

**CDBG Priority Task Force**  
**Meeting 4: Tuesday July 8, 2008**  
**6:30-10:00pm State of Maine Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor City Hall**

Attendance: Jon Bradley, Frank Gallagher, Larry Gross, Wendy Harmon, Rhonda Juneau, Denis Lachman, Anna Priluck, Jeannemarie Celentano, Rachael Weyand.

Staff: T.J. Martzial, HNS Division Director, Amy Grommes Pulaski, HCD Program Manager,

**Welcome, Introduction and Overview**

Amy welcomes everyone to the meeting and thanks them for coming on a beautiful and hot summer evening. She reviews that last meeting we elected co-chairs Anna Priluck and Denis Lachman who have a lot of information to discuss at the meeting today. Amy also asks the group to consider accepting the minutes each meeting so that they can be posted on a website and part of the public documentation. All agree.

**Review of past meeting, notes and discussion**

Anna asks for motion to accept the minutes. Moved by Larry the group unanimously approved.

**Decision Making Process**

Denis opens the discussion and gives an overview of the agenda for today. He explains that the power point can be used for a public process as we move forward. It's a bare bones outline that will become more detailed as we continue our process.

Denis begins to describe the proposed decision making process. He asks how many attendees we need to have a quorum. What is the method of the decision making process? What are the advantages and or disadvantages of different decision making processes? He answers those questions in regards to Consensus, Supermajority, and Simple Majority. He explains the number of attendees, method, numbers required to pass decision, advantages and disadvantages of each of these options. He answers that the co-chairs would like to start with consensus, and if that is not an option, to move to supermajority, and finally, when all else fails we move to simple majority.

Larry asks about how this has been done with CMPAC in the past? Amy answers that they used simple majority, but due to discussion they would often be unanimous.

Jon Bradley said that he isn't sure that consensus is possible, but can't really answer this until we are further underway.

Wendy said that one thing that helped CMPAC was the scoring criteria.

Frank asked for clarification about consensus.

Rachael thinks that it sounds great- try for consensus and if that isn't working to move to supermajority.

Denis asks for a go around asking if everyone is ok with this model. The group votes unanimously in favor of working to consensus then moving to supermajority if consensus is not possible.

## Priority Discussion

Anna thanks everyone for the homework that they did over the last two weeks.

Larry explains that there is no consensus to what a vulnerable populations. CDBG and HUD define presumptive eligibility which means they don't need to prove they are low to moderate income people. These eight categories include: Abused Children, Homeless Persons, Battered Spouses, Illiterate Adults, Elderly Persons, migrant Farm Workers, Severely Disabled Adults, and Persons Living with AIDS. Larry passes out a document that was released by Portland's Public Health Department. It compares the city to the county. He explains how Portland ranks against the county in many instances. He also passes out a handout from United Way. He explains that the amount of money we have \$2.1 million is a drop in the bucket. There are systemic problems that Portland faces but this grant may not be able to address or make an impact in those issues. Although we have a lot of enthusiasm, the impact that we can have may be small. He highlights certain issues and correlations between the "gut" instincts and the recurring themes and issues described by United Way. One of the questions is how much is dedicated to human survival needs, and how much do we want to part off for new and exciting initiatives. We may want to look at how this funding could be catalytic.

Jon states the number of homeless people is increasing. As to basic needs, we are seeing more and more people falling due to economic problems. It's hard to look these issues without being specific. Many of those experiencing homelessness are also suffering from mental health and substance abuse issues. Many of HUD's presumed benefit populations are they ones that may be homeless. When you talk about affordable housing, many of the presumed benefit populations can not afford it. Much of the affordable housing is workforce housing, and many of the most vulnerable simply cannot afford to live there.

Amy presents Kyra info on child care and adds early childcare education. She reads the email from Kyra, "I am not sure if child care should be broken out as a separate priority to be considered or just included under the umbrella of Jobs/Economic Development. It is nearly impossible for families to maintain jobs without stable, affordable child care." Amy then presents the summary of Kyra's article from the recommendation section: Integrate child care into economic development planning. Reduce land use zoning barriers to child care, ensure that Maine leverages all available fed and state funding to support affordable child care, explore new tax policies.. and develop a child care facilities fund to help child care providers..." Amy also explains that in addition to child care, there is early childhood education that is more than day care, but ensures that children get the educational attention that they need in order to be ready when they reach Kindergarten.

