

# **PLANNING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING YEAR 42 CDBG PROGRAM APPLICANTS**

## **MINUTES JANUARY 26, 2017**

In Attendance:

### **PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS**

Paula Caron, Chair  
Michael Hurley  
Paul Fontaine, Jr.  
Michael DiPietro

### **COMMUNITY DEV/PLANNING STAFF**

Larry Casassa      Liz Murphy  
Michael O'Hara      Sue Christensen

### **CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Paul Beauchemin

Paula Caron opened the meeting at 6:04 p.m. Paula explained the purpose of the CDBG hearing. Twenty three (23) CDBG proposals were received totaling \$1,932,993.14 million dollars in requests. Approximately \$950,073. in Year 43 funds is available. The CDBG schedule was explained to the audience. The schedule is as follows: the Planning Board will meet on February 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Year 43 proposals and make a recommendation to the Mayor. The Mayor will review the Planning Board's recommendations and submit his recommendations to the City Council for their review between March 14-21. The proposed Consolidated Plan and Statement of CDBG activities will be published on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Public comments will be received up to the date of the second public hearing which is scheduled for May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Submission of the Year 43 Consolidated Plan -Action Plan is in May. The start-up of the new program year begins on July 1, 2017.

Liz Murphy, from the Community Development Department, referred applicants to the handouts provided in the application package that were also available at the meeting. The CDBG Program regulations were outlined. In order for a project to be eligible it must meet one of the three national objectives which include: benefitting persons of low-moderate income, eliminating slums and blight, or meeting an urgent need. Eligible activities include: public facilities, public services, demolition, economic development, rehab & preservation, planning & administration. For projects serving a low-moderate income area, at least 51% of the households must be at 80% median income or less. There is a 20% cap on planning and admin activities, and a 15% cap on public service activities. It is the city's responsibility to insure that at least 70% of CDBG funds are used to benefit low-moderate income persons over a three-year period (2015-2017).

Paula Caron explained some housekeeping rules and welcomed comments from the audience. She said Joana Dos Santos from the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center was available to provide Spanish translation.

**PUBLIC FACILITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS**

<b><u>PAGE</u></b>	<b><u>PROJECT</u></b>	<b><u>SPONSOR</u></b>	<b><u>YR. 43 REQUEST</u></b>	<b><u>YR. 42 AWARD</u></b>
A	<b><u>Sidewalk Accessibility Improvements</u></b>	<b><u>City of Fitchburg Disability Commission</u></b>	<b>\$30,000</b>	<b>none</b> \$10,500 balance from prior years

Project funds will be used to bring city sidewalks into compliance with ADA requirements. The project involves adding/improving crosswalks and removal of curbs that are obstructing universal access along Water Street, between Nashua and Fifth Streets, and on South Street near the Hosmer School. Approximately 30 architectural barriers will be removed. Work will be performed by the DPW to ADA standards.

*No one was present to address this application.*

B	<b><u>Parks and Playground Improvements</u></b>	<b><u>Community Development Department</u></b>	<b>\$35,000</b>	<b>\$110,000</b>
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Project funds will be used to supplement funding available for the DPW to improve the soccer fields at Coolidge Park. Approximately 65,000 square yards of fields will be upgraded by regrading, loam and hydroseed. Work will be performed by the DPW and will be ADA compliant.

*Larry Casassa spoke in support of this application and stated that it was part of ongoing capital improvement plan to address all CDBG eligible parks & playgrounds.*

C	<b><u>Cleghorn Sidewalk Project</u></b>	<b><u>Fitchburg City Councilor Paul Beauchemin</u></b>	<b>\$250,000</b>	<b>none</b>
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Project funds will be used to make approximately 8,000 linear feet (approximately 1.5 miles) of new sidewalk in the Cleghorn neighborhood to provide safe passage to school children and residents walking in the neighborhood. Areas to be addressed include portions of Pratt Road, Clarendon Street and Allen Place. Work will be performed by the DPW and will be ADA compliant.

*Paul Beauchemin spoke in support of this application, stressing the dangerous conditions for Memorial students and elderly to use the sidewalk, especially at night. Several residents also voiced support for the application.*

D	<b><u>Memorial MS Auditorium Seating Replacement</u></b>	<b><u>Fitchburg School Dept.</u></b>	<b>\$147,241</b>	<b>none</b>
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Project funds will be used to purchase and install 780 new chairs to replace existing auditorium seating in the Memorial Middle School Auditorium. This will include handicapped accessible seating.

