuss future projects in more detail, at the next CDA meeting.

ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn meeting at 7:44 pm made by D. Souza. Seconded by S.K. Robinson.

D. Souza	Aye
S.K. Robinson	Aye
R. Gresty	Aye
B. Bruso	Aye

All in favor. Approved. 4/0/1.

NEXT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MEETING DATE

The next Community Development Authority meeting will be held Monday, June 13th, 2022, at 6:30 pm.

Minutes from May 16th, 2022

Respectfully submitted by,

Laura White
Administrative Assistant
Planning & Community Development

Minutes Approved on: <u>7/11/2022</u>	
Souza	<u>[Signature]</u>
Carroll	<u>[Signature]</u>
Bruso	<u>[Signature]</u>
Robinson	<u>[Signature]</u>
Gresty	<u>[Signature]</u>