

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT
2nd CDBG CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ZOOM MEETING
February 26, 2021, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

FINAL MINUTES

Roll Call: The meeting was started at 10:08 a.m.

Members Present: Pauline Gudas, Ashley Medina, Safiya Khalid, Abdikadir Negeye and Paul Robinson

Members Absent: David Nielsen, Jr.

Staff Present: Lincoln Jeffers, Melissa Lavallee, Jessica Wilson and Cathy Lekberg

1) Agency Interviews

Lewiston Adult Education, Integrated Skill Based Work Readiness Training – Jennifer Tiner Presenting

Jennifer stated their program is a continuation of the grant from the work they started last year. She briefly summarized the program and she updated the committee on the model they were using and how they were doing meeting their outcomes this year. The integration of skill based training helps people who are new to Maine and the United States or unemployed people who are in the low to extremely low category for employment. They are able to help students into better opportunities for employment. Their strategies are to grow individual education outcomes including English language learning. They work with students to earn a work ready certificate and help them development resumes, cover letters and interviewing skills. This year they had to revise their goals for people served because they did not get the CDBG contract signed until October and missed essentially the first quarter for the funding for this program. Their goal is to serve 18 students and so far they have served 10 Lewiston residents. Their goal is also to have 70% of the 18 students complete the program and earn the credential and 50% to get employment at the end of the program. They are on track to meet those objectives. Because of the pandemic, they had to change the way they do education and training. They had to do online learning, teach students how to use Zoom and other things to have connectivity to the education. They were successful in doing this.

Paul asked if this is an addition to the normal education that they are receiving from Lewiston High School or Junior High. Jennifer said yes. They do skill assessments to find out where they are academically. Some have already graduated from High School in a different country. They are looking at all the skills they brought with them and continue from there. Safiya asked is 24 the usual number of students administered into the program. Jennifer said there is no cap but just a gauge of how many people they can serve. Abdi asked what is the process of enrollment and how they ensure that they are including the most underserved population. Jennifer said that school is still open and people can come in and enroll. They do health screenings and ask them what their

technology access. They also teach them how to use the computer and Zoom. People can call and walk in to the school. Abdi asked if they do any outreach or community engagement to attract students. Jennifer said they do. They have partnerships throughout the community they serve on several committees with community partners throughout Lewiston and Auburn. They make sure that the community knows how to access their programming

Lincoln stated that because we were trying to catch up after Jayne left, the responsibility of missing the first quarter for the agencies is the City's fault, not any of the agencies.

Promise Early Education Center, Extended Care Program – Betsy Norcross Plourde and Sharon Bergeron Presenting

Betsy said this was a very unique year for the Extended Care Program. Last Spring when Covid hit, they did have a short period of time where they closed. They were still connecting to their families remotely. They came back to the classrooms on June 1st and continued to be back providing services in person since that time. They had to implement new practices for the safety of staff and students. They have providing early education and extended daycare. They have their full enrollment as they did before Covid. They have a maximum of 8 children in those three classrooms. They also have two classrooms where they serve children from 3 – 5 years old. Those classrooms serve 12 students in each rooms. She explained the process for students and that they have three checkpoint assessments for the children throughout the year. She stated that children are doing better at these assessments because the parents have been engaging them at home. Betsy said they will be meeting their goals this year. Sharon said that 70% of funds come from the State, 65% of parents are working, 35% are involved in job training, 26% of our revenues is from client fees and 4% is the support of CDBG from Lewiston and Auburn.

Safiya commented that she wanted to see increased Lewiston families in the program. Jennifer said in early 2022, they will be moving into One College Street and this will allow us to expand their services. Pauline asked about non-Lewiston residents and is CDBG funding used for those students. How much are other communities contributing to this program. Sharon said it is a combination of Auburn and Lewiston. We get funding from both. Abdi asked if they have other people of color on their staff. Jennifer said yes and would like to see the number grow. We have relationships with Central Maine Community College, and University of Maine Farmington for interns.

Trinity Jubilee Center, Food Pantry – Erin Reed Presenting

Erin stated that this has been a difficult year for people. There is a very high poverty rate downtown. Parents relied on their children getting breakfast and lunch at school every day. Kids are going hungry and can't concentrate in class, they are less healthy and these problems have long term consequences. They fall behind academically. She said some people lost their jobs because of Covid and are now coming to the center for help with food that have never been here before. Erin said they have doubled or tripled the

amount of food they are giving out and doubled the amount of diapers also. She said we are the only diaper bank in Lewiston and Auburn. They have given out 5,000 pounds of food and people can come in for food every week. They also gave out almost 4,000 summer food grocery boxes to 700 families over the course of ten weeks. People coming here for food also utilize other resources they have here. They are averaging 111 families and they expect these numbers will go up next year because of the loss of extra food stamps and unemployment benefits. They also expect with the new administration, there will be more immigrants coming into the country and coming to Lewiston. They will need help until they find employment. Because of Covid, they lost almost all of their volunteers. They have brought a few volunteers back but they need to be careful so they do not end up in a situation where they all have been exposed to Covid and they would have to close temporarily. They are now working 13 – 14 hours a week instead of 10 – 11 hours to run the program. They received \$9,000 of CDBG this year and they will not be asking any more than that next year. There were no questions from the Committee but they all praised the work that the agency does and to keep up the good work.

