

**WAREHAM COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

**Public Hearing**

**FY 2012 CDBG Mini-Entitlement Plan Grant Application**

**Auditorium, Memorial Town Hall**

**6:00 P.M., November 14, 2011**

CEDA Board Members Present: Sandra Besse, Jo Jeffries, Jennifer Petersen

Members Not Present: Jean Connaughton, Chairman; Robert Fitchenmayer, Rudy Santos, David Smith

Others Present: Selectman Ellen Begley, Acting CEDA Director Peter Sanborn, Library Director Denise Medeiros, Deena Kinsky, Fr. Gabriel Healy, Carol Cordeiro, CEDA staffperson Jacqui Hickey

Peter Sanborn, Acting CEDA Director, opened the hearing by describing that its purpose was to discuss the Town's FY 2012 Massachusetts CDBG Program grant application and to provide a report on the progress of the Town's existing grants. He noted that this hearing is a posted meeting of the Community and Economic Development Authority, although there was not a quorum of members present.

Mr. Sanborn summarized application process for the FY12 CDBG grant, which is due on December 16. He explained Wareham's designation as a Mini-Entitlement community and how it differed from other communities, including the difference between a Mini-Entitlement and an Entitlement grantee. He said that the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) served as a mini-HUD for most cities and towns with populations less than 50,000. DHCD has considerable flexibility in how it distributes its funds, although the requirements of the federal government have to be met. Because of Wareham's Mini-Entitlement status it receives more funding than many Entitlement communities. As one of ten Mini-Entitlement recipients, Wareham does not have to compete for funding like other towns.

For each of the past two years, Wareham received grants of \$1,000,000. Because of federal funding cuts, DHCD will be reducing the award by \$100,000 for FY12. He said that while this reduction is not welcome it seems reasonable; communities who compete for funding will also be facing reductions, as well as a "sit-out" requirement. Although DHCD has said that Wareham will be eligible for a \$900,000 grant, the budget process at the federal level has not been finalized. The state has been expecting a 15% reduction in funding; it could be more, or less, when Congress finally acts on HUD's budget.

Mr. Sanborn summarized the status of Wareham's two active grants, FY 2010 and FY 2011. The FY10 grant is approximately 40% expended. It started in earnest in early 2011 and he projects that it will be around 70% spent down by the time the grant application is submitted. He discussed the projects that are being funded under that grant. The FY 2011 grant was awarded in July. It is just now getting underway because it takes time to

complete grant start-up procedures. The Town only received DHCD's authorization to start spending the FY11 grant on October 4. That grant is scheduled to be completed at the end of 2012. The FY10 grant is supposed to be completed by the end of 2010 but the town will be requesting to extend it to June 30, 2012. He described the projects funded under the FY11 grant. The Village Streetscape project, because of its cost, is being funded from both grants. He said that he was pleased to announce that construction started on that this morning. He asked if there were any questions before he proceeded to the heart of the hearing.

Mr. Sanborn said that the hearing is intended to present and receive input, requests, and ideas for the upcoming application. The Town has several projects under consideration and has already received requests from different agencies, organizations and town departments. Before talking specifically, he said that it was important to understand that the total requests and possible projects far exceeded the \$900,000 available. As such, the CEDA board and Board of Selectmen have difficult decisions to make. It is simply not possible to fund all the worthy projects. He said that this is made more difficult because CEDA has now committed the lion's share of its Program Income, which is primarily money that is received from repayment of housing rehab program loans. In the past, the CEDA has been generous in funding different social services program with Program Income, either exclusively or to supplement grant funding. While the office receives income on a monthly basis, it is a relatively small amount when compared to the requests.

Over the past two years the CEDA board has committed more than \$500,000 in Program Income to various projects. Ideally the board would like to spend less, so as to husband it for the future, but DHCD and HUD have requirements that a community can keep only a small amount of Program Income account on hand. These are long-standing federal requirements but they are also understandable in the face of cuts. Program Income has been used for such things as the sole funding for Turning Point, Damien's Pantry, and the Code Enforcement Officer or to augment projects like the Village Streetscape project, the housing rehab program and the improvements at Agawam Village.

Mr. Sanborn explained the requirements of what CDBG can fund. A project or activity be eligible – authorized under the Housing and Community Development Act. Each project/activity must meet one of three national objectives that Congress included in the act. The most common is a benefit to low and moderate income persons. Most of Wareham's activities fall under this act. A second national objective is to prevent or eliminate slums and blight, which is the objective that the Village Streetscape project falls under. He explained how. The third is urgent community need. This is rarely used as the standard to qualify under this is very difficult.

