



CITY OF ALBANY
CDBG Housing Taskforce
City Council Chambers, 333 Broadalbin Street SW
Monday, March 25, 2013
11:30 AM

MEETING SUMMARY

Taskforce members present: Sharon Konopa, Theresa Conley, Tara Dixson, John Donovan, Wanda Kinney, Ray Kopczynski, Frank Moore, Larry Nelson, Debra Powell, Dala Rouse, Joann Zimmer

Members and Liaisons absent: Bill Higby, Donna Holt, Terry Knoll

Staff present: Anne Catlin, Lead Long Range Planner; Heather Hansen, Community Development Director; Lisa Bennett, Disability Access Coordinator; Tari Hayes, Administrative Assistant

Mayor Sharon Konopa called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.

Planner Anne Catlin went over the calendar and process to date. The group went through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Steps and Progress document provided in the packet. The steps include:

- Step 1 – Determining Needs – this is where the group is, they are almost done
- Step 2 – Setting Priorities - this the group will start today
- Step 3 – Determining Resources- April
- Step 4 – Setting Goals - April

The proposed next steps include a joint work session with City Council on the draft strategic plan in May and a public hearing in July. The City has been granted an extension and the completed plan is due to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) August 15.

Catlin walked through the information distributed at the meeting provided by members and staff that included

1. Eligible Activities and Needs by Category
2. CDBG National Objectives
3. Senior and Disabled Housing and Support Services Needs – by the Oregon West Council of Governments (OCWCOG)
4. Homeless Focus Group Priorities
5. Suggested CDBG Eligible Priorities

Catlin reviewed the CDBG eligible activities and explained that the projects must qualify as meeting one of the three national objectives of the program:

1. Benefiting Low-and-Moderate-Income (L/MI) persons (70%) of funds must be spent on this objective. This includes:
 - a. L/MI Area Benefit: an activity that benefits all residents in a particular area, where 51% of residents are Low-or—moderate-income (ex. Streets, sidewalks, parks, senior centers, etc).
 - b. L/MI Limited Clientele: an activity that is limited to LMI persons or households (ex. Homeless shelters, senior or disabled services, etc.)
 - c. L/MI Jobs: activities designed to create or retain permanent jobs, at least 51 percent of them being made available to our held by LMI persons (ex. Assistance to construct or expand a business facility, etc.)

2. Preventing or Eliminating Slums or Blight – the focus is to change to the physical environment of a deteriorating area. This includes addressing slums or blight on an area basis, or on a spot basis, or in an Urban Renewal Area.
3. Urgent Needs – Meeting needs having a particular urgency because existing conditions pose a serious and immediate threat, and other financial resources are not available to meet such needs.

REMOVING ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY

Lisa Bennett, the City's Disability Access Coordinator, reviewed the memo in the packet on CDBG proposals for ADA related programs. Currently the City is focusing on curb ramp repair and placement for existing sidewalks. Some areas have no ramps. A chance to supplement this program with possible CDBG money would be great as there is more demand than there is funding. Most of the current complaints regarding disability access issues come from seniors and the disabled. There is a section of the City's budget that is unfunded called Community Needs. Some disability access projects are included in this section. Based on ongoing community needs, the City Manager has requested that \$50,000 per year be proposed for ADA improvements from the CDBG funds. That number was based, in part, on needs over the past couple of years and the backlog of complaints and preliminary survey results.

Ray Kopczynski asked how many curb ramps would be replaced with the funds. Bennett said it depends on the curb, but the estimate is 10 to 15 high priority ramps per year. Kopczynski asked if the funds were over and above what was in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Konopa explained the funding in the CIP is for pavement. Could the accessibility improvements be added into the road improvements funding budget?

Bennett noted that some cities have been sued by not making improvements and City Manager Wes Hare is trying to avoid that.

Bennett said there was about a half million to upgrade around bus stops. She noted that funds are needed to respond to complaints. It was suggested that funds be targeted within a particular neighborhood and leveraging other funds.

It was suggested that staff conduct a survey to prioritize the accessibility needs.

Joann Zimmer noted resources such as Americorps vista programs that may be able to assist.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Heather Hansen explained that research is under way to identify specific economic development needs that may be eligible for CDBG funding by taking a geographic approach to community development, the City can combine resources across departments including Parks and Public Works. The group discussed the needs in the trades that are not being met. Perhaps this money could be used to provide job retention. Supporting micro-enterprises and a revolving loan fund were also discussed. It's hard to find affordable housing with low wages; perhaps the money could support jobs that raise the income levels of LMI employees.

GEOGRAPHIC PRIORITIES

Staff explained that taking a geographic approach to CDBG projects, the City can combine resources across departments including Parks and Public Works, and concentrate them into priority areas to make a bigger impact. Catlin referred to maps that were included in the packet of the neighborhoods that were located in the LMI areas. Sunrise Park is located in one of those areas, and area residents identified the need to improve the park (from the Hispanic Survey). The group discussed matching Parks and Recreation funds to rehabilitate the park. There are apartments and other buildings in the area that could be rehabilitated and some used for community services such as computer and trades training, senior resources, day care.