*Andre Ravenelle spoke in support of this application, stating that despite the many improvements at Memorial the auditorium states were original and were torn and tipped. Once new seats are installed, the auditorium can be painted and available to both students and community. A letter of support was read from Councilor Dean Tran.*

<b>E</b>	<b><u>Sidewalk Improvements</u></b>	<b><u>NewVue Communities; ReImagine North of Main; Residents of High &amp; Marshall Streets</u></b>	<b>\$44,850</b>	<b>none</b>
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Project funds will be used to repair deteriorating sidewalks on High Street (between Elm Street and Johnson Street) and on Marshall Street (between Simonds Street and Johnson Street) Scope of Work would include 500 linear feet of sidewalks on High Street and 995 linear feet of sidewalk on Marshall Street. Work will be performed by the DPW and will be ADA compliant.

*Meredith Geraghty from ReImagine North of Main addressed this application, stating that the sidewalk repair is part of an initiative to improve the housing market. Matt from New Vue shared anecdotes from residents who have difficulty navigating the sidewalks, especially at night. Several residents also spoke in favor of the project.*

<b>F</b>	<b><u>Coolidge Park Fence</u></b>	<b><u>Fitchburg Board of Parks Commissioners</u></b>	<b>\$65,000</b>	<b>none</b>
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Project funds will be used to remove the existing chain link fence along John Fitch Highway and Pearl/Townsend Streets adjacent to Coolidge Park and replace with a modern fence. All existing fence removal, fence supplies and labor will be provided by the Department of Public Works.

*Nate Larose spoke in support of this application, saying that Coolidge was the most used park in Fitchburg. The fence will match existing fence and provide a better barrier from the street to residents inside the park.*

<b>G</b>	<b><u>Crocker Field Grandstand Roof Restoration Phase IV</u></b>	<b><u>City of Fitchburg School Department</u></b>	<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>none</b>
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Project funds will be used to fund Phase IV, painting the steel roof trusses and columns in order to prevent further erosion of roof supports. It will extend the life of the grandstand and restore the appearance of the steel. Funding provided by CDBG will be matched equally by the School Department.

*Peter Stephens form the Fitchburg School Committee, Chairman of Facilities Subcommittee addressed this application stating that the grandstands can now be used and they would like to complete the job so as to stop erosion and further damage. Robert Jokela stated that for the last 10 years the school has matched CDBG award and they will do so this year if funded.*

<b>H</b>	<b><u>Streetscape Improvements</u></b>	<b><u>Community Development</u></b>	<b>\$150,000</b>	<b>none</b>
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Project funds will be used to design, install or replace sidewalks, curb-cuts, fencing, lighting, plantings or other streetscape or accessibility improvements along City Gateways, North of Main or other strategic locations. Project plans may also be developed.

*Larry Casassa addressed this application as an ongoing City effort to address the major entryways to the City. Funds will also provide a critical match for discretionary grants from state & federal government.*

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>SPONSOR</u>	<u>YR. 43 REQUEST</u>	<u>YR. 42 AWARD</u>
I	<u>Fitchburg Dog Park</u>	<u>Fitchburg Board of Parks</u>	\$6,000	none

Project funds will be used to fund activities related to the creation of a Dog Park in Coolidge Park, including the installation of a fence to lead to a gated entry. Also, the removal of the interior of the existing water run off structure from the old swimming hole, trench and run a new water line for drinking water fountain within the dog park. Work would be performed by the DPW.

*Nate LaRose addressed this application. The City of Fitchburg received a design grant and if meet all of the standards set forth in grant, City will receive an additional \$130,000. DPW will be used to remove existing water run structure and run a new water line.*

J	<u>Veterinary Science Center &amp; Community Clinic</u>	<u>Montachusett Vocational Technical High School</u>	\$50,000	none
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Project funds would be used for building supplies and materials to aid in construction of a Veterinary Science Center and Community Clinic which will serve both students enrolled in the job training program and pets of low-income families. *This activity may not meet the national objectives criteria of the CDBG program.*

*No one was present to address this application.*

**TOTAL PUBLIC FACILITIES & IMPROVEMENTS PROPOSALS (10)                      \$ 803,091.00**

**PUBLIC SERVICES**

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>SPONSOR</u>	<u>YR. 43 REQUEST</u>	<u>YR. 42 AWARD</u>
K	<u>Street Homeless Intervention Program</u>	<u>Our Father's House</u>	\$24,500	none

Summary: Project funds will be used to pay staff salary for a 20 hour per week Street Outreach Worker solely dedicated to the homeless within the City of Fitchburg. It is estimated that 60 unduplicated homeless individuals living in uninhabitable places will be engaged, eventually moving to the OFH Shelter or permanent housing. Connections to health and social services, mental health and addiction services will be offered along with food, clothing blankets and human contact. Will work with Fitchburg PD and FD.

