



City of  
**GREENFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS**

**COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

**Roxann Wedegartner**  
Mayor

City Hall • 14 Court Square • Greenfield, MA 01301  
Phone 413-772-1548 • [www.greenfield-ma.gov](http://www.greenfield-ma.gov)

Minutes of CDBG PUBLIC HEARING  
August 31, 2023 4:00 PM  
City Hall Meeting Room, 14 Court Square

Anna Oltman (Community Development Administrator) opened the public hearing at 4:03pm with the following people in attendance:

Christian LaPlante (Economic and Community Development Assistant)

Susan Worgaftik

Pamela Goodwin

Virginia Desorgher

Amy Clarke

Nancy Hazard

George Touloumtzis

Anna read the public hearing notice. Anna described how CDBG funds work. Greenfield receives the funds from the state of Massachusetts as a mini entitlement; Greenfield receives the same amount every year. Projects have to be approved by the state; must meet national objective which means projects must quantitatively show that it is benefitting low income people. Greenfield has a low-moderate income rate of 49%; particular neighborhoods are eligible however as they are above a 51% threshold.

**Accept community input on the cancellation of the CDBG 2019 public infrastructure project: GCET Leyden Woods Build Out.**

Anna stated occasionally there are projects that meet national objective on paper but upon attempting to implement it does not work out. The idea for this project was to allocate \$150,000 to GCET for build out of their internet to the Leyden Woods community. Income surveys were completed to show that the project would assist low-moderate income people. The original plan was for the project to hook into pre-existing conduit; however conduit data was incorrect and the existing conduit could not be used for the internet. The second plan was to use telephone polls to mount transceivers; the telephone poles did not have enough tensile strength. Third plan was to create new fiber underground via digging; this was cost prohibitive. Last plan was to license existing conduit owned by Verizon. GCET have applied repeatedly for licensing through Verizon – GCET is still waiting to hear back so the project is essentially stalled. As 2019 grant is about to close out, the funds had to be returned.

Comments:

Virginia Desorgher: asked if Community Builders having an exclusive contract with Comcast plays a role. Also concerned about telephone poles that do not have enough strength. Also concerned that there are other buildings downtown that do not have GCET yet that house low income people. People that need affordable connectivity are not getting it. Should the funds be repurposed for a different building?

Anna: Unfortunately the funds cannot be used for another building since the grant is being closed out. Her understanding is that GCET's goal is to provide internet to everyone in Greenfield; specific buildings would have to defer to GCET but in general building owners have the power to provide GCET access to their building. Broadband is not a public utility in the same way that water and sewer are.

Virginia Desorgher: Concerned that there are so many buildings and people that do not have access.

Nancy Hazard: Surprised that Mill House does not have GCET. Also asked if a future grant could be used for GCET project since CDBG2019 is being closed out, if the conversation with Verizon worked out?

Anna: Yes, the cancelled GCET project could be applied for in future years

Pamela Goodwin: Lives at the Weldon. Has been negotiating with GCET to try to get access. Had 25 signatures from interested residents. Need to be offered more than just Comcast according to FCC. Some residents are paying \$180/month for TV. There should be internet access, there should not be an excuse that "we cannot go there". Feels there should be internet at the Weldon at this point or there has been some big miscommunication. Would like to see a future grant used for GCET projects.

Virginia Desorgher: Concerned about shelter for the winter – use CDBG funding? Days Inn is full. Should plan ahead. Where will people go?

George Touloumtzis: Cancellation of GCET project caught his eye. Wondering why it was cancelled (joined late)

Anna Oltman: Repeated that there were a number of technical issues that prevented the project from moving forward. Current way to access Leyden Woods is to license fiber from Verizon, but that is stalled. Right now need to close out grant so next grant be received.

**Accept community input on the proposed addition of new activities in the City's CDBG 2021 grant to utilize unexpended funds from the public infrastructure project: West Street Phase II. Proposed activities include housing rehabilitation and improvements to the accessible entrance of the Olive Street garage. The Housing Rehabilitation program would**

**provide 0% deferred loans to make critical property improvements to homes occupied by low/moderate income households.**

Anna stated that every time a new project is added to a grant there must be a public hearing. \$19,977.99 is available for projects from West St. activity. Also an opportunity to do some strategic planning. A repayment of housing rehab loans came in, a new state rule required that the funds be added to a project immediately, they were added to the West St project – West St. was not under budget (original budget was followed exactly) but the funds were still sitting there because they were extra program income. Two ideas are housing rehabilitation and accessibility improvements at parking garage.

**Comments:**

Susan Worgaftik: Last year there were no cases of frostbite or deaths because of Days Inn. Susan would like to see funds put into a contingency fund to house unhoused persons during the cold winter months. If an agency is needed that connection could be made. \$20,000 coupled with other funds would be beneficial.

Anna Oltman: Not sure if a contingency fund would be an eligible activity but can discuss with reps and do research.

Amy Clarke: As a representative from interfaith council she is familiar with process to put people in hotels – feeling the loss of Days Inn. Last year interfaith council had 126 days at Days Inn. For \$80 or \$90 a night you can get someone out of the cold. For a warming center it is \$160,000 for a few months of staffing by Servicenet. Looking forward to September meeting by Mayor. Will likely be in same conditions next year as well.

Susan Worgaftik: Her understanding is that immigrants at Days Inn will be there for 18 months.

George Touloumtzis: Conducts outreach work for servicenet. Using funds to address housing people during the winter is a good priority.

Pamela Goodwin: Warming center is needed at the very least. Salvation Army does great work but is not a shelter. There should be emergency money – John Zon Center was closed during pandemic to use for emergencies. There has to be funding that she is not aware of to address these emergencies. Need money but can't wait for someone to write a grant. Who decides if the funds are added to emergency shelter fund or not?

Anna: Process would be for the CED department to apply to the state for a new project. Emergency management and emergency management funds are managed by Chief Strahan and they are more flexible.

Virginia Desorgher: How many nights were people put up in hotels?



Amy Clarke: 126 nights from Thanksgiving on at Days Inn last year. Other hotel in Orange and Red Roof also housed some people. ARPA funds from city were used last year.

Anna: There will be a coordinating meeting between service providers and City before end of September

Virginia Desorgher: the number of nights at Days Inn from Amy is a good case for using CDBG funds

Susan Worgaftik: overnight stays are the most critical times. John Zon and library are used for daytime warming but nothing for overnight.

Pamela Goodwin: trying to think outside of the box. Having no local hotel available necessitates it.

Anna Oltman: with CDBG the staffing has to be considered and this level of funding might not be able to provide something in its entirety. Could fit in somewhere.

Pamela Goodwin: how long is funding still available?

Anna: the \$20k is CDBG2021 and is finishing up by end of year. CDBG22-23 has funding for Wells Street Shelter project

Pamela Goodwin: is Olive St garage improvements happening?

Anna: not a project yet, but could be done with the \$20k

Pamela Goodwin: would like to see a crosswalk at garage. Parking study recommendations should also be a priority

Anna: CEDD is working on implementing parking study recs and Main St. reconstruction project is still a couple years out

Anna closed the public hearing at 5:01pm.

