

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT
4th CDBG CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

February 15, 2018, 12:00 Noon – 1:30 PM
Third Floor Conference Room, Lewiston City Building

FINAL MINUTES

Roll Call: The meeting was started at 12.00 p.m.

Members Present: Pauline Gudas, Sue Charron, Joline Beam, David Nielsen, Jr. and Hawo Abdille

Members Absent: Sara Goodrich and Jason Lavoie

Staff Present: Lincoln Jeffers, Jayne Jochem and Cathy Lekberg

1) Agency Interviews:

Community Concepts, Inc. – Weatherization Services for Lewiston Residents – Sandy Albert presenting -

Sandy said Community Concepts, Inc. (CCI) is a 501C3 non-profit community action agency and was founded in 1965 along with all of the community action agencies across the country as part of the Federal government's war on poverty. CCI is applying for \$50,000 in CDBG funding this year and have been funded in the past. They administer within their Housing Department a Weatherization Program that is funded directly from the Maine State Housing Authority who are funded by the Department of Energy and Health & Human Services at the Federal level. They utilize these funds to weatherize houses both in Androscoggin and Oxford Counties. Federal regulations does not allow them to do other repairs and renovations other than weatherization so they utilize the CDBG funds to do these other repairs such as electrical, plumbing and other issues with the home. They can use CDBG funds to fix these problems and then weatherize for energy efficiency. They plan on weatherizing ten low income homes in Lewiston. They use \$5,000 of the \$50,000 they are requesting for administration fees, the remaining \$45,000 pays for all of the materials used to make repairs. Lincoln mentioned that they have had challenges in the spend down of CDBG funds and asked Sandy if the agency would be able to use all of the requested funding before May of 2019 and Sandy said they anticipate spending all of the funding. Sue asked how many of the homes are single households and Sandy said right now they only have single family homes in the pipeline.

Tree Street Youth -Little Kids Rock Too!-Phase 2 Build Out and CEDAR Professional Internships – Julia Sleeper presenting -

Julia said Tree Street Youth is located on the corner of Howe and Birch Street across from Longley School and next door to the Colisee. They started out targeting at-risk youths in the community providing homework help for students but, they have grown by leaps and bounds to become the hub of the afternoon for children. Last year they served 750 individual youth from Pre-K through 12 so they span a lot of age groups. They have been able to expand their services beyond just afterschool through partnerships with the local public schools. During the day, they use the center for a tutoring site for special education students in transitional periods as well as coordinate behavioral intervention

programs and are collaboratively working with the district right now to design new programs that target youth that are not graduating and trying to intervene.

Julia said that the one thing that makes these programs physically and humanly possible is their space. The facility build-out they did last year was the warehouse side which was transformed into a space for the big kids. The infrastructure ask would be used to finish the rest of the building. The first renovation was about 65% of the building but they did not touch any of the old Sandcastle side. Harriman Associates and Hebert Construction were the two firms that worked on the first project and continue to work on this project. The building has significant issues including deteriorating floors, roof leaks, frozen pipes and more. They had a successful campaign last year where everyone in the community contributed so they do not want to approach this year's project in the form of a campaign but want to honor the community by finishing the project through targeting specific asks like CDBG funds and foundation support so they do not burden the broader community with further asks.

Julia said the CEDAR program is targeted at helping students that have capacities for work and significant abilities. They gently refer to them as the "alumni that failed to launch". Most of the students coming out of the center go off to college, enroll in programs or trade schools and are doing something afterwards. Most of them have graduated from high school but do not know which direction to go. They have gone through trauma and personal life problems but still have ambition to go further. The internship program fosters their professional skills while simultaneously supporting their personal development to pick a direction and really find out how they can get there. She mentioned that the work these individuals do at Tree Street should not be minimized at all as they coordinate all of our rooms during afterschool programs. These are individuals that grew up in this community and they are running the center. They also become role models to the children coming to the center.

Sue asked Julia to explain about the loss of WIOA dollars and did it effect just their agency or more. Julia thought there were tons of agencies and that piece was important to know because their goal is not having to keep relying on foundations to get the programs going. Their goal is to find more sustainable ways to support the program which they thought they had done effectively by partnering with the Career Center and Western Maine Community Action. These agencies saw the CEDAR program as being a great training program site that fit their criteria. The people they were targeting fit their out of work, detached population. About 90% of the young people that were engaging in the program qualified for their help which was great because these agencies offered perks like drivers education, helping to pay for deposit for first apartments for students and more. Tree Street Youth could never have offered these perks. These agencies also helped compensate a portion or majority of the individuals wages so their internship program could engage as many students as possible. Unfortunately, without warning, the WIOA dollars were being withheld at the State level which eliminating the partnership. Because of the loss of partnership, Tree Street needed to take on the full costs.

