

Consolidated Plan 2020 – 2024 Public Meeting

March 26, 2020

Wayne Feiden: So, thank you all for joining. I am Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning & Sustainability. Can we just go through and do quick introductions? Let me start with my office staff so you all know. Keith, you are on the call?

Keith Benoit: Yes, I am. Hello, I am Keith Benoit, the new Community Development Planer and finishing up at UMass. So I have had one day in City Hall before we went remote. So I understand the frustration of working remote, but I think we will get through it. I look forward to meeting you all in person,

Teresa Brockriede: Hello, I am Teresa Brockriede the Grants Administrator. I will be taking minutes, so if I ask your name and organization please forgive me, because we are all trying to get used to this. Thank you all for coming.

Wayne Feiden: Just going to go through and ask each of you to introduce yourselves. Dorothy, do you want to start.

Dorothy Nemetz: Hello, I am Dorothy Nemetz, I am on the board of Northampton Community Arts Trust. Do you want me to say about why I am here?

Wayne Feiden: Nope, that is fine.

Dorothy: Ok.

Sheila Murphy: Hi, I am Sheila Murphy. I am a site director with the Literacy Project and I work in our Northampton classroom and also our Amherst classroom.

Wayne Feiden: Great, thank you. Alisa.

Alisa Klein: I am Alisa Klein the Executive Director of Grow Food Northampton.

Wayne Feiden: You're supposed to say "And a City Councilor".

Alisa: And a former City Councilor.

Amy Cahillane: Hi, I am Amy Cahillane the Executive Director of the Downtown Northampton Association.

Diane Forsela: Hi, I am Diane Forsela, administrator for school.

Jennifer Dieringer: Hi, I am Jen Dieringer, Managing Attorney for Community Legal Aid.

Jessica Daly: Hi, I am Jess Daly, the program for Big Brother Big Sisters of Hampshire County.

Laurie Millman: Laurie Millman, Executive Director, Center for New Americans.

Sara Lenox: Sara Lenox, Board Member of Northampton Neighbors.

Donna Cabana: Home Ownership Coordinator, Valley CDC.

Jessica Cooley: Hi, I am Jess Cooley, the Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County.

Wayne Feiden: Is there anyone that I did not call on? Oh, Ken I am sorry. Ken.

Ken Dym: Ken Dym, Northampton Neighbors.

Joanne Campbell: Joanne, Valley CDC.

Wayne Feiden: Thank you all for coming, just quickly this is sort of informal. Everybody is unmuted on my end. If there is questions, feel free to ask as we go along otherwise we will take comments at the end. So, frankly some of this is boiler plate and I am going to go through and make sure everyone is on the same page to understand what Block Grant is. A lot of things are in play. So we think we have an extra half-million dollars than we had yesterday as a result of congressional action. Our entire Action Plan went before this morning, so are recrafting that and rethinking about that. Some of the things you are going to see are very rough. Usually people ask us for money and at least for now, we are doing the opposite, we are putting money in things that are high need and then for some of them thinking about how we are going to fill them.

Going to talk about the Community Development needs, which are sort of boiler plate. Some of you made impassioned arguments from the first hearing and my final slide will be where we think we are going right now. This is the second of two public hearings. The first one was open ended before we were all in lock-down. This is just a draft plan and the final hearing that we are required to do and bring back to the Mayor. If anyone is just joining the call, if you could go to the chat and just write your name and the organization that you are with. So, most of this is boiler plate. There are three National Objectives that you have to use Block Grant money for. Benefit persons of low- and moderate-income which is generally what we focus. The other is slums and blight which involved tearing down old buildings that is a serious and immediate threat to the health and welfare of the community. That rarely comes up. We are required for each program to be less than 51% is a benefit to low- and moderate-income people but the entire program has to benefit low- and moderate-income people and we need to strive to be 100%. There will always be co-benefits for the community, but the point is serving low- and moderate-income people. HUD is a bureaucracy, so even those are national objectives, we are very limited on what we can do in a category. So as we go through this process know that we can fund new housing construction for example.

Ken Dym: Can I ask what are the definitions of low- and moderate-income people? How are they defined?

