

CDBG Allocation Committee
February 2, 2023
9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.
Remote Meeting via Zoom

CDBG Annual Allocation Committee will conduct this meeting by remote methods/technology at the Zoom link provided below, in accordance with the requirements of 1 M.R.S. section 403-B and the City Council's Remote Participation Policy

Public Remote Access Information: Please click the link below to join the webinar:
<https://portlandmaine-gov.zoom.us/j/83965473212>

Meeting 5- Agenda

9:00- 9:30	Review Answers to Social Service Questions
10:00- 10:30	Review /Discuss Social Service Applications 21-24

Next meeting 2.9.2023
Thursday, January
Time: 9:00-10:30 am
Location: via Zoom

CDBG Allocation Committee
January 19, 2023
9:00am-10:30am
Remote Meeting via Zoom

In Attendance: Elinor, Janice, Barbara, Majid, and Clair
Staff: Mary Davis, Heidi McCarthy, Roux Lobozzo

Meeting 4- Minutes

Approved minutes from 01.019.23 Meeting: Approved by all members

1. Review and Discuss Social Service Questions 11-15

Through These Doors sent an answer to the question, a committee member reviewed the applications from a prior year and still wondered if it was an expansion of services. HCD staff member explained in more detail HUD's definition for expansion of services. Committee members stated they would agree that the application for this year was an expansion of service. A committee member stated that Through These Doors did have a higher goal this year and committee member stated the applicant was clear about their goals. Wayside Food Programs had submitted a response to the question from last meeting; no discussion was needed for that answer.

2. Review of Social Service Applications 15-20

Preble St. Emergency Food Programs

A committee member asked what would occur if Preble St. Food Programs did not receive funding. A committee member stated that the CDBG request percentage is low, so how would that affect the program? A committee member stated the financial stability is there, and they are leveraging other funds from different funds. A committee member wondered what the financial need for the program is.

Furniture Friends- Basic Needs Expansion

A committee member questioned readiness to proceed in particular the new service, which is the new warehouse. A committee member was concerned about the transportation been secured for this new warehouse?

A committee member was concerned about hiring a position and another member stated that they stated they would in the application.

A committee member asked the question that without these funds, could not serve beyond Portland. How would CDBG funding affect the whole program? Committee members discussed where all the referral were coming from.

Catholic Charities- Immigrant Legal Services

A committee member said that they made a financial error on the application. A committee member asked why there were not funded last year, and HCD stated that while people scored high there was not enough funding. A committee member would like more quantifiable information on impact. A committee member would like more information on the job creation. A committee member stated that they are only a few agencies that provide critical services. A committee member wondered how many applications they were able to process last year. A committee member wanted more information on the unaccompanied youth.

A committee member asked for more detail for numbers of youth service and if there was an increase from last year?

Hope Acts -Support for Homeless and Low Income Asylum Seekers

A committee member was concerned regarding the -19k in the budget? Please explain deficient mentioned in application in December. A committee member stated the application had done a good job in showing an increased need; they also did a good job explaining how to track the progress.

Greater Portland Family Promise- Preble St. - Homelessness Prevention & Housing Services

A committee member did not understand the rotational shelter model; another committee member explained what that model meant. A committee member stated that they have a much more increased request than last year. A committee member felt they provided good information in their application.

Preble St. - Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter –

A committee member stated they were shocked to hear most of the customers were from war torn countries.

Preble St. Adult Wellness Center

A committee member was concerned about whether they would hire for Elena's Way and discussed the budget. A committee member asked what would happen if CDBG funds were not awarded, would positions be lost?

Committee members discussed the meeting schedule and the process to releasing scores and the appeal process. Committee members asked when the last time a development application was submitted for housing. HCD staff explained what is eligible for housing using CDBG funding.

Motion to adjourn from all committee members.

Next meeting

Thursday, February 9, 2023

Time: 9:00-10:30 am

Location: via Zoom

Questions from CDBG Allocation Committee Review Meeting: 1/23/23

Furniture Friends- Basic Needs Expansion

Can you provide more detail on the plan to proceed, with the new service?

At present, Furniture Friends operates its program of acquiring and providing donated furniture within a defined service area in and around Greater Portland. We accept referrals from partner agencies for clients housed within the communities of Cape Elizabeth, Cumberland, Falmouth, Freeport, Gorham, Portland, Scarborough, South Portland, Westbrook, Windham and Yarmouth. With the approval of our CDBG application, we would expand our operations to accept referrals from the City of Portland Social Services Division for clients who might be housed temporarily in Portland (for instance, in one of the shelters or local motels) but find permanent housing anywhere in the State of Maine. For example, if a family were moving from the Family Shelter to Rumford, City staff could make a referral for that family and the family would be eligible to receive furniture from our inventory. Because Rumford is beyond our geographic reach, the family or City staff would arrange to pick up the furniture from our warehouse in Westbrook.

