

FY 2017 BLOCK GRANT PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

October 30, 2018

Hearing Officer: Morgan Drowniany, Director
West Springfield Office of Community Development

Hearing called to order at 5:31 PM. M. Drowniany introduced herself as the Hearing Officer and stated that all attendees were welcome to make comments or ask questions at any time.

Development of Needs for FY19 Grant

M. Drowniany reported that the procedure for developing FY19 grant needs would differ from the procedure in past years - she has reached out to department heads to solicit proposals, and will be circulating an RFP for social services, which will be used in conjunction with current Town priorities and public feedback, to develop FY19 proposed activities.

A discussion was had regarding streets and sidewalks in the Merrick Neighborhood, specifically the sidewalks on the “river” side of Main Street. A resident expressed concern regarding incomplete sidewalks, missing trees, and missing parking signage on these streets. M. Drowniany will bring this concern to the DPW for consideration in their proposal.

Review of FY17 Progress and Activities

Housing Rehabilitation

Under the FY17 grant program, no activities have begun in housing rehab because FY16 funds are still being expended. Grant years have fallen behind due to staff turnover. M. Drowniany reported that the grant was amended to lower the housing rehab allocation to \$110,000, representing 4 units to be completed as soon as FY16 funds are exhausted. She is working with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to get through the waiting list and move on to new projects.

Sanitary Code Enforcement Program

In the FY17 program year, approximately half of the \$70,000 allocation for sanitary code enforcement in the Southeast Target Area has been expended. The officer is responsive and adapting to the newly expanded area, as of this past summer. Residents seem pleased with the work he has done cleaning up the neighborhood.

Public Facilities

The Town is in the process of purchasing First Congregational Church on Park Street with \$481,340 of FY17 funds and \$35,122 of program income. It will be used as open space for Coburn School students, as well as for community activities and social services, as it is currently used. M. Drowniany is in the process of completing a Request for Release of Funds, and is working with the Massachusetts and West Springfield Historic Commissions currently to ensure compliance prior to completing the purchase.

Social Services

The five social service programs included in the FY17 grant were: Intermediate and Advanced Level ESOL at the West Springfield Library (\$7,000), Family Self-Sufficiency Counseling provided by the Center for Human Development (\$15,000), First Time Homebuyer Education classes provided by Wayfinders (\$4,400), Summer Camp Scholarships for the Boys & Girls Club (\$20,000), and translation services for the Head Start Program (\$15,000).

CHD and the Boys and Girls Club have completed their full year of service and are 100% reimbursed, Wayfinders and the Library are 50% complete, and Head Start has not submitted for payment yet, but is on track. Residents seem pleased with the services as-is. A short discussion was had around past years of social service needs.

M. Drewniany remarked that, as stressed before, a more competitive process will be undertaken for the FY19 grant, asking nonprofits to submit a proposal to receive funds. Prior recipients will have the opportunity to express that they have managed a CDBG grant previously.

Admin

A total of \$70,000 was included in the FY17 budget for salaries, benefits, supplies, and other miscellaneous expenses. It is approximately 33% expended.

As no further comments or questions were offered, the Public Hearing was closed at 5:59 p.m.