Wayne Feiden: It depends on the family size. I don't know what it is right now. You could Google it, "low- and moderate-income thresholds". We are part of the Springfield MSA and it brings us lower than you think because it part of the Springfield piece. One of the cross-cutting themes for us is that we want this all about social equity for people. When we serve low- and moderate income, we want to serve immediate needs, but also make sure everyone has the same opportunity.

Typically, and this is not typical this is the split we are allowed to spend 15% on what HUD calls Public Services, what we would all call social services. We have desperate need for that. For the last 30 years we have spent every penny. We are allowed to spend 20% on Planning and Admin, and we almost always do that, which is City staff. The other 65% is these other categories which we will talk about later.

That is how these funds are broken up. To get you a sense, this is funding for last year's action plan. Our allotment is a little under \$700,000 a year and we divide it up into an Action Plan each year. We look at new money we are getting any whatever funds were left over. We get some program income from some loans and not all money gets spent each year. We are not allowed to charge for planning and admin. This is the budget for the year that we are currently working on. Some of these will not get spent, because they are not spend each year and some won't get spent because of the crisis.

We started with what was the Action Plan and how are we going to spend the funds. And these were some of the programs we wanted to fund. Some of you are social service providers and you are not going to be on here. This just has 12 public services and it does not break down. For those non-public services, these are the projects that the Mayor has decided to fund with recommendations. Homeownership Center gives counseling and grants for first-time homebuyers. Housing Rehab program is run by PVPC, basically code-compliance issues for income eligible populations. North Commons is a project that we think will be done in the current fiscal year starting July 1st, but there is a chance that it cold roll over into next year. So this is buying the land, helping Community Builders Inc. buy the land for additional affordable housing units. Handicap accessibility are things that can be done safely during Covid and one cannot be done. The City is doing wheelchair curb cut ramps in primarily low-income areas. Populations that have disabilities are assumed to be low-income. We cannot legal fix sidewalks because that serves everyone, but we can fix ramps because that helps people in wheelchairs.

Valley CDC runs a microenterprise program for very small businesses for five people and under. Had this been a normal year, this is how it would have broken up. This is the current budget though. A lot of this is estimates. We lag behind the federal fiscal year by a few months. We are among the small Block Grant entitlement communities in the country, but it is real money for us. Last night, Congress acted on the Covid relief bill and there is \$5 billion for Block Grant. A billion off the top goes to the states to help with Covid relief so we do not see any of that. From a quick read, assuming the same percentages, we get \$400,000 subject to correction. There will be an additional \$2 billion to cities and states based on how bad Covid is hitting them. We don't know what that formula looks like just yet, we are not being hit hard like NYC right now. This is really a guess, we need something to plug and play around with.

There is still some carryover, there is three months left and we do not know that amount yet. It will be bigger than typical year because some projects just can't be done. We get a lot of information from a lot of different sources, community resilience workshop and various other plans – Food policy, fair housing policy, report on panhandling (focus on homelessness), disabilities focus group, age friendly survey, housing partnership focus group, and Covid ad-hoc. Block grant is ultimately the Mayor's determination.

Needs assessment is not surprising. Fair housing talks about impediments to fair housing that comes from institutional racism, tenancy protection is recent, and coming from panhandling report is a resource center that caters to the homeless. Mayors report said it would be good to have day program that could synergize with other public services. One place for case management. Broaden it to resiliency hub – acute and chronic problems. Covid highlights everything that we talk about nothing new there. We always want to do economic development but economic recovery is new. In Block Grant terms microenterprise is five or fewer, job retention is for jobs that are currently there. If someone got fired yesterday, that is job creation. Covid temporarily lifts that 15% cap on public services.

First column is what is currently funded, second column is our rough estimate. Public Services will be different this year because of the new cap. Valley CDC has \$30,00 – can we up that to \$100,000 for one

time piece of equipment like a no-touch key pad or a credit card machine. Job creation and job retention – we don't know what that looks like. HUD is a great but constrained funding source. One of the challenges is that we do not want compete with other funding that is out there. Carryover, we are playing around with that – taking away \$100,000 from housing rehab to finish Arts Trust ramp. Wheelchair curb cut ramps are opening bids next week but one of the appeals is that outdoor construction for safety has not been halted and we trying not to shut down things. If we can keep money flowing we will.

