

**CDBG Priority Task Force
Meeting 9: Wednesday August 19, 2008
5:00-7:00pm Merrill Rehearsal Hall**

Attendance: Denis Lachman and Anna Priluck co-chairs, Jon Bradley, Rhonda Juneau, Wendy Harmon, Jeanemarie Celentano, Larry Gross, Frank Gallagher, Kyra Walker, Rachael Weyand
Guests: Deirdre Nice, ED of Friends of St. Lawrence
Staff members: Deb Andrews, Rachel Talbot Ross, TJ Martzial, and Amy Grommes Pulaski.

Review of Past Meeting: Public Infrastructure

Amy reviewed the Summary of Public Infrastructure Improvement discussion with the Department of Public Services and Planning Division staff.

Public Facilities

Amy presents the overview of the history of the funding for the past 10 years. She goes over some of the slides presented in the handouts.

Anna asks how energy efficiency could be addressed through non-profit rehab and has this been done?

Amy says Preble Chapel is an example where it was a social service agency building rehab that had historic preservation, energy efficiency and housing programs that benefit low to moderate income persons, in one project.

Jon says that MaineHousing has energy efficiency as a huge initiative right now. We should be aware of other things that are currently going on.

Deirdre says with older buildings especially historic buildings would benefit from energy efficiency upgrades because they are so inefficient. However window upgrades can be expensive. You also have to maintain the buildings.

Rachel Talbot Ross asked about the bump up of outside physical improvements in 2007. Amy answers that there were more outside requests that year. Additionally CMPAC did not recommend funding for St. Dominic's or St. Lawrence, but the Council took \$162,500 from the Deering Oaks Playground fund to fund \$100,000 to the Friends of St. Lawrence and \$62,500 to fund St. Dominic's through the Maine Irish Heritage Center.

The task force discusses the differences between balancing city needs and expenditures and outside investment. The group agrees that we need to have further discussion about the balance of funds.

Rachel TR says that it doesn't feel fair to have projects not expend money within a year.

Deb Andrews says that sometimes groups cannot expend the money in that time because they have to raise money to do the project.

Amy explains the HCD TF felt the same way as Rachel does and has a 2 year time limit on the expanding of funds. The group discusses the readiness factor, can they start within two years.

RTR explains the importance of the readiness factor. Agencies should have strategic plan to utilize the funds quickly, if they request them. They should not sit and wait for years until they decide they are ready.

Jon explains how MaineHousing dealt with this.

TJ says that we can include this as part of the scoring criteria.

RTR says we either have to either help build capacity or only fund projects that are ready. The reality is that we would have to spend money so they are ready.

Deb says that some of the groups don't get on the map until they get funded by CDBG. That's something the group will have to grapple with.

Anna says that there is a balance. TJ says that if you do decide to invest in capacity building, you are taking funds from projects that could begin on Day 1.

Historic Preservation

Amy introduces Deirdre Nice.

Deirdre says it was wonderful working with city staff, Amy and T.J. and Deb Andrews. Deirdre starts at the beginning. The first grant that they received was from CDBG for \$10,000 in 1998. They turned it around and applied to another grant that would not have funded them otherwise for \$25,000. This enables them to hire a contractor to stop the leaking to get the next amount of money. From the \$10,000, \$121,500 and that \$115,000 was multiplied and they raised over \$800,000.

In 2003 the \$100,000 was used to prop up the sanctuary. We had a plan, if we fix the left; we will get money, open and start generating income. Back in the 1980s Munjoy Hill was a different deal, it was a drug haven a place people did not want to be. Now there are three-four nice expensive restaurants. The idea was if we build it they will come. This last bit of money was used to take down the sanctuary. If the previous allotment to shore up the, helped in the deconstruction of the sanctuary. She says that she wants to emphasize that the St. Lawrence would not be standing had it not been for CDBG.

She says that older buildings, especially older churches have been ignored forever. Congregations do not put money into the building or the roof. By the time these groups get the building it's in terrible condition. When a congregation leaves a historic church it leaves everything the bad heating system and everything. She emphasizes Historic Preservation takes a long time.

She says that each time the St Lawrence was funded it was an awful experience. The back room political animal required to actually get funded is painful. The political experience is terrible because it's like my project against your project. And it shouldn't be that way.

She is also wary of this idea of capacity because some of these applications

It would be lovely if it didn't have to compete with the in-house projects.

She talks about the importance of historic buildings in their neighborhoods. One example is State Street, with the State Street Church and St. Dominic's. It broke her heart when the St. Lawrence came down because the sun set used to sit over its tower. In Falmouth there are no historic buildings in what would be considered a down town that you can walk to. All of the historic

buildings in Portland you can walk to. She says many of the surrounding towns use downtown Portland as their downtown.

Amy introduces Deb Andrews.

There's been some discussion of weighing whether there is a historic project that does not have the direct service to low mod benefit. Even if there is no direct use by low-mod people it is a staple in the community and a sense of pride. To see the missing tower of the St. Lawrence, or if the Observatory was gone, it would be missing in the landscape.

