

CITY OF SOUTH PORTLAND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday March 1, 2017, 6:00 – 8:30pm

City Council Chambers

Committee Attendees: Don Legere (chair), Mike Fletcher, Anton Hoecker, Elizabeth Morin, Richard Rottkov

City Staff attendees: Maeve Pistrang, Joshua Reny

The Committee noted that they liked the updated application questions and formatting this year. They agreed that they all wanted to be able to pose questions to the applicants during the presentations. They discussed in particular the South Portland Food Cupboard application, which was requesting more funds than last year while the proposal had not significantly changed. They also discussed the West End Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment and how it relates to the West End Master Plan, also funded by CDBG last year. Josh Reny volunteered to speak in more detail about the non-public service projects at the next meeting.

The Committee discussed reallocating \$1,700 in 2016 Public Services fund to a different 2016 Public Service project. Those funds are now available as a result of the SIRP program relinquishing their grant.

At 7pm Don Legere welcomed the presenters and noted that CDBG public service funding is capped, so while all of the programs are worthy, not all of the requests can be accommodated.

Sybil Riemensnider of the South Portland Food Cupboard spoke about the fact that she is retiring from her volunteer position as director of the Food Cupboard this summer, and that the organization is seeking a paid staff person to replace her. This position would increase their costs, which is why they are seeking a larger grant from the City. The Committee asked about the rent at 130 Thadeus. Sybil noted that the South Portland Food Cupboard is much larger than others in the region and wouldn't be able to find a comparable space for free. Also, their rent is not expected to rise. She also spoke about the Board of the Food Cupboard and the need for more members who can work on behalf of the organization. The Committee thanked Sybil for her 30 years of service to the Food Cupboard.

Liz Thompson of the Southern Maine Agency on Aging spoke about the Meals on Wheels program, which reaches home-bound South Portland seniors. She talked about the cycle of declining health that befalls many of their clients, and how Meals on Wheels becomes an important lifeline of food as well as human contact. She said although the program is required to send a bill to clients, no one is turned away for their inability to pay. The Committee asked questions about the cost per meal and how many clients were served with the South Portland funds. Though the \$10,000 breaks down to a small number of clients, the clients served by the program throughout the year is not static so the funds cover more people than it appears just by the calculations.

Rebecca Hall, Executive Director of Family Crisis Services spoke about domestic violence services provided to South Portland via the EPIC program. The committee asked how much utility the \$5,000 in CDBG funds has for their program. She responded that though it is a small grant, those funds have been critical in demonstrating community support as match funds when seeking other, larger funding sources.

Chris Gorman from the Opportunity Alliance spoke on behalf of the Redbank Hub. He noted their excitement about the Master Plan effort, plans for improvements at the Redbank Community Center, and improvements throughout the neighborhood. He then introduced Kate Parker, a resident at Olde English Village. She told the committee about her experiences with the Hub and how they have been an important source of help and support for her, her daughter, and her grandson. The committee asked about other funding opportunities available to the Hub, and Chris noted that child abuse and neglect had dropped so significantly in the neighborhood since the Hub has been in place that they have been able to redirect funds to other programs. He also noted that they are working to replicate the Hub model in other communities based on the South Portland example because it has been so successful.

Lisa Thompson of the City Parks & Recreation department talked about the Summer Camp scholarship program. She said the City runs 5 camps for grades k-8 with over 600 attendees. Last year CDBG funds were able to cover 50% of the costs for 25 kids from 12 families. 75 kids from 40 families had requested assistance. The committee asked where the other funding for the camps comes from and Lisa confirmed that it comes from camper fees. The committee also asked about the possibility of increasing the number of camp spots available and she said that bus and building capacity factor in to the number of children they are able to accommodate. The committee also asked about families that are not able to pay the other 50% of the camp cost, and Lisa said they help those families to connect with other resources that can help cover the difference.

Kathleen Babeu of the City Social Services department spoke about the Heating Assistance Program. She talked about the different heating the program covers from oil, to pellets, to electric. She noted that LIHEAP has long wait times and many people can't access it until after the winter is over. The committee asked if the program sees repeat customers and she confirmed that it does, and for some it is their only way to get heat in the winter. The committee also asked about the leftover funds from 2015, of which there was about \$4,000. She said so far, the program has spent about \$6,200 in CDBG this winter in total, which includes that \$4,000 from 2015 and about \$2,200 from the \$8,000 in 2016 funds.

Art Handman of the City Transportation department spoke about the Free Bus Pass program. He commented that he appreciated hearing from the other applicants, because he works with these social services agencies to distribute free bus passes throughout the year so the people they are talking about are also the bus pass clients. He noted that the South Portland bus service was the only one in the region that worked with social services agencies in this way and that requests for free bus passes had increased by 68% over the year.

The Committee thanked the presenters for their work and for their time this evening.

On motion made and seconded, the Committee voted unanimously to reappoint Don Legere as Chair of the Committee. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30pm.