*Judith Pasierb addressed this application. Our Father's House has never applied for CDBG funding, but critical need this year. This funding will allow an outreach worker dedicated to Fitchburg only. Clinician also spoke to the dire need. Addressed how homeless presence affects economic development.*

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>SPONSOR</u>	<u>YR. 43 REQUEST</u>	<u>YR. 42 AWARD</u>
L	<u>Building Leadership &amp; Inspiring Self Sufficiency</u>	<u>United Neighbors of Fitchburg, Inc.</u>	\$83,402.14	\$53,000

Project funds will be used to provide an afterschool youth program, information and referral, food pantry, bi-lingual services to Latino residents, GED in Spanish, ESL, citizenship, civic & community engagement. Funds will be used to partially pay for staff salaries, including Executive Director, Manager of Donor relations, Bookkeeper Assistance; Community Access Supervisor and Afterschool Program Assistant. It is estimated that 1,100 (unduplicated count) will be served.

*Joana DosSantos addressed this application, stating that as the only Latino agency in the City they need to expand staff due to a 20% increase in youth and 88% in referral services. . Also present were many residents representing members of UNF, who also spoke as to the benefits of UNF. A Board member also addressed the fact that UNF serviced people City-wide.*

M	<u>Spartacus Program</u>	<u>Montachusett Regional YMCA</u>	\$10,000	\$9,000
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Project funds will be used to support staff salary of the Teen Center Spartacus Program, offering services to at-risk youth between the ages of 13 and 18 who live in Fitchburg. Emphasis will be on Youth Development, Healthy Living and Social Responsibility through physical fitness, team building, life skills training and outdoor activities. It is estimated that 50 youth (unduplicated count) will be served between September and June.

*Jenn Gordon addressed this application, explaining that the program benefitted youth at risk, meeting their academic, social and emotional needs. Chief Martineau and Councillor Beauchemin also spoke in favor of the Spartacus program.*

N	<u>Drug Enforcement and Patrol Program</u>	<u>Fitchburg Police Dept.</u>	\$75,000	\$65,000
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Project funds will be used to provide for police overtime expenses related to drug investigation activities in the CDBG Strategy Area and foot/motorcycle/bicycle patrols in targeted CDBG areas. Police activities include narcotics investigations, surveillance, undercover buys, search warrant services and arrests.

*Chief Martineau addressed this application, thanking the City for continued support and indicating that due to this funding last year 38 search warrants were issued and 57 arrests were made. 2500g of cocaine, 2000 g of heroin and 7 firearms were seized.*

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>SPONSOR</u>	<u>YR. 43 REQUEST</u>	<u>YR. 42 AWARD</u>
O	<u>Transportation Services to Afterschool Program, Project Learn STEAM</u>	<u>Boys &amp; Girls Club of Fitchburg and Leominster</u>	\$40,000	\$16,000

Project funds will be used to provide one-way transportation from Fitchburg schools to the Boys and Girls Club Afterschool Program located at 365 Lindell Street in Leominster. The Fitchburg schools include: Memorial, South Street, Reingold, Crocker, McKay, Longsjø, Sizer and Fitchburg High School. It is estimated that approximately 1,440 transportation trips will be provided and 250 Fitchburg youth (unduplicated) served.

*Donata Martin spoke on behalf of this application and highlighted the various programs offered at the Boys & Girls Club including STEM, Recreation, Sports, Academic Success and Entrepreneurship. This year the “Mass Youth of the Year” was from the Boys & Girls Club. To date, 318 Fitchburg students are enrolled. Fitchburg students pay no fee due to HUD regulations.*

P	<u>MIHN Family Housing/ Family Pathways Project</u>	<u>Montachusett Interfaith Hospitality Network</u>	\$12,000	\$9,000
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Project funds will provide emergency housing for homeless families in North Worcester County, including case management and follow up services. It is estimated MIHN will screen at least 250 referrals during the year, and will continue to try to meet the goal of serving 30 Fitchburg residents (unduplicated count) in the shelter and emergency services. The CDBG funds will be used to partially pay for the MIHN Operations Manager salary costs.