Trinity Jubilee Center, Day Shelter & Resource Center – Erin Reed Presenting

Erin stated that in Lewiston, homeless people cannot get into shelters due to mental illness, unable to climb stairs to get into a shelter or the shelters are full. People need to have a place to go and also connect them with other resources. At Trinity, they have staff that can keep them safe and connect them to resources they need. Having a one-time stop for these people is a game changer. Homeless people do not have cars or telephones. They are out in inclement weather and do not have a place to go. They let them use the shelter, telephone and other resources. The shelter has stayed open throughout Covid and all safety measures were taken. They do health screenings every day, increased sanitation, put on screen doors for more fresh air in the warmer weather. Their hours have increased by 6 ½ hours a week. They have Covid tests on site for the homeless so they can get into a shelter. They do referrals for case management to get them into homes. For attendance they had 120 people use the shelter between July and December and they have had over 1,000 visits. They had another 20 or 30 people just in January and 600 visits. They are also working on a better way to track people. They are estimating they will serve 450 people between their two programs by the end of this year and the same for next year. Because of the CDBG funding, they have increased the operating hours and staffing. They will not be asking for any increase next year. CDBG is the largest funder and without CDBG they would have to cut hours, staff and more. The Committee had no questions but praised the work the agency does and to keep up the good work.

YWCA, School-Aged Childcare Programs – Melanie LaMore Gagnon and Marielynn Herrera Presenting

Melanie stated that they were funded last year for our afterschool programming. This has been a unique and challenging year due to the pandemic. They never closed their childcare program because of Covid, but schools were closed and all of their staff said

they would be willing to work. They pivoted from an afterschool program to an all-day program. They needed more staff and to install all the safety measures needed for Covid. At first, they figured out how to stay open without any guidance. They instituted rules and regulations before any guidance was set by the CDC. Since March they have been providing childcare Monday through Friday, 7:00 am to 6:00 pm for students 5 – 12. With the CDBG funds they were able to keep the doors open. They are the only summer camp that continued to run and they provided a modified summer camp. They usual take field trips but had to stay on site this time. The pool was also not open at that time. They provide meals for these children. A lot of families that they serve rely on public schools for meals so they decided to provide that for the children. They partner with the Good Shepherd Food Bank to purchase fresh produce and get the best bang for the buck as far as food goes. They make sure the meals are nutritious and culturally specific. They have not been able to provide their open swim to the public. Marielynn said they are seeing the impact of Covid and it has created a double need of childcare services and remote learning support. One of the biggest barriers for their program is they have not been able to have open gym and open swim for the public. Because the CDBG contract was not executed until the 2nd quarter, they missed capturing some children in the first quarter. For the 1st quarter, they have served 80 children between the ages of 5 and 12 years old and 25% of those children are a race other than white. For the 2nd quarter, they have served 78% children and about 25% are a race other than white. They have 21 staff, 10 of which are not white. They have a predominantly female childcare staff which includes 15 women and 6 men.

Safiya asked how do you follow CDC guidelines with so many kids. Melanie said we break kids up in groups. Mask were not required until five months into the pandemic for childcare centers but they did not have a case from March until November. They only had one case in our childcare department. They have been very fortunate and this shows that their safety measures have worked. They also do not allow parents into the childcare. The parents drop the children off in the lobby. Marielynn said kids are made to wash their hands when they arrive and throughout the entire day. Safiya asked if they have more remote learning activities. Marielynn said that children did not have the technology at first and so it was difficult at that time but now they have been able to do more with the remote learning. Abdi asked what will you do differently this year to help continue your support for the kids with emotional support. Melanie said they will continue what they have been doing but they will have the VHP, OT and speech therapists coming in again. There will still be remote support also. Marielynn said they are trying to expand to additional space in the building for one on one support.

2) Set Future Meeting Dates

The Committee discussed when the next meeting date would be. Safiya stated that she works during the day and would prefer to have meetings at night. Other members preferred daytime meetings. David Nielsen, Jr. was not present to discuss dates. Lincoln stated that it might be difficult for the agencies to present at night. He said Jessica would need to reach out to them and find out if they can. If not, the committee would need to meet during daytime hours. He asked Safiya if she would be comfortable

reviewing the applications and if she had questions, she could give them to him and he would forward them to the agencies. They tentatively scheduled the next meeting on Thursday, March 4, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Jessica would get in touch with the agencies and see if they could present at that time.

3) Review and approval of March 13, 2020 and February 18, 2021 CDBG meeting minutes.

The following motion was made:

MOTION: by **Safiya Khalid** approve the March 13, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. Second by **Abdikadir Negeye**

VOTED: 3-0-2 (Passed)
Paul Robinson & Ashley Medina Abstained

The following motion was made:

MOTION: by **Ashley Medina** approve the February 18, 2021 meeting minutes as presented. Second by **Paul Robinson**

VOTED: 4-0-1 (Passed)
Safiya Khalid Abstained

4) Any other business members may have relating to the duties of the CDBG Committee. Safiya asked if the immigrant representative member was required and Lincoln said that our HUD representative said it was a requirement.

5) Adjournment

The following motion was made:

MOTION: by **Safiya Khalid** to adjourn meeting at 12:04 p.m. Second by **Paul Robinson**

VOTED: 5-0 (Passed)