Although the expanded system mentioned above will not increase our furniture delivery program, it will force us to increase staffing to oversee our furniture acquisition efforts to ensure increased inventory in our warehouse to accommodate these additional referrals. We know from the number of requests we currently receive from individuals and agencies in other parts of the state, that stockpiles of household furniture are difficult, if not impossible, to find. City staff report that this type of expanded service would be helpful as they find housing for unsheltered people farther and farther from Portland. The likelihood that people will accept these placements will improve knowing that they will enter housing that has the essential furniture they need versus moving into an empty apartment with no option to acquire these items.

Once our CDBG application is approved, we will meet with Social Services staff to discuss the details of this arrangement including prioritizing referrals to facilitate faster moves into housing.

If you did not get CDBG funding how would that affect the whole program?

If we did not receive CDBG funding, we would not be able to expand our operations to accommodate referrals from the City for people being housed outside our current service area. Additionally, a lack of CDBG funding may limit our ability to meet our overall goal of serving 750 households in the program year. Both goals are dependent upon Furniture Friends being fully staffed. During COVID, as volunteerism essentially evaporated, our warehouse assistant was crucial to our daily operations by maintaining our ability to collect furniture donations as well as delivering furniture to clients unable to arrange for transportation to pick up furniture at our warehouse. Given the significance of this grant to our budget, we are unsure whether or not we could maintain this position without CDBG funding.

Questions from CDBG Allocation Committee Review Meeting: 1/23/23

Hope Acts - Asylum Seeker Assistance Program

Committee members wanted more detail on the Budget Overview, specifically the Net Revenue line of the -\$19,448. (I provided the attachment and the line is highlighted on the bottom)

The good news is that we ended 2022 at around 70K positive against a budget of -19K. (our bookkeeper is out because of a family medical emergency, so there will likely be some year end adjustments to our books, but this should be close.) On the positive side - we received an unsolicited donation of nearly 60K from a local church -- a wonderful surprise.

For calendar year 2023, we have a net negative budget again, due to several factors. First, our existing staff was significantly underpaid according and they did not receive health insurance. In 2023 staff salaries are aligned with the current labor market and Maine Association of Nonprofit benchmarks. We are now paying all staff an additional stipend that cover most or all of their ACA insurance premiums. We are also contributing to a 403b retirement plan. Additionally, inflation and high utility costs are having a major impact on Hope Acts.

On the positive side, we just learned that both Maine Housing and the Maine Department of Labor are providing 2-year grants for some of our Asylum Seeker Assistance Program. While we still have a budget gap, these grants along with CDBG funding will be an enormous help as Hope Acts is seeing ever-increasing numbers of asylum seekers looking for help addressing their basic needs.

Questions from CDBG Allocation Committee Review Meeting: 1/23/23

Preble St. Adult Wellness Center

How would the program be impacted if they did not receive CDBG funding?

All revenue sources are critical to allowing Preble Street to continue to provide services to hungry individuals and households in Portland. Without significant dedicated local, state, or federal funding streams, funding of Preble Street Emergency Food Programs by necessity involves a patchwork of public and private funding, each critically important to allowing us to carry out our work of getting food to hungry people in this community. Preble Street Food Programs is a model of efficiency: we utilize volunteer labor and donated food as much as possible to keep costs low. As such, any loss of funding, including the loss of CDBG funding, could jeopardize our ability to maintain or, as we have in recent years, flexibly increase our services to respond to increased community need (for example as we did during COVID and during the Franklin Towers power outage).

Questions from CDBG Allocation Committee Review Meeting: 1/23/23

Preble St. Adult Wellness Center

Please provide more detail on the impact of your program if CDBG funds were not awarded?

Would positions be lost if you did not receive CDBG funding?

If CDBG fund were not awarded, there could be a significant impact to shelter services: The 1.25 staff positions at Preble Street Adult Wellness Shelters that CDBG funding supports would be at risk. In these essential programs that provide services 24 hours a day to individuals with complex medical, mental health, and substance use related needs, each position is critical to maintaining a safe level of staffing and effective services - without sufficient staffing, we cannot operate the shelter at full capacity.

Additionally, a significant portion of funding for these shelters comes from federal and state funding that require match contributions from non-federal or state sources. CDBG funding helps Preble Street meet our match requirements for these awards. Continued CDBG funding to Preble Street is a critical element of our funding strategy for Preble Street Adult Wellness Shelters and Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter and will allow us to continue to access and receive these larger awards.