Many people think that there are lots of funding sources for historic preservation, and there is not. There have been State Bonds in the past, but they are small and gone. The new historic tax credit is new and will do great things. But it is limited. Investment of CDBG shows that the city supports the project and may help others support the project.

She does not see a difference between historic preservation and CDBG funded projects. Whether you're funding the Preble Street chapel or the non-profit organization that is in a historic building, it is all connected. Historic preservation is a stated objective of CDBG and she hopes the city would continue to fund this.

Deb comments about the city tapping into this where they can or should fund it. The Portland Observatory was funded with CIP and CDBG. Similarly City Hall restoration was not funded with CDBG. TJ says that City Hall was not eligible. Deb continues there is no specific fund dedicated to historic preservation activities. We don't have a fund to do that. The only funding mechanism is HCD dedicated property owners.

She also says that historic preservation may not always have a huge extra investment.

There are a lot of new products on the market that can meeting historic standards that are not that expensive. On energy efficiency they have seen a lot of request for solar panels, which have been approved. Generally the goal is to get to yes. This is a funding source critically important to historic preservation.

Anna asks about the brick sidewalks. She asked about other materials for the sidewalks in order to stretch the money further. One of the things he said was he doubted historic preservation folks would not be on board with this. She asks her thoughts.

Deb says brick sidewalks are hugely character defining. It's a sense of authenticity. She feels strongly that it defines a sense of place. Bob Ganley, former City Manager who was fiscally responsible, felt that the whole peninsula should be brick. Its seamless and should be treated as a whole. There are costs that are associated with it. In Bayside there are some allowances for concrete. But each material has its failures, including concrete or asphalt.

Larry says falls are a leading cause of hospital intakes and we as a society are getting old. He understands that preserving character is important but so is safety. There is a balance of character and functionality.

Rachel TR says in USM neighborhood they don't have brick sidewalks. She doesn't like to pay for brick sidewalks in the West End if she her neighborhood can't have brick too.

Anna says that the question really is should the CDBG program pay for brick sidewalks, not whether brick sidewalks should be built or not.

Rachael W. says it's important to maintain the sidewalks regardless of material. Maintained sidewalks promote walk-ability.

Deb says that maybe the city can supplement or match the funds to build the sidewalks.

Denis says there was distinction between direct impact for low to moderate income benefit and others that are directly impacting. He says that some of the projects that meet many objectives like Preble Chapel. The committee is interested in complimentary projects.

Deb says St. Dominic's which is a historic building and a community center. The delayed maintenance would cause harm to some of the larger landmarks, regardless of what's housed inside. Normally they do hit a number of the categories.

Deirdre says with St. Lawrence they wanted to fix the building before they had a use. It's difficult to raise money and convince donors to give when there isn't an end use defined. There were so many years lost and maintenance delayed. Sometimes these projects don't have their use, but they should continue to exist.

Deb says you need to consider the impact of saying no. Deirdre tells the story someone who visited St. Lawrence and told her to plug up the holes. He told her each rainstorm would cost her \$20,000.

Wendy says that there should be funds for historic properties, but each should be reviewed individually. Deirdre and Deb discuss the limited funding.

Jon says we will struggle like this in every area because there is limited funds.

The Task Force talks about Quality of Place and the ability to revitalize a neighborhood.

Deirdre talk about St. Lawrence and there was no vandalism.

Other Improvement Discussion

Anna talks about focus group. She asks if we should split into three groups : housing, economic development & physical improvements.

Jon says the social service groups will cover housing as part of basic needs. He doesn't think that it needs its own category.

Anna asks if we need a separate focus group for economic development. We talked to Chris O'Neil and Greg Mitchell. Jon asks who we would be reaching out to.

Rhonda says the small business, grass root organizations. Anna says we can also invite Economic Development staff from the city and also members of the chamber of commerce.

Do we need a separate focus group for economic development or do we want to piggy back on physical improvements?

Jon asks what you mean as focus groups. He says that there are certain things that we can do and can't do and we need to know how to draw the line.

Anna says that she'd be happy to lead that up. Rhonda also thinks it's important.

Rachel TR. says we need to decide if it's strict business economic development or community development. She mentions the Creative Economy.

Jon says that there are big issues that need to be addressed here.

Frank says that we are not making decisions to specific projects. We may over-analyze and over discuss, but it should be discussed. He passes on having another roundtable.

Larry says due to our own experiences and sources; we may have the knowledge to do some of this decision making.

The group suggests having economic development discussions at the focus groups. Maybe we can utilize these meetings to reach other audiences.

The group decides that two of the scheduled focus groups will be for social services and the other two will be for economic development or physical improvements.

Focus Groups Discussions:

Sept 3, 8 Social Services

Sept 9, 10 Economic development and physical improvements.

Possible combination with CDBG meeting.

Next meeting *August 26: Big Discussion, Please Plan to Attend!*

Social Service Group: Jon Bradley, Shalom Odokara, Rhonda Juneau, Wendy Harmon,

Economic & Physical Development Group: Anna Priluck, Frank and Rhonda, Denis

Planning Group: ??