

PUBLIC HEARING
CDBG APPLICATIONS FOR THE 2020 PROGRAM YEAR

Monday, March 15, 2021 - 11:30 AM

Clerk's note – This meeting was held virtually.

Shaun Gilliland, Chairperson
James Monty, Vice-Chairperson

Chairman Gilliland called this Public Hearing to order at 11:30 am with the following Supervisors virtually in attendance: Clayton Barber, Robin DeLoria, Archie Depo, Stephanie DeZalia, Shaun Gilliland (in person), Joseph Giordano, Kenneth Hughes, Jim Monty, Jay Rand, Jeffrey Subra, Ike Tyler and Davina Winemiller. Joe Pete Wilson was excused.

Department Heads present: Laura Carson, Dan Palmer (in person) and Judy Garrison.

Also virtually present: Sun News, Tim Rowland and Bruce Misarski – Housing.

GILLILLAND: I will call this Public Hearing to order. We already did the salute to the flag so I will ask Judy to read the public notice.

GARRISON: Essex County Notice of Public Hearing. Essex County will hold a public hearing on Monday, March 15, 2021 at 11:30 am at the Essex County Board of Supervisors Chambers, Essex County Government Center, 7551 Court Street, Elizabethtown, New York for the purpose of hearing public comments on Essex County's community development needs, and to discuss the possible submission of one or more Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications for the 2020 program year.

The CDBG program is administered by the New York State Office of Community Renewal (OCR), and will make available to eligible local governments approximately \$10 million for the 2020 program year for housing, economic development, public facilities, public infrastructure, and planning activities, with the principal purpose of benefitting low/moderate income persons.

The hearing will provide further information about the CDBG program and will allow for citizen participation in the development of any proposed grant applications and/or to provide technical assistance to develop alternate proposals. Comments on the CDBG program or proposed project(s) will be received at this time. The hearing is being conducted pursuant to Section 570.486, Subpart I of the CFR and in compliance with the requirements of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended.

The Essex County Government Center is accessible to persons with disabilities. If special accommodations are needed for persons with disabilities, those with hearing impairments, or those in need of translation from English, those individuals should contact Judith Garrison, Clerk of the Board at 518-873-3353, at least one week in advance of the hearing date to allow for necessary arrangements. Written comments may also be submitted to Judith Garrison, Clerk of the Board, Essex County Government Center, 7551 Court Street, Elizabethtown, NY 12932 until March 15, 2021. Dated: March 2, 2021.

GILLILLAND: Thank you Judy. I will turn the podium over to Bruce Misarski, the Director of the Housing Services program in Essex County and he will give us a brief on this program.

MISARSKI: Great. Thank you Supervisor. So the Community Development Block Grant Program is a Federal funded program that comes from Housing and Urban Development and so the money is given in block grants to the states. New York State is actually and will be administering the program and so we will be applying through the Housing and Community renewal at the Office for Community Renewal. There's about \$10 million dollars available in CDBG funds this year for housing and counties are eligible for up to a million dollars in funding awards in towns, cities and villages can apply for up to \$500,000 amounts. The purpose of the money is to help primarily folks with low and moderate incomes and the money should directly impact the applicant's needs. So part of the reason for the public hearing is to really reach out to the community to see if there are specific community development needs that the public is looking for and we would consider those in the development of the application that will be submitted. So the application is due on April 9th of 2021, and so we've only got a couple weeks to formulate, plan and put an application together.

Some of the activities that could be considered for in this housing round are housing rehabilitation which is something that we've been doing pretty consistently across the county, first time home buyer programs which we also have been doing fairly consistently, rental rehabilitation which could assist with apartments that serve low and moderate income renters. We could be developing new housing and using CDBG dollars to fund new housing. We could also be working on water and sewer as they effect single, family projects so normally for this type of funding it wouldn't be municipal water or sewer project but it could potentially be connections to directly to people's houses, it could be drilled wells or onsite septic systems.

Some of things that you can't be doing with the funds are obviously using CDBG dollars to fund municipal activity. So, normally town halls and town garages are not eligible, general government expenses are not eligible. Obviously you can't be using these funds for any partisan political activities or the purchase of equipment generally is not eligible. Acquisition construction, rehab of structures for religious purposes, operating and maintain expenses for communities all these things are not eligible. What the Housing Program are considering to do this year is to submit an application for a rental rehab program. What we found is that this is one part of our population that we have not been serving very well. We find that our rental housing stock is in pretty poor condition and the landlords are mostly primarily small, mom and pop business owners that are managing one to four unit buildings and their resources are very limited as well. So we're finding a system with our rentals and we need to give them assistance and help, hopefully improve some low and moderate income rental units so that's sort of what the housing program is proposing for this year's application. And we just kind of wanted to see if there is any input or comments from the public and or the Board of Supervisors.

GILLILLAND: Thanks Bruce. I don't see any members of the public on this, but any members of the board have any questions or comments for Bruce?

MONTY: Yeah Bruce, so basically we can only apply for one segment of this grant? We can't apply for multiple areas like a rehome rehab and rental rehab? It's got to one designated area only for the grant?

