

Town Council
Tuesday, April 20, 2010 – 5:30pm
Windham Town Hall Meeting Room
Public Hearing Minutes

The Town Council held a public hearing on April 20, 2010 at 5:30pm in the Town Meeting Room, 979 Main Street, Willimantic, Connecticut to hear public comment on fiscal year 2011 Community Development Block Grant program.

Call to Order

Mayor Ernest S. Eldridge called the public hearing to order at 5:30pm and read the public hearing notice.

Public Comment

Mary De Marco, Human Services Director for the Town of Windham stated that the last time Housing Rehab funds were received by the Town of Windham was in 2001. Currently there are approximately 50 people on the waiting list, 6 of which are classified as emergency repairs. Ms. De Marco mentioned that the Town would maintain a revolving loan fund from the income generated from repayment of housing rehab loans. The funds will be rolled into the revolving loan account, which would be used to further address the housing rehab needs in town.

Ms. De Marco read 2 letters from families currently on the waiting list who couldn't attend the public hearing. The families are:

Kimberly Cortez, 23 Jaynes Avenue, Willimantic, Connecticut – See appendix A
Joyce Indart, 22 Lynwood Drive, Willimantic, Connecticut – See appendix B

Tom DeVivo, 30 South Park Street, spoke entirely in favor of the Town applying for housing rehab funds. He stated it was good for the community. Good housing stock brings good community which helps attract good families.

Sylvia Verastegui, Southridge Drive, spoke in favor of the town's application for housing rehab funds. She stated she has been on the waiting list for repairs since 2007. She has problems with water in the basement and the gutters are in need of repair.

Kathy Dubay, Jackson Street resident and small business owner and is in support of housing rehab loan program. She purchased a foreclosure and her bank account is wiped-out because you open up a can of worms. She is all for it and hopes the Council takes it into consideration.

Ricardo Ojeda, building owner of 123 Union Street, is in favor of the housing rehab program. He purchased the property about 10 years ago, the street was in pretty bad shape and there was a lot of police activity. The street is now clean and neat mostly because there was money available to fix their places and it worked. He's very much in favor of rehabbing the houses.

Albert Pallitta and Chris Tripolina (supportive living staff), 182 Quarry Street, spoke in favor of the housing rehab program because Mr. Pallitta's basement floods, the roof needs to be fixed and he needs to replace his old septic system with the city sewer.

Mrs. Osuba, 14 Hewitt Street, spoke in favor of the housing rehab loan program. Her home was built in 1952 and has drafty windows. The house also needs a new roof and the chimney is leaking.

Marta Perez, 40 Lebanon Avenue (translated by Ed Rivera) has lived in Willimantic for 10 years. She needs to have her roof and windows. During the winter heat is escaping through the windows.

Rebecca Gaudreau, 102 Lewiston Avenue - spoke on behalf of her Mother, Norma Chestnut and is in favor of the housing rehab loan program. The house was built in 1912 and has a stone foundation which crumbles when touched, rain water floods her basement, the house is shifting, the roof is starting to sag and the electricity is outdated.

Harry Carboni, Lewiston Avenue - Would like to see housing rehab loans but would like grants for Main Street. Jobs are needed, need economic development in town, the lights need replacing on Main Street and the Hurley Building is falling down. Would like to see a grant to rehab the buildings and lights on Main Street. Maybe able to find other programs or loans to help with housing rehab but money is needed on Main Street.

Ed Rivera, 309 Jackson Street - Received a housing rehab loan about 10 years ago. Would like to see that after 10 years the loan is forgiven and the homeowner doesn't need to repay because they might need another loan to fix their house.

Kay Haskell, 956 Main Street - Will support the housing rehab loan this year but a plan should be put together for next year. Should start a committee now so next year the town will be shovel-ready for streetscape projects. Also, suggested getting a group of people together so homeowners who need minor work done on their homes can get work done.

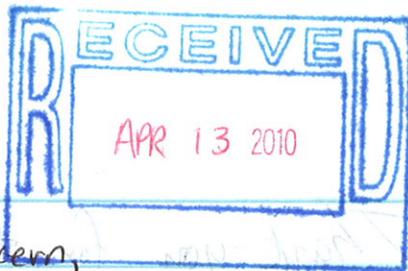
Jean deSmet, suggested contacting Access Agency for weatherization to those in the audience who needed help with windows. Should apply for Housing Rehab this year but 2011 CDBG monies should be used for improvements to create a more "pedestrian-friendly atmosphere." See letter (Appendix C) attached submitted by Jean deSmet and Teri Santucci.