Sue asked about parent involvement and how they engage the parents with the kids and Julia said that parent involvement is different with each family depending on which program and which child. They have more formal and consistent meetings with families if it is a vulnerable child. With the Juvenile Justice Initiative, our agency has daily contact with the parents for those young men because the parents have to hand them off to us and they are a part of their supervision. For the average student that comes to us, parent contact is when they pick up and drop off the kids. Being accessible as possible to the parents is their goal. The center does not have a land line, but all of the staff have cell phones. They also use Facebook and Wi-Fi to message because if the parents phone are shut off, that is the only way to get a hold of them. They keep constant dialogue and allow the parent to connect with any staff member they are comfortable with. They have seven languages on staff so for some members of the community they can speak to whoever they are comfortable with.

Sue asked how Tree Street is filling the gaps versus duplication with the pre-school, the afterschool summer programs. Julia said kids are everywhere and the afterschool program is probably where there is the most services that work with unique populations. They collaborate with all youth agencies in the community, but they target a unique populous that often times cannot stay afterschool due to responsibilities. It is a barrier for these kids to stay afterschool. They also get the little angels (Cherubs) that are not permitted at some of the other sites mostly because of behavioral related issues. One of the layers that is unique about our center is the staffing model, having people from the community, but also having a reflective staff is very unique. The average age of our staff is 23 years old and 75% of our staff are people of color. Half of the staff have grown up in this community and have stayed here.

Pauline asked what would happen if the agency does not get funded for the build-out and Julia said they will keep going. They have the drawings and the builder and also have a lender that helped them originally purchase the building. She said obviously this is not the best or most feasible way to go, but if we get to about \$700,000-750,000, their lender could cover the gap of the rest. They are at about \$400,000 right now and they have a number of other foundation private dollar asks. If they did not receive funding from CDBG, they would have to keep looking. They have a good momentum and people come to the building and are wowed by it. Julia said she is worried about the building and the issues that they are seeing more and more with the structure. The walls are deteriorating and they keep patching them. They cannot do any major renovations because the structure is what needs to be fixed. Because of the location which is at the bottom of a hill there are water drainage problem and it is basically a very old space. It is not an option not to do the work and it may take longer without the CDBG funding. Lincoln asked if the agency receives CDBG funding, will the money be spent by May of 2019 and Julia said yes. Jayne mentioned that the most important thing if you do get funding is to not start without us and Julia said she understands.

The Center for Wisdom's Women - Healing Art Therapy (NEW) – Klara Tammany, Carl Lakari and Bethanie Bernard presenting -

Klara said that The Center for Wisdom's Women was established in 1999 by nuns and they have been running the center privately for 8 ½ years after the nuns left. She considers the center very unique because they do not require an appointment, no paperwork is needed and no charge is necessary for these women to come to the center which makes for a totally different relationship. It is a whole different dynamic when you are paying for only one hour of attention. The center brings women together in a community setting to build relationships, empathy and respect and then the women help each other. The problems these women have are rooted from childhood experiences, abuse and trauma which effects them as they grow up into adulthood if left untreated and unresolved. These women have been isolated and have limited access to support that would help them become resilient and get back into the community. Another piece of the healing comes through body work and they have trauma informed yoga and other programs that help with this. They also provide writing groups and art therapy programs.

The CDBG funding would be to support the Art Therapy program and increase it. They had an art van (AV) come to the center for a couple of years and have funded it mostly from donations or foundations. The art van only came once a month but they would have liked them to come twice a month. Another women has come to try out her art therapy work at our center for a few months now and it is working wonderfully. She has been coming once a month and donating her time but they would like her to come twice a month and be able to pay her.

Klara said that Bethanie came to this meeting because she is a participant in some of these programs. Bethanie said two years ago she would not be sitting here because she would be scared to death. She used to keep her emotions bottled up and people and therapists would try to reach out to her but she had a wall built up. She decided to participate in the art therapy healing. They offered many different classes such as clay work, glass work, painting and much more. She started talking with the art therapist and women who were also participating in a group like session sitting around a table and they would start talking with each other. She started expressing feelings to this group and the art therapist. She said it becomes so much easier to open up with a group rather than one on one therapy. It felt so good to finally get her emotions out using this therapy and now she actually is a volunteer at the center.