Jeannemarie presents affordable and sustainable housing. She thinks that they are very relevant to CDBG priorities. Sustainable housing has positive implications and financial benefits to sustainability. There is a CDBG community near Portland Oregon who gets similar funding levels and couples affordable housing projects with programs, similar to Logan Place. She asks how can we address vulnerable populations? She thinks by integrating housing with services.

Rhonda presents the concept of walk-able cities. General characteristics include parks, accessibility, streets, income, schools and workplace. Our responsibility in making Portland a walkable city we have to consider what the needs are. The needs are specific to location in neighborhoods, where the homeless and low income populations are. The goal is to try to meet those needs within those neighborhoods. This would include grocery stores, hardware stores, and

supporting farmers markets in different neighborhoods throughout the city. Safety is an important priority. It is also important to connect neighborhoods through pathways and trails. The reason we don't have a walkable city is congestion, traffic, issues in each neighborhood. In every area she has researched, she found it all rolled back to the transit system and how people get around. Not everyone needs to use the bus or train, but try to manage the congestion of traffic and people traveling into and out of the city. This would help to make a safer environment for those who want to walk or bike. She does want to get some information and send a link. Portland Peninsula Transit did break down transit in different neighborhoods. We should invite them to come and talk. She feels that there are things we should consider for a walkabout city is involvement and public transit. Be supportive of pocket neighborhood centers, child cares etc so that people can walk and access their workplaces and have their basic needs be met.

Denis discusses quality of place. He is going to read a few excerpts from the quality of place. In 2006 Brookings, in spring 2007 the governor created a council on quality of place. In the report *People, Place and Prosperity* he is substituting the word Portland for Maine. "A more prosperous Portland is tied... to attract people.... Portland's principle advantage is its quality of place... picturesque downtown and historic buildings.... Portland is engaged in a world wide competition in people...." "Our distinctive competitive advantage is it's .... Neighborhoods and quality of place....we must work to keep and attract workers... retirees.... The goal is protect and strengthen our quality of place...." "In order to create a quality of place investment strategy....it shall be the policy to invest in a quality of place investment strategy in combination of economic development and community development strategies.

Frank discusses both energy and transportation. Energy is perhaps the one category that has the biggest potential for upsetting the apple pie. Right now people are spending an increased amount of their income to stay warm or to get around. Northern Utilities rate will go up in July. People who are on the edge right now, will fall off. Other communities have put funds into helping people get out of the trouble through fuel assistance or weatherization.

For transportation, it couples with all other categories. He learned that you can get away with almost anyway if you call it economic development. One municipality started a whole new transportation program with the funds. There are a few limitations, but there are so many options.

Wendy discusses food security. She reviewed how the money has been spent in the past at The Wayside Soup Kitchen, St Luke Soup Kitchen, and the St Vincent soup kitchen. There's an overlap of services for the lunches. There are also several food pantries, Preble Street, the root Cellar. She thinks they all should be working together. Even as she was looking online she found even more food pantries. Cultivating communities is doing something creative. She searched for food security and found food stamps. Older single adults head of household no children there is a 4-5% increase in that group. This is one area that could increase collaboration. Wayside serves over 230 meals a night and it's not just homeless. It's people who have jobs and work in town and they are stopping at the soup kitchens on their way home. I'd like to see how we can get them to all work together.

Anna discusses jobs and economic development. You can define economic development very broadly. She focused more on jobs. She looked at the way things have been done. A large chunk of the funding is going to social services. One thing to think about is instead of spending money on basic survival services but to provide more funding for job training. This could help some of the vulnerable populations to be less vulnerable. Job training and education is something that

other communities have focused on. There hasn't been a city wide effort. But there are many non-profit organizations around the country and here to shift services from basic needs with an angle toward education and jobs.

Amy discusses safety and community policing in Portland. Community Policing is a typical way CDBG funds are used to address safety. Community Policing are plain clothed individuals who are not police officers. They are in the community, in the neighborhoods, and connect with the people. They know the kids, the leaders, they go to the neighborhood organization meetings. They know what's going on and what the issues are in the neighborhoods. They are also able to connect people with resources and police support.

Amy also explains that CDBG is a flexible grant that can be used in numerous ways. The primary goals of the program are to help low and moderate income people and revitalize slum and blighted areas in the community. She will highlight things that are not eligible as they come up.

Anna describes how we proceed using a Let's Talk America. There is one or two ways that we can go around and discuss are "gut" reaction to what they heard.

