

Community Preservation Committee

Minutes

Date: August 26, 2020

Time: 7:30 PM

Place: Zoom Virtual Meeting

Attendees: Committee Members: Didi Chadran, Beth Williams, John Lee, Michelle Catalina, Doug Thornton, Pam Marston, Stacia Donahue

Absent: Fran Nickerson, Jo Ward

Guests: Debbie Thompson, Director, Harvard Council on Aging, Michael Barton, Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, Jennifer Van Campen, Metro West Collaborative Development

Meeting Convened at 7:31 pm

1. Roll Call, Sound Check were done. Preamble, Rules for Participation, and Reminder that meeting materials are available online and that this meeting is being recorded were read.
2. Didi introduced our guests. Jennifer Van Campen is the executive Director of MetroWest. Metro West Collaborative Development is a private non-profit community development corporation. The mission of Metro West CD is to organize residents, resources and good ideas to resolve community problems and improve the quality of life for all members of our Metro West neighborhoods. Emergency housing assistance is needed during this pandemic. Metro West is currently administering 4-5 programs. Michael Barton is the former chair of MAHT. Scope is to promote affordable housing within Harvard. Working with Metro West. Debbie Thompson is the Director of the Harvard COA. Work with Harvard Seniors towards Harvard being an Age Friendly Community.
3. **Public Comment Period** - None
4. **Review Minutes from 8/19/2020 Meeting** – Minutes accepted as amended.
5. **Treasurer's Report** - John Lee stated approximately \$30,000 in unreserved funds.
6. **Discussion on Implementation Process for an Emergency Rental Assistance Program for Harvard with Jennifer Van Campen, Metro West Collaborative Development, and Debbie Thompson, Director, Harvard Council on Aging** – CPC started this conversation from memos from the Coalition regarding help during the COVID-19 pandemic. CPC wanted to explore doing this in Harvard. To assist Harvard Residents by allocating CPC funds to MAHT to disburse them to Harvard tenants who have 1) lost income due to COVID-19 and 2) have rent in arrears.

Michael Barton (MAHT) stated that due to member shortage, they cannot handle at this time. Currently limited by lack of membership. Expanding the charter, may assist this emergency program. John Lee spoke with Tim Bragan about expansion of the MAHT charter, who referred this to Mark Lanza, Town Council. Mark Lanza noted that the MAHT charter can be changed/modified by MAHT, who would then record this change with the Worcester Registry of Deeds.

Jennifer Van Campen stated that Metro West works with various departments/groups within Town Halls and other non-profits. Community Preservation Coalition has advised towns to work with best

practices, as there are no real regulations/guidance regarding this emergency. Impressively varied. Must have a COVID related loss of income. All eligibility is burdensome. Traditionally housing programs require a stack of paperwork. Metro West tried to narrow list of documentation for this emergency. None of the current programs have an asset test. Eligibility review is much shorter. With CPA you are allowed up to 100% of the average rental housing cost for the area. Emergency programs, so far, has been via contract with Metro West. Belmont's MAHT applied for grants from CPC and then asked Metro West to administer funds. Easton is working with CPC coordinator, through a contract, to administer the program, approximately \$70,000. Lincoln's is not emergency program. Administered through their COA. Lincoln is approximately 10 households needing assistance. Hudson running their program 100% themselves. Requested \$50,000 but didn't use it all. Most of emergency programs are for 3 months. Newton considering extending to 6 months. Don't know of any community that has handled this exclusively with volunteers. Most have a paid 3rd party administer this emergency program. Metro West's fee is currently 10%-12% of program funds to administer. Cheaper than hiring someone at Town Hall. CPC funds can be used for these administrative expenses.

Debbie Thompson –Most of Harvard's programs depends upon income qualifications. Not sure how many have applied for tax abatement program. Applications go straight to the Assessor. Tax Abatement program is currently handled out of Assessor's office. 4 applications were received this year for Elderly and Disabled Taxation Aid (EDTA), Tax Work off program, fuel assistance (handful). Most Seniors don't have a COVID related loss of income, so therefore might not qualify for this proposed program. Looking at factors of need, approximately 20 households might require assistance. Chris Ryan is hosting a Senior Housing forum on September 8, 2020 @ 4:00pm.

CPC voted to submit Warrant Article for the October Town Meeting. Given the complications still outstanding, we (CPC) need more information to be able to sell this to the Town in the Warrant Article. We need to have education information available. We need a Consider This article for the Press.

7. Call for Other Business - None

8. Action Items

- a. Michelle Catalina will get a Consider This item to the Harvard Press regarding the Emergency Assistance program, for the Warrant Article.
- b. Didi Chadran, John Lee & Beth Williams will draft wording of proposed Warrant Article for review at August 31 meeting.

Adjourn Meeting – Meeting was adjourned at 9:16pm.

Next meeting scheduled for August 31, 2020 @ 7:30pm.