



Roxann Wedegartner
Mayor

City of
GREENFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

**COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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Minutes of CDBG PUBLIC HEARING
January 30, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.
City Hall Meeting Room, 14 Court Square

MJ Adams (Director of Community Development) opened the public hearing at 5:30 pm with the following people in attendance:

Anna Oltman (Community Development Administrator)

Christian LaPlante (Grant Program Assistant)

Michael Mastrototaro

Susan Worgaftik

Dorothy McIver

Joshua Freund

Dawn Morin

Ashley Kramer

MJ read the public hearing notice and introduced Christian LaPlante and Anna Oltman. MJ noted that this is the second of two public hearings, the first of which took place via Zoom on January 26. MJ offered background information on CDBG and Greenfield's mini-entitlement status, explaining that CDBG funding focuses on improving quality of life, particularly for low- and moderate-income people, and is disbursed as a block grant so communities can determine how best to spend it. This year's grant will be submitted in March 2023 and is double the size of previous years' grants because it is for both 2022 and 2023, amounting to \$1.65 million.

Accept community input on Greenfield's 2022-2023 Mini-Entitlement Program application

MJ stated that the City plans to allocate \$200,000 to support the renovation and expansion of the Wells St. Shelter. The project is also seeking CPA funding and other funding from the state. The City will also request funds for improving the accessibility and walkability of sidewalks. Funds will also be allocated to design and engineering on the Main Street Improvement Project (with a focus on infrastructure, particularly, water, sewer, storm drainage, and utilities) and to design and engineering for the Court Square project. CDBG funds can support up to five social services projects as well. The City issued a request for proposals for social services projects in November

and in December received 9 proposals with a total request of \$584,000. Applications have been reviewed and recommendations made to the mayor, and a decision should be made soon.

Comments:

Joshua Freund: Speaking as site director of the Literacy Project. The organization relies on CDBG funding and is grateful for its support. The educational landscape has changed dramatically due to Covid-19, with more people seeking Literacy Project services (70 students served since September). Greenfield's Literacy Project office has the second highest graduation rate in the state.

Susan Worgaftik: Resident of Greenfield and representing Housing Greenfield. Expressed enthusiasm for the Wells St project, which will support a significant portion of Greenfield's unhoused population. Recognizes that the renovation will likely cause 30 residents to need relocation during construction, and would therefore appreciate CDBG funds to support relocation.

MJ clarified that the CDBG funding for the Wells St project might not go directly to relocation, but that relocation expenses will certainly be covered.

Ashley Kramer: Speaking as a Greenfield resident and representative of the Stone Soup Café and Community Free Store. The Free Store opened during Covid due to increased need, but need continues to be high as grocery prices have gone up and the Covid-related increases to SNAP benefits are set to expire. Stone Soup and Free Store program numbers remain elevated.

Michael Mastrototaro: Supports funding for social services but has questions about infrastructure projects. Once sidewalk improvements are begun, what will be the costs beyond what CDBG will cover? Similarly, what is the cost estimate for the Court Square reconstruction?

MJ clarified that the design and engineering funding would establish a cost estimate for the eventual construction, which may eventually be funded with City or grant money.

Dawn Morin: Concerned that accepting CDBG funds for design and engineering on the sidewalks and Court Square improvements would obligate the City to move forward with eventual construction regardless of the cost. What opportunities do members of the public have to comment on these decisions?

MJ explained that accepting funding for design and engineering did not obligate the City to complete construction projects. Noted that public comment has been solicited at numerous points and that input would continue to be welcome.

Michael Mastrototaro: Expressed concern that the City lacks the financial resources to move forward with large projects e.g. the Court Square and Wilson's building reconstructions, and that even with grant support each new project risks increasing the burden on taxpayers.

Accept community input on the allocation of Program Income funds to complete design work for ADA improvement upgrades to Greenfield City Hall.

In 2018, the City updated its ADA self-assessment and transition plan, which included recommendations for improvements to City Hall to make it more ADA accessible. The focus is on the first floor bathrooms and the ramp on the north side of the building. Funding is needed for an architect to complete design and engineering and provide cost estimates. Some state funds are earmarked for this, but to access them the City needs to have bid-ready plans, specs, and a cost estimate.

There were no comments specific to the City Hall ADA improvements.

Update on CDBG activities funded through the 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 awards

MJ reported that the CDBG FY2018 and FY2019 grants are expected to be wrapped up by June of this year, with some housing rehab and GCET installation projects still being worked on. The FY2020 grant still has open planning funds for the Downtown Revitalization Plan update. There are \$25,000 in uncommitted funds from the FY2020 grant that will be used to provide some assistance to a property owned by GHAI. The FY2021 grant continues to fund three social services programs: The Literacy Project, the Center for Self-Reliance food pantries, and the LifePath congregate meals for elders. Final work on Phase II of the West St infrastructure project (replacing sewer) should be completed in spring.

MJ noted that anyone interested in CDBG activities should be aware that the Sustainable Greenfield Implementation Committee (SGIC) serves as the City's CDBG Citizens' Advisory Committee.

Comments:

Susan Worgaftik: Are the Oak Courts sidewalks being considered for the sidewalk improvements project?

MJ: DPW has a list of priority sidewalks but no final decision has been made.

Joshua Freund: The mayor and CEDD have done a good job of building a strong safety net for our community. Many Literacy Project students also use the CSR food pantry, the Free Store, and Stone Soup. Some live in Leyden Woods and benefit from the GCET installation. Layers of support allow our community members to thrive.

MJ closed the public hearing at 6:08 pm.