*Jon Hogue spoke in support of this application. House relocated to Leominster 1 ½ years ago and volunteers contributed \$200,000. worth of time over the last year. The house can hold 5 families and MIHN has incorporated trauma-informed care along with their program supports.*

**TOTAL PUBLIC SERVICE PROPOSALS (6)** **\$244,902.14**

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>SPONSOR</u>	<u>YR. 43 REQUEST</u>	<u>YR. 42 AWARD</u>
Q	<u>Small Business Technical Assistance Program</u>	<u>NewVue Communities (formerly Twin Cities CDC)</u>	\$25,000	\$20,000

Project funds will provide outreach and technical assistance to businesses. This program leverages loans for small businesses. It is estimated that 40 businesses will be served (unduplicated count), 60 jobs will be created/retained, 40 businesses will be counseled, 4 loans with a value of \$100,000 total will be facilitated and 25 business plans developed. Funds will be used to pay staff salary.

*NewVue Communities spoke in support of the application. Last year 98 businesses were assisted (28 from Fitchburg retaining 37 jobs and developing 23 business plans. Mary Jo Bohart & Tom Skwierawski from ReImagine North of Main also spoke in support of this application.*

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>SPONSOR</u>	<u>YR. 43 REQUEST</u>	<u>YR. 42 AWARD</u>
R	<u>Fitchburg Venture Fund's Loan-Loss Reserve</u>	<u>Montachusett Opportunity Council (MOC) on behalf Of ReImagine North of Main</u>	\$25,000	none

Program funds will support a Loan-Loss Reserve that will leverage a new targeted Revolving Loan Fund, known as Fitchburg Venture Fund. The proposed amount will be matched with \$25,000 committed by ReImagine North of Main. The combined Loan Loss Reserve will leverage \$500,000 in funds to the Fitchburg Venture Fund. It is estimated that 6-10 businesses (unduplicated count) will be served in Year 43 with CDBG funds, with at least 2-4 of the loans funded going to new businesses.

*Tom Skwierawski addressed this application, explaining the background of this program. ReImagine North of Main currently has \$25,000 which would leverage \$250,000 and they would like to expand to serve the entire City of Fitchburg.*

S	<u>CDBG Business Loan Pool</u>	<u>Fitchburg Comm Development Department</u>	\$100,000	none
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Summary: Program funds will provide financing for new and existing small businesses to start-up and expand their operations in Fitchburg and will allow grant incentives for building owners in the Main Street commercial district to encourage accessibility improvements such as elevators or lifts. It is estimated that 4-8 businesses (unduplicated count) will be served; 3-6 full time equivalent jobs will be created and 1-2 units will be made handicapped accessible

*MaryJo Bohart addressed this application. The recent assistance to River Styx Brewery depleted this account. Larry Casassa stated that by its nature, it a flexible program but with flexibility comes increased risk. Mary Jo stated that funds can be used to address accessibility issues which would be helpful in some of the older downtown buildings.*

**TOTAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS (3)** **\$150,000.00**

**REHABILITATION AND PRESERVATION**

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>SPONSOR</u>	<u>YR. 43 REQUEST</u>	<u>YR. 42 AWARD</u>
T	<u>Code Enforcement</u>	<u>Fitchburg Building</u>	\$100,000	\$49,000

Project funds will add one full-time Building Inspector position to work within the CDBG target area. Through enforcement of the State's Sanitary and Building Codes, Fitchburg's housing stock will be greatly improved. To be eligible, this activity must be part of a comprehensive strategy to arrest deterioration, including housing rehab and demolition. It is estimated that 3,500 housing units (duplicated count) will be inspected in the CDBG strategy area.

*Duffy Lanciani addressed this application, stating that add one full-time building inspector to work within the CDBG target area.*



**PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION**

<b><u>PAGE</u></b>	<b><u>PROJECT</u></b>	<b><u>SPONSOR</u></b>	<b><u>YR. 43 REQUEST</u></b>	<b><u>YR. 42 AWARD</u></b>
W	<b><u>CDBG Administration</u></b>	<b><u>Fitchburg Community Development Department</u></b>	\$185,000	\$185,000

Project funds will provide for the necessary administration of CDBG programs and sub-recipient contracts in accordance with federal guidelines, including staffing, technical services and planning activities. This also includes the cost of various activities such as the Consolidated Plan; Consolidated Annual Performance Report; Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing and other strategic plans and services. These funds enable the City to apply for, receive and administer additional federal and state grants.

*Liz Murphy addressed this application. A correction was made as to the Year 42 amount, it should read \$212,000.00*

**TOTAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION PROPOSAL (1)** **\$185,000**

Susan Christensen informed Planning Board that the United Neighbors of Fitchburg had left a letter in support of their application to be entered into the record.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm