

CITY OF SOUTH PORTLAND  
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

Minutes

Thursday February 12, 2015

7:00 – 8:40pm, City Council Chambers

*Committee Attendees: Bud Johnson, Mike Fletcher, Richard Rottkov, Anton Hoecker, Matthew Gilbert, Don Legere*

*City Staff: Maeve Pistrang*

The Committee members introduced themselves and Bud Johnson, Committee Chair, welcomed the CDBG applicants and public to the meeting. He explained that applicants would have the opportunity to give a brief presentation about their application and the Committee would have the opportunity to ask questions.

Lois Reckitt the Executive Director of **Family Crisis Services** spoke about their application for the Enhanced Police Intervention Collaboration (EPIC). The program partners domestic violence advocates with police officers when conducting follow up calls to incidents of domestic violence. Ms. Reckitt noted that domestic violence intervention prevents homicides and helps families and kids. She said that the program served less people overall last year, but that was due to focusing more on particular cases, like trafficking, which have been increasing.

Deb Dunlap from Opportunity Alliance spoke about the **Redbank Hub**. She described the CPPC approach of creating community and neighborhood networks that prevent isolation as a means of reducing and preventing child abuse and neglect. She noted that since the introduction of the Redbank Hub, child abuse has decreased in the neighborhood and other communities in the state are looking at the Hub as a model to replicate. Several other neighborhood residents spoke about the Hub. One talked about how having the Hub as a resource helped his family and how residents consider it the “city hall of the west end.” He also spoke about the creation of the new Redbank/Brickhill Neighborhood Association coming out of the connectivity in the neighborhood initiated by the Hub. Another talked about the Hub as a warm and comforting place that helped her transition to her new home. One of the Committee members agreed with the commenters that the neighborhood has put the stereotype of Redbank in the past.

Helen Slocum of the **Community Garden Collective** spoke on behalf of their application to construct a new Community Garden at the Redbank Community Center. She explained they plan to construct 40 raised beds, 3 of which will be set aside to donate food to Harvest for Hunger. She also noted that there will be enough room to add more beds if there is enough demand. One Committee member asked if the soil had been tested. Ms. Slocum responded that it had, and that the beds would also be raised.

Rick Towle, Director of South Portland Parks & Recreation, spoke about the **Redbank Park Phase II** application, which would in part entail site preparation for the Community Garden. Additionally, this project would include stormwater improvements and the construction of soccer fields at the Redbank Community Center.

Rick Towle also spoke about the **Redbank Community Center Engineering** project. This would be the design phase of constructing a new addition onto the Redbank Community Center. Mr. Towle discussed how the Community Center has become a focal point for the neighborhood and that they have utilized all of the current space to maximum capacity.

Sybil Riemensnider, Director of the **South Portland Food Cupboard**, spoke about their application and the work of the Food Cupboard. She explained that the CDBG funds would go towards rent and utility costs for their space, which includes two 2,000 sq. ft. warehouses. Rent is \$3,000/month. She also said that the Food Cupboard serves between 600-800 people per month, not all of whom are South Portland residents. They also run a backpack program and deliver food to disabled housing authority residents. They have recently hired a 20 hour/week manager position while the rest of the workers are volunteers. One of the Committee members asked whether there were plans to be in a space that would not have such a high rent. Ms. Riemensnider said they have extensive space needs that these warehouses fulfill. However they do have parking issues and are no longer as centrally located or visible as they used to be.

Art Handman, Director of Transportation for the City of South Portland, talked about the **Bus Pass program**, which provides free bus passes to low income residents. He said it is a small portion of the overall transportation budget, but that giving people access to public transportation is important for the community and thinks it is an important use of CDBG. One Committee member asked Mr. Handman about the projected amount of bus passes to be distributed and the amount of funds requested, and said the numbers did not line up. The Committee member talked about the small amount of funds available for applicants and not wanting to fund any one project more than they actually needed. Mr. Handman responded that the amount of bus passes is only an estimate.

Susan Wilder of the Southern Maine Agency on Aging presented about the **Meals on Wheels and Simply Delivered** meal programs. These programs would serve homebound seniors and Medicare patients recently discharged from the hospital. Family caregivers of the patients can also receive meals. One Committee member asked whether the Simply Delivered program is able to get other funding, such as from insurance companies. Ms. Wilder responded that they are working on getting funding from hospitals and insurance companies and hope to eventually make the project sustainable under those sources.

Kathleen Babeau, Director of Social Services for the City of South Portland, talked about the **Fuel Assistance** program. She explained that the State can reimburse emergency fuel for GA clients, but residents who do not fall under those income guidelines are eligible for CDBG assistance. Therefore, the CDBG funding fills a gap for low income households that could not otherwise get assistance. One Committee member asked about the LIHEAP program and Ms. Babeau responded that Opportunity Alliance has appointments booked months in advance for LIHEAP and it is not accessible for many families.

Rick Towle spoke about the **Ferry Village Beach Access** application. This project would repair the public steps down to the beach off of High Street in Ferry Village. Materials would include engineered soils, granite curbing, and aluminum steps. The steps would also be able to fold up. Mr. Towle also noted that the property owner has threatened to remove the easement for the steps if they are not repaired, which would leave no public access in the neighborhood. The Committee mentioned there are also steps on Front Street in need of repair.

Rick Towle also spoke about the ***Recreation Scholarships*** application. This program subsidizes summer recreation program fees for low income South Portland youth. The Committee discussed other programs with Mr. Towle such as the afterschool programs at the Community Centers.

After the presentations, some Committee members discussed whether any of the City public service programs could be paid for out of the City budget instead of CDBG.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:40pm.