

2020-2024 Consolidated Plan and 2020 Action Plan Public Hearing Minutes

February 25, 2020

The Public Hearing for the 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan and 2020 Action Plan beginning July 1, 2020, began at 5:30 PM with 12 individual present representing various agencies, Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Sustainability, and Teresa Brockriede in attendance.

The meeting began with introductions of City staff and staff changes to the program, as former CDBG Administrator, Peg Keller retired after 26 years of service. The department is still in the process of hiring the new Community Development Planner.

Wayne gave a brief overview of the CDBG Program. The grants purpose is to focus on three areas:

1. Benefit persons with low and moderate incomes
2. Prevent or eliminate slums and blight
3. Address a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community.

The 2019-2020 CDBG grant award was \$670,267, and with unspent funds, there was \$1,000,000 available to fund projects. 65% of the grant's funds were allocated to support projects in Housing, Public Facilities improvements, and Economic Development. 15% of the funds were allocated to Public services. HUD has capped the grants allocation to that percentage. Lastly, HUD allows 20% of the fund to be assigned to Planning and Administrative costs to run the CDBG program.

2020 the City of Northampton is required to submit a five-year Consolidated Plan, along with the Annual Action Plan. The five-year Consolidated Plan provides HUD with the City's project plan for the next five years based on surveys and community input. The Annual Action Plan is the City's one-year objective the current year funding.

In planning for the Consolidated Plan process, the City has brought in public participation in various means. The Planning and Sustainability Department resilience and regeneration, the walk/bike Northampton project, open spaces, and recreation plans, and citizen feedback in the age-friendly survey. The CDBG hearing process is another way of citizen participation, providing community feedback on current needs. The City has also invested in focusing on understanding how to most effectively address the current panhandling and homelessness concerns through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The City also holds focus groups and individual interviews for a community needs for food policy, housing, fair-housing, and disabilities.

As department we want to focus on how through this program, we can advance social equity. We want to break the cycle of inequity and provide distribution, procedural, substantive, and intergenerational equities for the community.

Applications for the 2020-2021 grant year are available on the Community Development web page. Applications are due by Friday, 2/28/2020 at 12:00. Please include a PDF and paper submission.

For the 2019-2020 Action Plan resources were applied to the following projects:

- Homeownership Center - Valley CDC \$33,000 for financial assistance to First Time Homebuyers

- Housing Rehabilitation Program - Pioneer Valley Planning Commission \$343,905 (\$177,674 new year funds; \$166,231 carried over from last year)
- Village Hill North Commons affordable housing - \$150,000 (carried over from last year) for acquisition of parcel for development of rental units for families
- Property Improvements/handicap accessibility improvements (4 sites) - Northampton Housing Authority \$95,000
- Sidewalk Wheelchair Ramps - \$110,000
- Micro-Business (economic development) Assistance Program - Valley CDC \$20,000
- 11 Social Services (public services) \$100,540 (with \$175.00 program income from prior year)- 15% of total CDBG
- Administration and Planning of CDBG Program and Housing and Community Development activities \$134,053- 20% of total CDBG

For the 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan will also include the City's Needs Assessment in the following areas:

- Substance abuse
- Youth
- Fair housing, evictions, foreclosures
- Housing rehab
- Affordable housing needs
- Homelessness
- Transportation
- Life skills
- Economic development
- Public infrastructure
- Public facilities

The next hearing for to review the draft Consolidated Plan and Action plan is scheduled for March 26, 2020 at 5:30 PM and will be located at the Northampton Senior Center located at 67 Conz St., Northampton.

Wayne opened up the conversation for public comment.

Judith Roberts – The Literacy Project

Our current literacy program educates 50 students. Through the support and guidance of our staff, student are empowered to learn, to be more confident in the workplace because the barrier of literacy is being broken down. Our participants are working towards their GED's to become more self-sufficient. We are watching adults turn into students, and gaining tremendous confidence to open up and move forward in their own personal development.

Victor - Student, The Literacy Project

Before becoming a student at the Literacy Project, I had a hard time reading and writing. I looked for classes to get better skills. It was really difficult to fill out applications. With the Literacy Project I've had a lot of improvement. When I started, I could read at a 3rd grade level. Today, I can read at a 6th grade

level. I am more confident to move forward reading, talking publicly, the program has really benefitted me socially. I feel more confident looking and reading the paper, reading and filling out forms. I just want to thank the program for being there.

Laurie Millman – Center for New Americans