Jeanemarie thinks that quality of place should not be a priority. She understands what it is about and likes it, but doesn't feel it necessarily fits as well for our priorities.

Frank agrees. He values quality of place, but given the dwindling resources and urgency as some of the other categories it doesn't rise to the top.

Jon's feels that it is really important for people as they do research that they really find out what is happening. We raised a lot of really good issues, but we need to know the facts. There is CDBG funds at the county. They made a big point for collaboration. The only people that addressed this were the food people. That combined Wayside, the food pantry in Brunswick and others. There are ways to make people work together.

Denis asks whether we look more flexibly in the future and abandon some of the current needs that have been served, or do we stay with the ones that we have been funding. Or is there some middle ground? The quality of place is where we hope to get to. He would be sad if we abandon that completely.

Anna heard five ideas for criteria: 1) what is the immediate need of the population, 2) most high need, 3) theory of saving the world ideal vs what is possible- what can actually happen? 4) it needs to intersect several of the populations, 5) efficiency and futuristic thinking.

Rhonda hears there are some instances where the needs of some of the populations intersect. Safety is very important. People who live in stressful situations are reactive. Managing that is a top priority you want to have a safe environment. You do need to have an objective. Our problem statements need to come together. There needs to be an outcome in our mind so that we have some direction. We should stay with a common thread for things that come up more than once.

Larry doesn't think we are missing anything. Some of these things we've identified as a priorities are bigger categories for other things that we've identified as a priority.

Rachael thinks we shouldn't focus primarily on crisis issues. Our task is to steer this in the direction that we want to go. We are in a crisis, but we will always be in a crisis. She wouldn't add or take away any priorities.

Wendy wanted to add the refugee population. There are some issues with translation. There are some economic development strategies like jobs. She would like to move forward with the collaboration of foods, and quality of place. We have a lot of knowledge here at the table. The first community policing was probably in the mid-90s in one of her buildings. It caused transportation on that street that you would not believe.

Anna makes a motion to remove quality of place from the priorities and move it to one of the lenses. Seconded by Frank. Jon asks Denis if he's ok with that. He explains that he is.

Denis describes the straw polling process.

Jon and Larry express concern over voting on priorities before getting any data.

Anna explains that we need to go through a process. We need to gather data, public participation and finally use that information to make the decisions. She says that the reason we are doing the gut polling is that we can identify our own "gut" and be comfortable with our own biases. This we can identify and move forward when the information and data is provided.

Denis states that we will take numerous polls. Poll discussion, poll discussion and it will take a snap shot.

Larry voices his concern about the psychological impact of consensus. If someone sees that they are not with the group, they may not be so apt to voice their honest opinions.

Larry discusses how the perception in the community might be if it looks like we have already set the priorities.

Anna says that we already have biases and are employees of direct funding recipients. It helps us to be more transparent. We know the truth of where we stand.

Frank said that he was down with polling until Larry's comment. There may be people who do misunderstand. Anonymity doesn't matter, what matters is the outcome. The political implication is strong.

Jon Bradley thinks that we have not had time to discuss each of these topics to learn about things that we do not know. We have not structured the process to have a discussion; we have only had "gut" comments.

Denis is hearing two questions. 1) Do we want to do polling? 2) Are we ready to do polling now?

The group agrees that polling is appropriate, all raise their hands

### **Public Participation Process & Data Gathering**

The group debates when polling is appropriate. Some say it should be at the end, some argue that we should have some polling throughout. Jeannemarie thinks that maybe after each step we take a poll. We can do it after the data gathering, then poll, public participation, then poll, and more information then poll.

Jon says that many of these populations that we need to go to them. Consumers are difficult to get involved. The best way to gather information is doing focus groups. There are many people who won't do surveys. There are ways to reach people. Nothing we get will be that scientific. Some agencies will have a lot of information others less. Jon worries that the summit may be more work and only gets service providers.

Anna says the survey has two challenges- keeping it simple- short and to the point. Who does this survey go to and how do we get it back? We could utilize each one of us for this process. We can send the survey to all the groups that have received funding and ask the groups to respond. The focus group piece is important way to let many people participate.

Larry says that ways to gather data, can it be statistical? We want to do a good job but be mindful of how much we put into it. Larry says we have to be mindful that we are not just focusing on the 33% of public services as well.

Jeannemarie voices her thoughts about how each agency that comes forward will think that their needs are the greatest. How will that help us make a decision?