Klara said the goal they checked on the application is Goal 3, Transitioning out of poverty by meeting basic needs. She feels the center meets the needs of women by attending to their mental and physical health which is a basic need so they can be able to cope in the community.

Sue asked if the CDBG funding will be used for funding most of the Art Therapy program and Klara said yes.

The Center for Wisdom's Women - Historic Rehab of Sophia's House (NEW) – Klara Tammany, Carl Lakari and Bethanie Bernard presenting –

Klara said she realized that a day center was not enough to meet the needs of the women that were described to the Committee who have multiple adverse child experiences and minimal support to recover from them. She visited a facility called Thistle Farms in Nashville and thought that this is what they needed to do here. For the last three years they have been trying to make that happen and with the generous donation of the building by St. Mary's and recently they applied and were awarded an Affordable Housing Grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston in the amount of \$500,000 which will give them a great start on leverage. The renovation is now a reality and at the end of 2019 they will be in the house and providing a Thistle Farms model for support of women survivors. Other funding sources are Historic Preservation tax credits and they will be holding a capital funding campaign as well. She stated that they have met three of the goals in the Consolidated Plan. The building will be managed with a model similar to Tedford Housing. The first floor of the building will contain some public spaces which can be used for the neighborhood. The old chapel can hold different gatherings and events and the kitchen and dining room can host neighborhood meals. It is not a building just for the residents. Carl said that aside from the development support that he is bringing, he stated he has been in long term recovery himself and this project is important to him because he knows from experience that people in his situation need a lot of support to get back on their feet and be engaged again in the community. The Thistle Farms model is a model that is really hard to develop because it offers up to two year support for these women. The challenging part is to bring all the mix of funding to actually do the building and provide support that people will need in the community. As a person in recovery this is very important. He said the structure has good bones and they have a great team to do the construction and rehab. They are very optimistic about the outcome.

Sue clarified that the first floor is public space and a kitchen, the second floor will be residential housing and the third floor will be temporary housing. Klara said this is not an emergency shelter like Safe Voices. Women come there and stay up to two years with extensive services with a three level program they go through. They support these women long enough for them to get on their feet and it really takes at least two years to give them that support. Sue asked to clarify second floor, residents can stay a long period of time and Klara said yes. She said there is also an apartment on the first floor that is handicap accessible. Sue asked if they get referrals from St. Martin de Porres and Kara said yes. She also said they have thirty affiliates around the country and if someone here needing assistance have children, they cannot take that family but they could be sent to another facility like in a different city for example St. Louis. Jayne mentioned that the most important thing with this project is that is it shovel ready and she asked where are they at for funding. Carl said they have already received an award from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston for \$500,000, submitted the CDBG application, historic tax credits. They have interested equity investors to close credits and that should

go along with the project timeline. The capital campaign is the one thing they are nervous about. They have hired a firm, Gary Friedman & Associates out of Bar Harbor. Because this campaign is so small, Gary felt it is very feasible. When they start construction in December, they will definitely be able to spent the \$150,000 of CDBG funding. Because of the bank grant, the project needs to be completed in two years. Klara said that they already have the keys to the building and offered members to come take a tour.

2) Review and approval of February 8, 2018 meeting minutes.

The following motion was made:

MOTION: by **Sue Charron** to accept the February 8, 2018 CDBG Citizen Advisory Committee Minutes as presented. Second by **Joline Beam**.

VOTED: **4-1 (Passed)**
Pauline Gudas Abstained

3) Any other business the members may have relating to the duties of the CDBG Committee

Pauline asked what is going on with some of the cuts that Trump is making and Lincoln said he cut out CDBG funding last year and he is doing it again this year but, they still do not know definitely whether it will be cut because last year the cut did not go through at the Congress level and it could happen again this year.

Pauline mentioned that Veteran's, Inc. was left off the interviews on the agendas and Cathy said she would contact Alley Smith to attend at the next meeting. Lincoln said they will be discussing public works projects at the next meeting also.

4) Adjournment

The following motion was made:

MOTION: by **Sue Charron** to adjourn meeting at 1:10 p.m. Second by **Joline Beam**.

VOTED: **5-0 (Passed)**