Mr. Sanborn said that grant activities are also subject to state requirements in addition to the federal ones. They need to be consistent with one or more of the Sustainable Development Principles listed on a handout. They also need to be consistent with the Community Development Strategy, a local statement of needs, strategies and priorities. He referred to the special meeting held in October that discussed the CDS. He directed attendees to the current CDS, revised in 2010, and gave examples of how certain of

Wareham's activities were cited as needs in the CDS. He said that the CDS itself has to discuss its relationship with the Sustainable Development Principles. He said that the CDS meeting in October was well-attended and many persons actively participated. Many new comments were offered, but there seemed to be overall agreement that the CDS accurately reflects the most pressing needs and priorities that the town should be addressing. He asked if the attendees tonight had any comments about the CDS. There were none. He said that after tonight's hearing, CEDA will review the comments from tonight and the October meeting and determine what revisions should be made to the CDS.

He asked if there were any questions. The 2011 Grant – how does the funding work? A lot of the same programs funded in FY11 are the same as in FY10. The programs do not overlap but provide a continuation in funding, especially for the various Public Social Services. Also, when last year's application deadline approached, he had just come into the job so there wasn't a lot of time to prepare the application. Mostly, though, he thinks that the projects are important in that they serve some of Wareham's neediest residents.

Planning for the FY12 application has been more difficult than it should have been because the status of another grant application to fund the remainder of the Village Streetscape project has been up in the air. Wareham just learned that the application was not funded. Had that been funded, it would have freed up monies for other projects. However, the CEDA board sees it as important to continue the project with funding from FY12. This would fund Phase 2 of the four phase project. Phase 1 is the work that started this morning.

Mr. Sanborn discussed the MassWorks grant program that the Town applied to for the Village Streetscape project. The state funded 23 out of more than 100 applications. It received funding requests totaling more \$400,000,000. This decision is affecting what the make-up will be for this CDBG application.

Mr. Sanborn presented the list of projects currently under consideration for the grant application. Again, the CEDA board believes that the village streetscape project will/should continue. A rough estimate is that the next phase will be \$400,000-500,000, which includes engineering services, resident inspection, and police details in addition to the direct construction cost. In the end this will probably take \$500,000 of the \$900,000 FY 2013 grant. CEDA proposes to continue the long-running housing rehab program as it serves very needy people. The assistance from the program makes them more secure and safer in their homes.

CEDA is reviewing the funding and spending for the Public Social Services programs. It is looking at the spending rate and the amount of funds that remain in the programs that are currently being funded, either with grant funds directly or from Program Income. Most programs have funds remaining that will carry them through mid- to late-2012, a few even into early 2013. As a result, certain programs currently receiving funding probably will not be included in the next grant. This should not be taken as a negative judgment on an individual program; it is just the reality in the face of budget constraints.

Currently, CEDA is considering including funds for Damien's Pantry, Turning Point and Transportation Assistance. Other programs may be included, depending on how the budget works out.

Mr. Sanborn said that the housing authority, the Board of Health and the Onset Youth Center has requested funding. There has also been internal discussion with Guy Campinha from Water Pollution Control and Treasurer/Collector John Foster about a betterment assistance program to reduce the impact of the betterment charges for sewer expansion on lower income residents. He has received several inquiries from businesses about help with façade renovations. The Christopher Donovan Center has also requested funding. He recognized that representatives were present from Damien's Pantry and the Reading Partners program from the library. He asked the persons from Damien's Pantry to speak.

Fr. Gabriel Healy and Carol Cordeiro gave a presentation on the beginning of Damien's Pantry. We have been part of the community since 1943. Fr. Gabriel was a priest in Harwich in the 1980s when the St. Vincent de Paul Society started feeding a few hungry families. This grew into a food pantry. When he transferred to New Bedford and then Wareham, his superior Fr. Tom McAvoy asked him to help establish a pantry to feed the poor. He chose to do it in Wareham. It is named after St. Damien Moloki whose philosophy was that if you take care of the poor that will be enough. This started modestly with no funding commitment so he and others had food drive and collected 30,000 cans of food. The pantry opened in a garage and started to grow. For years, no one was on a salary, it was all volunteers. Now, one staff member is on salary and every one else is a volunteer.

