

Town of Charlemont, Massachusetts
SELECT BOARD Meeting June 6, 2016
Town Hall

Meeting convened at 10am

In attendance Select Board Chair Beth Bandy, Select Board members Sarah Reynolds and Toby Gould

Invited guest: Pam Parmakian, Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority

Also in attendance, Bruce Hunter, Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority

Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority's role with Community Development Block Grant funds is to write applications and administer grants for 23 of the western MA Towns. Some of the communities are entitlement communities, i.e. Northampton, Greenfield. Community Development Funds – fund 1 (CDF1) and fund 2 (CDF2) fund different communities, CDF1 funds entitled communities. Last year in 2016, \$14M+ was spent in CDF1, distributed over past 3 years. CDF2 towns received \$2.7M.

Pam, Bruce, and the Select Board discussed scores. The community wide needs score for Charlemont is 29 of 35. For the previous project for housing and fuel assistance, Rowe, Heath, and Charlemont's scores were averaged. 32 projects housing rehabilitation projects were included in the grant, to be spent over 18 months, which currently has an extension. All residents are currently eligible for fuel assistance.

Pam, Bruce, and the Select Board discussed eligible activities. Charlemont is 46.3% low to moderate income, however it's never been at the 51%. They discussed whether apartment complexes are included. The last census did not include income data. Interpolated income data is based on random investigations. If want to get economic development, can apply for an Economic Development grant. To apply, need to meet 51% threshold. Can do an income survey according to Housing and Urban Development requirements. Depending on the size of the area, anything under a 100 household, need 80-90% response rate. Did a survey 4-5 years ago, got a lot on Social Security, not low to moderate. Maybe the downtown will come out low to moderate income. Where we find the infrastructure works best is where there's a small town with a small neighborhood. It's harder in a rural situation.

Potential projects were discussed. The Towns must meet one of three national objectives, and they're limited to what can be done. Can a Town Hall elevator be considered? There is a task force looking at abandoned properties in town – problem with properties is that because they're privately owned, if want to do it, have to take properties in tax title, and wait a year for ownership. Once have ownership, can repair it under spot blight. If choose it, the rest of the area can never be considered for blight, such as a neighborhood or downtown center. Anything over 4-5 units will need to go through public bid. If going to demo need a re-use. If re-used, it's a 15-year re-use. Example: when the Town did wastewater treatment work, they did a survey of just the sewer district, about 10 years.

Discussing the task force, it is not clear what the next steps would have been. Things have been on hold for quite some time. Bruce will send regulations on blight. Re-use will have to meet low to moderate income requirements. When applying for a grant, the Town must have all details set in stone. Applications are due the first week of February. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will award in August. The Housing and Redevelopment Authority recoups \$3,000 for writing the grant. Consider 2018 for application timeline.

The direction of the funds may change based on administrations, staying within the HUD guidelines.

Does the town have any 10% set aside of low to moderate income, 40B rental units that are affordable? Discussing previous projects completed, HRA has done water and sewer for trailer parks. In Bernardston, the Town replaced the water mains and repaved the roadways in a trailer park. Wendell did an income survey, proved they were at 52% low to moderate income. Infrastructure would be considered wastewater, water. Otherwise it can be very difficult to do infrastructure.

When discussing whether the Town can achieve greater accessibility using CBDG funds, it depends on the severity of the need for what you're asking. Why do you need an elevator for the second floor? If it is a space crunch and we don't have enough office space, then the alternative is to purchase a new building. The Town would have to commit to using the space for Town use. Would have to be space that's used, or has been designed or redesigned for assembly use. Would it meet code? To do that, would need to do an engineering study to find out the feasibility. Is the foundation able to hold? Could you move the library upstairs? There may be funding through a library grant. Mass Historic and Powers Institute in Bernardston, put in an elevator in Phase 1 and are doing some structural improvements in Phase 2 to put in a senior center. If put in, would need to pave the parking lot, would need to meet architectural design aspects for handicap access. The elevator then has to be maintained, the most expensive part of gaining accessibility. The Town would need a 504 plan completed. We can call Stavro's for assistance, or Mass Office of Buildings. The Department of Housing and Community Development doesn't require the civil rights end of accommodations for people with disabilities. It was asked if the Town has an active museum count, though it's a non-profit. Is that enough of an existing use? It's allowable per HUD, but the state has never funded it. But if we had an advocate for persons with disabilities submitting a letter it would help. What is the definition of a public building? In Heath put an elevator into the 2nd floor for their community center. It was recommended the Town evaluate for potential uses, such as the library or other office spaces; The use group triggers the expenses. Example – Northfield, needed to pay for a second egress, putting in over \$450k. Hire an architect to consider the options. **Action:** Beth made a Motion to for Peg to reach out to Architects and State or nonprofits that could help 504 transitional plan and feasibility study. Toby 2ndd. All in favor. Cost and time frame.

Grand total combination of \$900,000 over two years (20-25% for program delivery and admin.); Minimum of two activities in each grant. Project would have to be complete prior to being eligible for second year's funds. To revise a Community Development Strategy, the Town needs a public information meeting which would need to be scheduled for the Fall. The Town needs bid ready plans and specifications to apply. It was suggested that the Town work out a timeline for 2018 funding.

Adjourned at 11:24am

Respectfully Submitted by Peg Dean 7-5-16
Draft minutes until approved

Documents viewed:

- Powerpoint from the Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority's CBDG info session held at the FRCOG May 12th
- Town of Charlemont 2014 Community Development Strategic Action Plan Prioritized Projects List
- FY2016 Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant DRAFT One Year Action Plan from the Department of Housing and Community Development