Transportation is an issue in many LMI areas. The busses don't run along Salem Avenue and sometimes only to 5:00 pm. The group will identify bus stop areas and commuting routes with the highest priorities.

Joann suggested a one-stop "shop" such as what Linn County is doing to centralize services in one building.

Kopczynski suggested targeting an area to upgrade skills of persons in the area.

The old Salvation Army building was noted as a good location for a community resource.

Larry Nelson asked if Front Street could be improved with funds in the CIP. Catlin explained that Front Street is classified as a local street and road funds are for streets of higher classification with more traffic.

SERVICES AND OTHER NEEDS (see agenda packet for the following documents)

Catlin distributed additional materials related to needs within the community including the *Suggested CDBG – Eligible Priorities* related to addressing homeless issues; the *Housing and Supportive Services* sheet prepared by Cascades West Council of Governments suggests two potential eligible activities for seniors and disabled persons; and the *Homeless Focus Group Priorities – 2013-2015 Community Assessment* that was completed at Albany Helping Hands by the Community Services Consortium (CSC).

The taskforce identified potential obstacles to meeting these priorities included difficulty in obtaining funding partners for new/rehab construction projects. The high and continuing employment rate is an issue. There are also fewer families that are able to maintain stable housing. Funding is dwindling while the homeless rate and people requiring social services are increasing.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES REVIEW

Catlin distributed a list of all the suggested eligible activities and needs raised together for review (*Eligible Activities and Needs by Category* sheet). The taskforce reviewed the four main funding program areas – affordable housing and homeless prevention, public facilities, public services and economic development. The taskforce made the following initial determination of needs.

1. Affordable Housing (and Homeless Prevention): includes assistance to Low and Moderate Income (LMI) households for both home owners and renters.
 - a. Housing rehabilitation program for low-income owner-occupied homes, typically no or low interest loans, to include any accessibility retrofits, lead-based paint abatement and historic preservation. CSC has a revolving loan fund program for owner-occupied houses that has been funded with CDBG money. Catlin will check on the fund balance and needs. It was suggested that housing rehabilitation money be used to replace deteriorating manufactured homes with site built homes.
 - b. Housing Rehabilitation for apartments – housing rehabilitation is needed
 - c. New affordable housing units for those earning 50% or less of the area median income– either through property acquisition or new construction
 - d. Weatherization and energy efficiency helps reduce monthly costs and keeps owners in their homes CSC has funding for owner- and renter-occupied housing and can be paired with housing rehabilitation. Catlin will check on funding and criteria.
 - e. Down payment assistance – Catlin will look into programs and need
 - f. Utility assistance to tenants – it was noted that the utility assistance program run by CSC only pays for water costs and not sewer costs

2. Public Facilities and Community Development:
 - a. Transitional housing needs
 - b. Family and youth shelter

- c. Removing barriers to accessibility
 - d. Infrastructure improvements to sidewalks and streets, utilities, street trees, etc. in low income neighborhoods to reduce blighted conditions
 - e. Parks – Sunrise Park was identified through the surveys and the city as a priority for new equipment and improvements. Staff will look into funding sources for parks
3. Public Services (limited to 15% of the total CDBG award):
- a. Develop services for those just over Medicaid eligibility threshold
 - b. Child Care for LMI persons
 - c. Job training for LMI persons
 - d. Health services like dental and medical for homeless and uninsured
 - e. Mental health services, substance abuse counseling
 - f. Abused children services
 - g. Housing counseling

There was discussion about the need for better paying jobs. demand for service needs. Frank Moore explained that there will be a lot of changes in the next 18 to 36 months with the Affordable Care Act and changes in Medicaid and Medicare. The Coordinated Care provider (Samaritan) will be responsible for some programs that are identified in the health care needs assessment.

Due to anticipated need for public services funding and the limited amount, the recommendation was to allow for flexibility in funding these programs, not “lock in” funding for any services, but to consider them through an application process.

4. Economic Development – There was discussion about the need for better paying jobs and the need for job creation.
- a. Microenterprise assistance (LBCC) - Funding cuts at LBCC were noted. Mayor Konopa asked if other cities provided support to LBCC’s economic development programs. Staff will look into the need.
 - b. Job creation or retention for LMI persons – The taskforce suggested outlining potential “shovel ready” projects and other projects that may have partners but may be missing small pieces.

Catlin will take the first draft of suggested eligible activities and review data and consult with agencies to get identify the needs more specifically. Potential obstacles to meeting these priorities included difficulty in obtaining funding partners for new/rehab construction projects. The high and continuing employment rate is an issue. There are also fewer families that are able to maintain stable housing. Funding is dwindling while the homeless rate and people requiring social services are increasing.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting date is a joint work session with the City Council in May.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Prepared by Tari Hayes and Anne Catlin