Question: The chart horizontally, you would be totaling up those columns correct?

Wayne: That is correct. The only caution is for existing funding programs, if it is a new program, yes. The Arts Trust for example, yes. If it is an existing program no. These are made up numbers and we don't know for example for Valley CDC that if they do not spend the entire \$30,000 this year – they would have \$30,000 carryover plus whatever new funding.

Sheila Murphy: Curious about the resiliency hub, first time hearing about it. Is there a location or where is it at, at this point?

Wayne: Really good question. One of the question is what can we do that this time. Mayors report on Panhandling suggest a day shelter, so there is still a concept of what should be there – lockers, showers, etc. We amended our resiliency plan and asked for public comment and with Covid 19 is getting worse and worse. As of three days ago, we were going to apply for state grant for planning for resiliency hub, that will be a year and then we will put in Block Grant budget for July 2021. This has highlighted how important that is and brought in resources that we don't want to waste. Can we speed up the planning and buy space? We need to bring all of our partners on board – this is City funded not City driven project. It is a marker in the plan. It could be for repair or buying an empty building on the market.

Inquisitor 1: Wayne, what do you want from us. Usually, we tell you what we need. Everything has changed now. Are you asking us on our original need or our constituents with respect to Covid 19? What kind of input is helpful right now?

Wayne: So one of the things is to what extent can you even deliver services and how does your services. How does your delivery service model change for however long we are on lockdown? For brick and mortar, you can probably build outside but not indoors. Or service delivery, what can you deliver? The need is unlimited so you don't have to argue that but are their unique things by how that population is affected by Covid 19?

Inquisitor 1: But for this particular program that starts after July 1st, we can tell you what we are doing. But this meeting has to do with fiscal 2012 money, but please we will be back face to face after July 1. I am not sure how those two things mesh.

Wayne: Two things- do you believe that we will be under some control on July 1st, maybe not what it is today and the other is that some of this money is fungible. We can move money around these columns. Money will flows in 30 days from when president signs it. One of the questions is can I count today's action plan for Covid-19 or do I need a separate action plan? We are running today hoping that we can, but if we can than we can bump up public service significantly. So in 30 days, I think we will be in a similar place.

Alisa: Where would you see something like food insecurity fitting in? Something that we had before the pandemic but that we are experiencing the affects already of people not being able to feed themselves. Wondering where money might flow in the rubric for Covid money.

Wayne: That falls under public services. It is much easier for us to move money around from existing programs than to add new programs. So Survival Center and Manna, which are already in our current year action plan are easier to increase funding for. And CHD which includes outreach, so those three programs give out food increasing funding for them would be much easier.

Dorothy: For bricks and mortar program like ours, do we know when the funds are coming?

Wayne: Yes and no, it's a work in progress, before the Mayor got sick, the column on the left the Mayor was committed. We don't know what MEMA and FEMA are going to pay, so there are lots of unknowns in the process. When governor announced shutting down, exempting the construction and Boston ignored the governor, the Mayor said he would exempt construction as long as they follow state standards. For now Dorothy, I am assuming its there but anything is possible. Because we want to prime the economy in every way that we can the faster we can get things out the better. Because you are bricks and mortar, Keith has to do environmental review, so we would be waiting on that.

Dorothy: When can environmental review start?

Wayne: As soon as we are not overwhelmed with getting Action Plan ready. It could start today, we just have a lot of things on our plate. One thing to consider is how fast you can get money out the door. If you can't start till July, you will stay in new fiscal year, but if you are ready now then go with Covid amendment.

Alisa: Wayne, you brought up an interesting point which is what is going to happen to organizations during this pandemic. People are going to get sick or laid off – they may not be able to maintain the services that they have. So I am wondering how quickly you can pivot once this plan is place once if funds can be moved in different directions because of the incapacity of organizations?

