

TOWN OF HAMDEN
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING

March 14, 2012

6:00 PM

IN THE LOUNGE

KEEFE COMMUNITY CENTER

11 PINE STREET

HAMDEN

Commissioners in Attendance: Joyce Blandon, Chairwoman

Michael Brooks

Peter Curtis

Alexis Highsmith

Others in Attendance: Chris Marchand, Program Manager

Berita Rowe-Lewis, Councilwoman-at-Large

Peggy Craft, Commission Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Due to the lack of a quorum, the meeting could not be called to order. An informational meeting was held.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance was taken as noted above.

Mr. Marchand introduced Berita Rowe-Lewis, and explained her background on the Legislative Council as the Councilwoman from the Third District. Ms. Rowe is presently a Councilwoman-at-Large. Ms. Row-Lewis also served on this Commission for several years.

All member of the commission introduced themselves.

PROGRAM MANAGER'S REPORT

Program Manager Marchand presented the following information to the Commissioners:

The Public Service Grants do not have to go before the Legislative Council for approval until mid-April. He added that since a quorum has not been established at this meeting, a quorum could be established at the next meeting (April 11th) at which time the PSA Grants could be voted on.

Rehabilitation Program

There is one outstanding project. This project is 60% complete. It is necessary to wait for the weather to improve to do the exterior work.

The invoices for the on-hold furnaces repair/replacement had not been received at the time of the last report. Mr. Marchand said they have now been received and can be processed for payment. He explained the work that was done, and the background on each.

Next, he explained that he has been working with the Engineering Department Designer Vince Conte regarding handicap ramps.

Mr. Marchand said there are currently ten projects on the waiting list. He explained that emergency furnace repair/replacement take precedence over traditional rehabs. He also explained the payback procedures regarding rehab loans. There is no interest on the loans that are repayable at the time of sale of the house.

Down Payment Assistance

There has been one closing in the last month. This was for a home on Hillcrest Avenue.

Fair Rent

Mr. Marchand said Fair Rent has been very quiet. Mr. Marchand believes this is due to the economy. There hasn't been a formal hearing in over a year. Many complaints had previously come from Broadmoor Apartments. There is now a new Property Manager, and Mr. Marchand reports he has been able to work with her to reach agreements with out going to a formal hearing.

Infrastructure

The streetscape and road improvement project going north from the Industrial Park entrance on Dixwell Avenue is currently underway. Mr. Marchand explained the funding for this project.

The sign for Car Solutions has been completed.

Miscellaneous

Regarding the \$750,000 in additional rehad funds from the DECD/FLES FUND, Mr. Marchand said it is estimated that we will receive notification the summer of this year. Next, Mr. Marchand discussed the Federal Housing Grants and explained how the funding is distributed.

Work has been able to continue on the Brundage Library project. He discussed the electric doors and ADA accessibility ramps that were completed three years ago. The current project includes making the bathrooms on the first floor handicap accessible.

Next, Mr. Marchand discussed the cuts in CDBG funding. He participated in a conference call with Washington, D.C., along with Mayor Jackson, and Economic Development Director Dale Kroop. The call was to determine why Hamden received the smallest grant in the State. They were told that the figures are correct. He explained that the figures are based on the 2010 census.

Mr. Brooks asked if this would happen again next year. Mr. Marchand said this would depend on the Town's one-year growth. He said that if this changes next year the grant could be increased. Pre 1940 housing is also a determining factor.

OLD BUSINESS

The Public Service Agency Grants were discussed.

Mr. Marchand explained the procedures and regulations involved in applying for a PSA Grant.

Ms. Blandon said all the applications had very real needs. She added that the committee went over the applications several times. She further explained how the recipients of the grants were determined. She identified the newest programs, Quinnipiac Valley Health District and Newhallville Development Corporation and explained their need for a grant.

Next, Ms. Blandon opened the floor to questions.

Mr. Curtis asked if anyone was familiar with Newhallville Development Corporation. He said he is familiar with them, and questions what they do. Mr. Marchand explained the work that Newhallville does. He added that they have some certifications, and are presently addressing receiving HUD certification. He said that one of the problems with getting their HUD certification is their lack of a board. He said this grant provides seed money for them; this is the third year they have been funded.

Mr. Brooks discussed this organization not having a board in order. He asked if funding this organization is fair. Ms. Blandon said if they do not get further along then they have during the three years of funding, they will not be provided with funding next year. She further explained that this is a three-year commitment. Ms. Highsmith said part of the message is that they did not fund the full amount requested in order to send a message that it is necessary to get things in order.

Ms. Rowe said this organization is “reinventing the wheel” since there is a similar program that exists in New Haven. She questioned why the Commission is funding them when they can't form a board.

Mr. Curtis said he volunteered two years ago to assist them, but was not asked to participate.

Mr. Brooks said he has no issue with funding the third year as long as they understand that this is it. Mr. Brooks asked if they could be cut off if they are not meeting certain benchmarks during the year. Mr. Marchand said they couldn't be cut off from funding if they present invoices for things that have been paid. He added that Newhallville Development Corporation has conducted First Time Homebuyers Seminars at Keefe, and they are working toward being certified by HUD.

Ms. Rowe asked if the entire \$52,000 has to be used. Mr. Marchand said it doesn't. Ms. Rowe said there are many other areas that could use the funds. She said that QVHD has been funded since she was on the Commission. It was explained that the current request is for a new program. She also questioned STEPS and REACH being funded, since the funds are for entertainment.

Ms. Blandon pointed out that these programs benefit Hamden children. Ms. Highsmith explained how these funds are used for a reward system and are not entirely entertainment.

Ms. Blandon said that perhaps the Commission should discuss the three-year commitment to an organization. Mr. Brooks suggested a two-year commitment with an option for a third year if progress is shown.

Mr. Brooks said that he feels that the sub-committee has done an excellent job distributing the available PSA funds, and did it in a very equitable and fair manner.

Ms. Blandon and Ms. Highsmith further explained the funding for QVHD.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM.

Submitted by _____

Peggy Craft, Commission Clerk