



TOWN OF WARE

Planning & Community Development

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Minutes from October 12, 2017

Community Development Authority

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

Authority members present:	D. Gravel, P. Opalinski, B. Cooper
Authority members absent:	T. Opalinski
Staff present:	Rubén Flores-Marzán, Director Judi Mosso, Assistant to the Director
Public:	Ted Harvey (PVPC), Denis Ouimette, Tara Vocino (Press: Ware River News), Gail Farnsworth-French (QV CDC),

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

- 1. Public Hearing: Community Development Strategy (CDS)** – We have received notice from DHCD on the 1-Year Action Plan and the Community Development Strategy. Although a CDS is not required this year, the CDA wanted to move forward with updating the current one. This year's comments from DHCD include:
 - Communities will identify community development goals and objectives over a 3 to 5 year period
 - Communities will describe how they intend to address these goals and objectives utilizing CDBG and non-CDBG funds
 - Communities will provide a priority list of activities/projects that it intends to carry out to achieve these goals and objectives
 - Responses will be limited to three (3) pages, reduced from 7
 - CD Strategies will be submitted with the application and will continue to require public input

Other planning efforts and goals will be removed from the document. Target Area is omitted. T. Harvey will inquire with DHCD is Sustainable Development Principles are

still required [Update: they are not]. DHCD will only use their calculated LMI score as they did last year (Ware had 9/10 points). The Needs Score will not be used, even as a tie-breaker.

The CDA discussed the survey results we received. Although it seems like a low response rate, the CDA agreed that it was 45 more responses than we would have if we did not offer the survey (in both electronic and paper formats).

SURVEY RESULTS TOP 3:

- Overall
 - Demolition and building renovation
 - Redevelopment of mill yard
 - Recreational improvements
- Social Services
 - Substance use prevention
 - Youth summer programs
 - Domestic violence prevention
- Economic Development
 - Increased employment opportunities
 - Improved business climate
 - Explore continued support for Holyoke Community College's Education to Employment (E2E) Program

Gail Farnsworth-French of the Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation (QVDC) spoke in support of the ongoing partnership and collaboration with the CDA on the many topics covered in the survey. These projects include: Quaboag Valley Business Assistance Corporation as a certified lender; their CDFI includes the downtown Ware Census Tract as a lending and investment area. CD funds have supported the BAC for decades and have made positive impact on the area and small businesses. The Education to Employment (E2E) center has also been a positive partnership and the CDC would like to help reduce the cost of some courses in order to encourage access to education in the region. The Quaboag Connector (QC) van service has also been a highly successful pilot project and dovetails with the E2E program. Funding for the QC will run through December 2017; Ware and QVDC have applied to the state for additional funds. Ms. Farnsworth-French offered an overview of the programs offered by the CDC and BAC as well as E2E courses.

Town Manager, Stuart Beckley provided written comments in support of (in no particular order):

- Transportation
- Housing
- Planned Approach To Community Health (PATCH) program
- A connected walking/recreation/biking system designed to increase health
- Top priorities from the Master Plan (2016)

- Expanded education system including strengthening E2E and connections to vocational education, and to identify those needed skills and to teach to those careers
- Revitalize the mill yard
- Infrastructure improvements and strategic demolition.

Select Board member and CDA member Tracy Opalinski offered support for the QC, housing and demolition of dilapidated houses, economic development, cultural organizations such as Workshp13, extend natural gas line to Ware, and first time home buyer programs (T. Harvey will inquire with Wayfinders [formerly HAP Housing]).

Denis Quimette, Chairman of the Finance Committee offered comments on remediating brownfields, especially at Monroe Street, redevelopment of the Mt. Carmel lot on Pleasant Street.

There was discussion about the following:

- converting apartments to condominiums
- use and code hurdles for demolition and rebuilds
- recreation-related CDBG projects
- mill yard revitalization, ownership, occupancy
- economic development
- a planning study on natural gas (apparently Ware used to have natural gas)
- a planning study to extend the mill yard district to adjacent areas
- infrastructure condition on Church Street

The CDA discussed priorities and narrowed down goals to:

- Housing Rehabilitation
- Demolition
- Infrastructure improvements
- Economic development
- Downtown revitalization
- E2E
- Quaboag Connector
- Natural gas expansion

FY2018 may be a Ware-only application since we are eligible for an \$800,000 grant; possibly a Bank Street and HR demolition project similar to Southbridge's 2016 project. Social services may be included in a different, regional grant, where more funds are available.

The public hearing closed at 8:10 p.m.

2. **Administrative**

- a. Minutes of September 18, 2017 – **Motion** by P. Opalinski o accept the minutes as presented. Seconded by B. Cooper. So voted 3/0/0.

3. Updates

- a. CDBG

- i. FY2014 High Street repair budget – there is slope repair at two driveways; prefabricated steps are on order for another repair. Some funds for Prospect will be moved to cover the repairs for this project.
- ii. FY2015 WRV (HR report) – one PARP project is in dispute; another PARP owner has not met the rental restriction obligations
- iii. FY2016 Prospect Street/Bank & Spring – final paving on Prospect is expected to be early November; public input for Bank & Spring designs were received last month and the final design will be available soon.
- iv. FY2017 WRV (w Warren & Hardwick) CDBG
 - 1. Program Income status – still awaiting guidance from DHCD. PVPC sent data on PI expenditures and receipts to DHCD; data spanned several years.
 - 2. Implement grant – Request for Release Of Funds (RROF) was recently sent to DHCD.
- v. FY2018 One Year Action Plan – discussed above.

- b. Tri-Community YMCA after school program – The CDA briefly discussed the program. J. Mosso will invite Jennifer Hopp to attend the November meeting for further discussion of the matching grant.

4. New Business

- a. Regional Community Development Forum – there was discussion about the CD forums we've hosted in the past. The Forum is social services focused, part public outreach and education, as well as testimonial. PVPC would like to do another one for the area. The CDA would revisit the idea in the spring.
- b. Brownfields grant (Memorial Field) – the EPA announced a brownfields grant. Rubén has been in touch with consultants, PVPC, and Town Manager about application process.
- c. ADA grant – we are possibly applying for a planning grant to update our 1994 Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Deadline is early November so may not be feasible at this point.

- d. Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant – We were awarded \$17,000 for this program. First step is to choose a consultant from a state-approved list however the consultants are being trained this month so the list is not yet available.
5. Other – J. Mosso reported that we may have an application to the septic System Improvement loan fund. The CDA will be able to decide on the application after the perc test and design approval have been completed. The CDA is willing to hold a special meeting to review the application so that, if approved, the work can begin as soon as possible.
6. Adjourn – **Motion** by P. Opalinski to adjourn at 8:47 p.m. Seconded by B. Cooper.

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

Documents reviewed:

2015 CDS
Survey results
Written comments on CDS
Minutes from September 18, 2017
Letter From Jennifer Hopp re matching grant
"Program Income notes" prepared by PVPC
DHCD's One Year Action Plan

Documents received:

none