Wayne: It is a good question and we thought about that. Teresa is doing research, when do we need to do a new action plan, which is a slow process and when do we not. And our understanding now is that as long as something is listed in the action plan, then we can move funds around. If I have bad news for anybody and we don't fund you, we may still fund you for \$1,000 so that you are in the program so that we can increase it exactly for that reason.

Teresa: Right now, as long as I do not have funds that are actually committed right now I have fluidity to move them around to other projects as need. So even though we have contracts signed for organizations with all these projects, I might have to de-obligate them for the remainder of this year based on their status. The one thing, if we want to add something to the current action plan, it's going to delay the process because we would have to amend what we currently have and wait for HUD's approval before we could apply money to that project.

Wayne: It goes back to food insecurity, easiest to fund those we are already funding. When we moved Community Development from Mayor's office to Planning & Sustainability, one of the things we said was that you get to decide the goals and I thought about how we can administer the program efficiently. We have inherited this system and you all get funded because you have incredible work, but if we did it

over, we may not do it exactly the same way. We want to think about the things that are easy, food insecurity is a good example – you spend a \$100,000 and a year later hopefully the need is not as bad as a year earlier. What are the things that scalable and not scalable. We have a half a million more this year than last year and we know we are going to be cutting.

Sheila Murphy: Don't know how this fits in, but with the Covid 19, as adult education provider, we are having to do this remotely. Maybe this is not as important as food, but it may be something to consider to provide low-income people with remote access.

Wayne: That is valid, thank you.

Sara Lenox: I have a question about something that Northampton Neighbors is thinking of doing. Right now we have cancelled all person to person services because it is too dangerous, although we are in phone contact with all our members. Possibly we could conceive of addressing Covid, but at some point we are assuming that this will be over and we could go back to delivering services for those in subsidized housing. How does that factor into your planning?

Wayne: It is a crystal ball into how long this time period will be, but we hope in the next fiscal year we are going back to life as it was, whatever that time period was. So we can certainly think about programs that are further down the line, but we are focused on immediate needs and immediate recover. We have a public services committee that knows the public service world better than I do and they certainly want to deal with immediate crisis. It is probably less likely to be funded even though you could spend the money for 6-8 months.

Laurie Millman: I would like to say, to the point that Sheila was making that about how you choose which programs, I always thought that the United Way approaches it in an effective way. That is to say, there is spectrum of need and the need goes from complete and total crisis, to some stabilization to self-sufficiency and as I understand CDBG funds they are about promoting self-sufficiency. So there ought to be a rubric to fund programs all along that spectrum because all of those things are important and I am not sure that people can say one is more important than the other. If you only fund people in crisis, than there is no pathway out of crisis and people will stay in crisis. So there ought to be a rubric for acknowledging that spectrum. As Sheila said, Center for New Americans we are working as much as we ever have and everything has moved online. Except, our teachers are not social workers. We are the sole link between many immigrant families and the resources. We are the connection. I would agree about the internet connectivity, some people have it and some people don't and that makes this lifeline a little bit harder, but you have to look at the entire spectrum and all are valid and all are needed. I am not sure if one is greater than the other.

Wayne: I think you are absolutely right. This year is different from many. Housing rehab is rarely about someone that is going to be about someone who will die that night. We have a 30 day public comment period starting tonight so if you did not get comments in then, please send them in.

Dorothy: Does this chart go up on the website? Can we look at it a comment?

Wayne: We can put it up.

Jess Cooley: I will make a comment about our service delivery model and for FY 2021, with so many unknowns, but at BBBS, our case managers are all are already social workers and there is certainly a

heightened need for that right now. We had to suspend in-person visits of mentors and mentees and yet they are connecting virtually. Now that parents are home not every parent is able to work with the homeschooling options and know what resources are available. Schools are doing good jobs but not all families can focus on that. Connection is important right now because we are so isolated, so these relationships are critical more than ever. We anticipate that we can still deliver the services that we proposed.

Nancy: Looking forward to being the place where everyone can come back to again whenever this is all over.

Keith: Joanne had asked if we can send out the slides.

Teresa: Put your email in the chat and I will make sure that you get the slides.

Wayne: We will put it up on the website.