Jon says the best intentions may not come to fruition. People are too stressed to work toward big picture thinking. He says that it will take a lot of time. He recommends focus groups and surveys rather than the summit.

The group continues to discuss how to gather information.

Denis asks if there is an interest of cross- category conversations. Larry says that moving outside the silos is a good thing. You would need to structure. For the focus groups you may wish to invite different groups to a discussion.

Jon asks who would be the focus of the focus groups. If you want to hear from homeless people- hold the focus groups at the shelter.

Frank says he thinks that people are looking to us to make decision. That being said we need to have public participation and data. We don't need to have three different ways to have communities get us that information. Key informants is going to help us streamline the process. Who do I need to hear from underlies of the priorities. He is going to change his mind several ways. This is really about us- how do we get the info we need to make the decisions.

Jeannemarie said if we go through the agencies to try to reach the constituents, they are going to give information that will keep them at the high end of the priorities. How do we avoid getting one testimony after another for all the needs?

TJ says we answer that that's how we develop the questions.

Larry said that we can set minimum criteria. How can each program make an impact?

Denis says that we have focus groups that go directly to consumers. We may also have a mini summit that we have inter-silo communication, with key informants.

Anna voices concern over time.

Jon says surveys are one way to reach people. We can have eight or nine focus groups based on the vulnerable populations. We won't get scientific. He thinks that ultimately he would like to have applications that meet those five categories. We need to give get busy with surveys and have a finite number of focus groups.

Frank agrees with Jon's methodology. We have a survey, we craft questions, reach out to the populations that we need to hear from. Then we have some focus groups. And then have some public meetings.

Rachael asked if you can merge the focus groups with the summit. Combine testimony with discussion.

Anna described her version of the summit.

Amy says there are two kinds of focus groups that are being discussed here. One is with the consumers or populations we are trying to serve, the other is agency representatives.

Frank does PR for a living, and he would be happy to help get the word out.

Anna says it seems that we have consensus on the survey, and less for the focus groups and summit. What should be asked in the survey?

Denis presents the schedule.

Larry says that we are not re-inventing the wheel. There are vast bodies of knowledge of how the community has set priorities in the past. It is unlikely that there have been changes.

Rachel says maybe we need to ask them what we need to know.

Wendy says that the city parks and public works prioritize their requests. They work in conjunction with other ways to fund the projects. They are all working toward their five or ten year plans.

Anna says that we need to gather data to find out what the needs are but how do we also determine what

Frank says there is vast amount of data out there that we can use. We still need to bring the public in. On the front end, we have a survey; on the back end we have a public meeting.

Wendy says that we can have United Way come in to talk to us. They participated in the HCD Task Force last year.

Denis states that there are benefits and drawbacks to looking to the past, without looking to the future.

Larry says we have a pretty good feel about what's been done, but not where we need to go.

Jon says that the best of use of our time is how to get good information. From the social service perspective, if we ask the right kind of questions. If we decide to only have large grants- then everyone will have to rethink how they do things. If you have to work in collaboration with other services providers, you will. You can force people to think outside of the box.

Jon says we are moving past where we are. He thinks that maybe we should have two surveys. He still wants to have a discussion about the topics. We haven't had enough discussion.

Rachel thinks that we are making it too complicated. We can't ask people what they need.

Jon says that we need ask the right questions. If you set things like we aren't funding anything under \$50,000 then that forces people to think differently. Otherwise you are going to get the same responses.

The group discusses how we set criteria. Jeannemaries asks that the surveys are multiple choice or easy to answer questions. Larry suggests doing data collection first so we can determine what the survey should have. Frank says we should know what exists before we try to write the survey. They group discusses data gathering methods.

Frank requests that we have city folks come to the next meeting. We can ask them, with the current economy what would help you. This is how it has worked in the past. What is the biggest

challenge in your department that HCD addresses? (It's the only thing that funds this particular thing?) What is the future?

Amy suggests bringing in United Way, and Cumberland County, etc. Jeannemarie requests that we set up another meeting between now and then to ask questions.

So everyone will send information to Amy by Friday at 12:00.

### **Schedule**

Ana introduces the proposed work outline. 1) gut priorities 2) data gathering 3) public participation and 4) decision making. How do we maximize involvement? There are a few data gathering methods. We can have testimonials, surveys, public participation, focus groups, large meetings, summit, etc. How do we figure this out? What are the principles and criteria?

### **Homework**

Read through the information Amy will send out.