Fr. Gabriel said that Wareham is at the very edge of the services area for both the United Ways of Greater New Bedford and Brockton, and therefore do not seem to be a priority for much funding. Even though the economy is supposed to be improving, demand continues to rise. This Thanksgiving the pantry is giving away more than 800 turkeys, up by 20% from 2010. It serves Wareham, Dartmouth, New Bedford, Marion, Mattapoisett, Rochester and Buzzards Bay. More than 50% of the visitors are from Wareham. People are never turned away the first time they visit even if there is some doubt as to their need or if they are from outside the area. They are given a donation of food and then referred elsewhere. The pantry is trying to focus as much as possible on nutritious and fresh food: produce, eggs, milk, potatoes, oranges, apples, frozen fish and meat. It is very busy and getting busier all the time. There has been a cutback on funds and donations. People who were donating in the past are now coming for food. Fr. Gabriel discussed other sources of funding and donations, including Project Bread and small foundations.

Mr. Sanborn noted CEDA's commitment of \$25,000 of Program Income since early 2011, now fully spent. He asked if the pantry still needed support from the town given the various other sources. Fr. Gabriel said that they did but that they are grateful for what they have already received. He said that he sees a lot of poverty. Carol Correiro of the pantry said that almost all of the visitors are on food stamps and fuel assistance; many are receiving help with rent. She said that, on rare occasions, the pantry will assist in paying

a utility bill, heating oil or an arrearage in rent so as to prevent someone becoming homeless. She said that many Wareham residents are poor (3% of them are in the lowest level of poverty), and many grandparents are feeding grandchildren.

A discussion of the needs of the Wareham's low income individuals and families ensued among the attendees. There were many questions and comments, as well as the discussion about the various organizations that serve the needy. The discussion also included the opportunity for agencies to discuss improving cross-referrals. Mr. Sanborn said that this discussion is important because it will result in a broader understanding of the population's needs and the hardships that they are facing. This discussion is consistent with, although more specific than, the discussion in the Community Development Strategy.

Deena Kinsky said that she was from the Wareham Free Library's Reading Partners program, which provides literacy, reading and writing classes for adults and out-of-school youths. She thanked CEDA for its funding support. The Library provides English as a second language, GED testing, ASFAB testing, or a Wareham MTEL test, and various other testing, as well as computer basic training. Many community volunteers assist the instructors – currently there are 57 students, plus an additional 150 or so that come and go. They do not continue for many various reasons. Some will disappear and then come back and fully participate. Continuity is very important in regards to achieving the end goal. The funding needed now is to pay staff and instructors and for course supplies. Currently, there is not a need for major purchases (curriculum materials and equipment because this has been accomplished with prior funding). The structure is well set-up. Ideally, there would be funds for a third person to work evenings, because of the demand. A lot of students need one-on-one assistance. Ms. Kinsky asked the representatives from Damien's if they would put information on the Reading Partners program at the Pantry.

Mr. Sanborn thanked the representatives from Damien's Pantry and Reading Partners for their presentation. He said that he wanted to stress the need to make sure the funding for social services is used effectively. He believes that it is, but it is difficult for CEDA to get hard data from some programs. Others present very clear and useful data. It is important to know the impact of the funding.

Selectmen Ellen Begley asked if there were any programs that are not being funded because of the streetscape project. Mr. Sanborn said, this project is not affecting social service funding. He said that DHCD has requirements that put a limit on funding not more than five programs. Also, there is a percentage cap of the dollar amount of the grant that can be used for public social services. She suggested that it would be good for CEDA to disseminate information more widely about how its money is allocated and the limitations that it faces. She thinks that there is some misunderstanding and it can hurt the good efforts.

Mr. Sanborn recapped the various requests for funding that it had received, including those from the Housing Authority. He said that, despite early reservations about funding

this project by some, the outcome is like night and day. Unfortunately, he will not be recommending funding this year as a result of denial of the MassWorks grant application.

He said that the recommendation may or may not include continued funding for the Board of Health's part-time Code Enforcement officer. It has been a valuable program as the BOH has had to deal with some extremely bad conditions. However, this may not fit in the budget.

At this point, the likely projects that he will recommend to be included for funding are Turning Point, Damien's Pantry and transportation assistance under the Public Social Services category, housing rehabilitation, and Phase 2 of the Village Streetscape. Scholarships for low income families for special needs children at the Christopher Donovan Center is also a possibility.

He said that he appreciated the participation by all attending. Together, with the discussion at the Community Development Strategy meeting in October, he feels that CEDA has received valuable input about the community's priorities. He said that he has worked in many communities and he is moved by the compassion of so many residents toward their less fortunate neighbors.

Were there any other questions? Selectman Begley thanked CEDA for its work and for the work of the representatives from Damien's Pantry and Reading Partners.

He said that the next step is for the CEDA staff to consider that discussion at tonight's and last month's CDS meeting and recommend activities for the grant application. These recommendations would be acted on by CEDA Board and then forwarded to the Board of Selectmen.

The hearing closed at 7:50 PM.