MISARSKI: No I suppose we could put more than one application in I suppose they may fund both of them. Yeah, we could look at more than one activity.

MONTY: That's kind of what I was thinking and my other question to this, is how are they for the rental program how is that vetted because I know in some areas we have landlords who have multiple rental units who put absolutely nothing into them and just let them deteriorate, deteriorate, deteriorate and now they'll be eligible to come in and have those units rehabbed at taxpayer

expense?

MISARSKI: Yeah, I mean if they're serving low and moderate income families, they're going to be asked to, first of all there will be a match component. So we're envisioning probably a 25% match from landlords. The grant money would be to bring the money up to code compliant and standards so we would be looking at that and we would be bringing these units into compliance. As far as their vetting, we certainly would look at and make sure their taxes are paid, and that they are you know, their ownership is sound and insurance and those things are up to date.

WINEMILLER: I have a question. So, Bruce, is there income guidelines for landlords? Do they have to, you know, have income to a certain amount in order to qualify for rental rehab assistance?

MISARSKI: No, one thing we were envisioning though is if they were low and moderate income we may waive that, the 25% match so that it would be perhaps a 100% grant funding. No, we typically would not look at the income or I guess in a lot of cases they'd be businesses so we'd be looking at the business income of an enterprise so it wasn't part of our plan no.

WINEMILLER: Bruce, thank you.

MISARSKI: The important thing is that they are providing rental units to the low and moderate income population so I think that's one of the important pieces of it is they are providing descent, sanitary, healthy units and they are making them affordable.

WINEMILLER: Sure. So, along those lines Bruce, if a landlord applied for the grant you know and was awarded the grant would they have to sign a contract of some time with HAPEC that states you know, they wouldn't charge over you know, eight-hundred or whatever the low to moderate –

MISARSKI: That's right.

WINEMILLER: Okay. Thank you.

MISARSKI: And that would be for five years. So we would be locking them in for renting to low and moderate income families for five years.

WINEMILLER: Thank you.

RAND: I have a question Bruce. Does the application itself come directly from the person, like the landlord or does it go through the township?

MISARSKI: This would be a county application so we'd be working as an administrator for the county's program. So I would imagine, the list of properties that we are working from is a list that we've reached out to these landlords over the past year seeking their input and cataloging their needs and so this list is really formulated based on an outreach that our Landlord Ambassador has done over the past year for landlords. We have a list that they've responded to us saying, this is our need, we need assistance in making repairs and so we're sort of responding to what we've seen in the community.

RAND: So, the lists have already been basically established for people that can apply for it?

MISARSKI: No, if you have people you can provide us with the names and we could submit it. Send them applications or if you want we can distribute to each of the Board of Supervisors and you can make them available however, you would like us to make it work.

RAND: Okay. That'll be good.

WINEMILLER: I have another question Bruce. I'm thinking about a gentleman here in St. Armand that purchased a four unit, it had a flood, some pipes broken. The property is in Bloomingdale so it's in Essex County but the gentleman actually lives in Clinton County. Would he still be eligible to apply?

MISARSKI: Yes.

WINEMILLER: So, as long as the property, the rental property is in Essex County?

MISARSKI: Yup, that's the goal.

WINEMILLER: Okay thank you.

DEZALIA: So, are you said that it's only going to be, the application is only going to be for rental rehab because if you did a housing rehab could that also take care of the wells if someone needed wells or are we just deciding to just do the rental application at this point? I do know individuals in my town that had been trying to get wells and then there's probably a couple that could use the rental rehab also, or not, sorry not the rental rehab the housing rehab.

MISARSKI: The reason why we are putting the housing, the single family owner occupied housing property for next year's funding ask is that we still have some rehab money and the program is probably going to extend through the end of this year so we figured that we would try to help out a different population this year since we still have home buyer and some rehab money still remaining.

DEZALIA: Right, last year I spoke to you about a couple of the people for the wells could they still apply under the housing rehab for the wells or no? Or is that completely different?

MISARSKI: No we can assist folks with wells through the Housing rehab application.

DEZALIA: Okay. Thank you.

MONTY: How much money do we have left Bruce in the housing rehab?

MISARSKI: I think we've got about \$50,000 left, uncommitted at this point.

MONTY: It wouldn't go far. I'd like to see us at least apply for both worse-case scenario they tell us no on one.

MISARSKI: Okay.

GILLILLAND: Any further questions?

HUGHES: Just a quick question. Thank you. Bruce, are you writing this grant yourself or are you

using any community resources to support that effort.

MISARSKI: No, we always write our own applications.

WINEMILLER: I just had one more comment Shaun, if I may?

GILLILLAND: Sure.

WINEMILLER: Thank you. Bruce, I just wanted to take this opportunity to publicly thank you and your staff for all the help that they have provided for St. Armand residents and all the residents of Essex County. We know that you work very, very hard to help our citizens and I am truly grateful.

MISARSKI: Thank you.

GILLILLAND: Thank you. Anything further from the board? Well, thank you very much. The public hearing is adjourned.

As there was no further discussion to come before this public hearing it was adjourned at 11:46 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk
Board of Supervisors