Jeff Viens, Columbia resident - In favor of Community Block Grant for housing rehab but loans should be repaid so it doesn't become a giveaway program and the monies can be recycled for others to use.

Adjournment

Public hearing was adjourned at 6:00pm.

Appendix A



To whom it may concern,

My name is Kimberly Cortez. I am a resident of Windham. My husband and I live check to check and at times find it hard to make ends meet. We purchased a little "fixer-upper" in the campground on Rt. 30 in hopes that we could live within our means (due to the expensive cost of living there) but, unfortunately we are unable to have any significant amount of savings and the repairs to the home are pretty costly. More recently we have just been made aware that our septic has gone "sour" and it will cost thousands to replace. We obviously would be very grateful and would greatly benefit from low income family town loans to help us make the necessary repairs to our home. We have tried bank loans, but we have been denied any loan that would be large enough for septic replacement. We have seen other families in the past who have received this loan for their home repair and it has been a marvelous blessing to them. It is a wonderful blessing to them to be able to have a home warm, and safe. And the neighbors appreciate the up keep for their neighborhood.

April 2, 2010

Human Service Department
Town Of Windham
979 main Street
Willimantic, Ct. 06226

Dear Council Members:

My name is Joyce Indart .As a resident of Windham I fully support the Windham Housing Rabilitation Program as it has helped many low income owners in Windham make their homes more livable and energy efficient.

A while back I applied for The windham Housing Rabilitation Loan which if approved it will help me a great deal on the many issues my house is currently encountering for example, broken and drafting old 1955 windows, cusing loss of heat and energy, bad plumbing and rapidly decaying of wood siding.

As a home owner this issues are of a serious concern since due to my low income I can not properly take care of those problems.

I will be greatly appreciated if you consider choosing my application for this program.

Sincerely,

Joyce Indart
22 Lynwood Dr.
Willimantic, CT. 06226



We are citizens who are working to assist in growing our downtown into a center for arts, culture, recreation and entertainment with an exciting mix of interesting retail, terrific restaurants and clubs for young people – an attractive and thriving place to live, work and do business.

Our challenge is to create an urban environment where people want to live, shop, work and visit.

While Willimantic installed trees, brick walks and period lighting some years ago, unfortunately there has been deterioration which needs to be addressed, as well as improvements to be made to create a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.

- The walks have deteriorated in many places and bricks are buckling, creating tripping hazards
- There are no storm sewers. As a result, the curb cuts catch water, rendering the sidewalks inaccessible after storms and during the winter, when the water collects and freezes.
- The period lighting replaced poles which were much higher. Although the number of fixture heads was doubled, there are deep pockets of darkness. That effect is well established by urban planners to instill a greater feeling of danger than a consistent, but lower lighting level. The lighting needs to be redesigned and more even lighting installed, perhaps with led fixtures or solar power, to reduce electric use. At the same time, we would like to install meters to charge electric vehicles.
- Truck traffic rumbles down Route 66/Main Street creating an uninviting pedestrian atmosphere. Traffic calming techniques that should be considered in consultation with DOT include additional crosswalks, raised and/or textured crosswalks, and neckdowns at the corners to reduce the distance pedestrians need to cross.
- The original improvements did not extend east to the new tourist district near the Textile and History Museum and Garden on the Bridge, nor west to Memorial Park and the ECSU dorms. Utilities are above ground on non-period lighting, etc. We seek to unify the streetscape from the Mills to the intersection of Routes 32 and 66.
- Finally, 1% of public project funding is designated to be used for public art. We have shovel-ready ideas for our historic Main Street.

DOT was scheduled to repave Main Street in 2009. While it was postponed, we fervently hope that our street is high on the list. Since these suggested improvements need to be coordinated with DOT's design and implementation, we feel it is urgent to begin these discussions and to fund the work now.

We therefore recommend that the CDBG Small Cities application to be filed in 2010 address the issue of our deteriorating infrastructure in the historic commercial district on Main Street, and upgrades be made to existing infrastructure to unify the streetscape.

Jean LaFrance Mantucci