TOWN COUNCIL
WATERTOWN, CONNECTICUT
MONDAY, May 6, 2024
PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing was held on May 6, 2024 at 6:15.

Attendees: Mary Ann Rosa, Chair
Ken Demirs, Vice Chair
Robert Desena
Anthony DiBona (remote)
Gary Lafferty
Carina Noyd
Jonathan Ramsay
Robert Retallick
Rachael Ryan

Mark Raimo, Town Manager

Chair Mary Ann Rosa read the resolution.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
TOWN OF WATERTOWN
FISCAL YEAR 2024 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Town of Watertown will conduct a public hearing by the Town Council on Monday, May 6, 2024 at 6:15 pm at the Watertown Town Hall, Town Council Chambers, 61 Echo Lake Road, Watertown, CT to discuss the Fiscal Year 2024 Community Development Block Grant program and to solicit citizen input.

Maximum award limits:
• Up to $2,000,000 for Public Housing Modernization with priority to State Sponsored Housing Portfolio (SSHP).
• Up to $1,000,000 for Infrastructure associated with the development of Affordable Housing (e.g., streets sidewalks, sewer lines, windmills);

Major activity categories are: Acquisition, Housing Rehabilitation, Public Housing Modernization, Community Facilities, Public Services, and Economic Development. Projects funded with CDBG allocations must carry out at least one of three National Objectives: benefit to low- and moderate-income persons, elimination of slums and blight, or meeting urgent community development needs.

The purpose of the public hearing is to obtain citizen’s views on the Town’s community development and housing needs and review and discuss specific project activities in the areas of housing, economic development, or community facilities which could be part of the Town’s new Application for funding for the year 2024.

Also, the public hearing will be to give citizens an opportunity to make their comments known on the program and for approval of the Program Income Reuse Plan, if applicable. If you are unable to attend the public hearing, you may direct written comments to the Town of Watertown, Town Manager’s Office, 61 Echo Lake Road, Watertown, CT 06795, or you may telephone 860-945-5255. In addition, information may be obtained at the above address between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The Town of Watertown anticipates applying for the maximum grant amount of $2,000,000.00 under the Public Housing Modernization.

The Town of Watertown promotes fair housing and makes all programs available to low-and moderate-income households regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity or expression, marital status, age, lawful source of income, familial status, learning disability or physical/mental disability, or sexual orientation.

“All are encouraged to attend. The hearing is accessible to the handicapped. Any disabled persons requiring special assistance or non-English speaking persons should contact the Town Manager’s Office at 860-945-5255 at least five days prior to the hearing.”

Chair Mary Ann Rosa asked for comments from the council?

Hearing none.

Chair Mary Ann Rosa asked Peter Testa, Consultant and Janelle Wilk, Chairman Housing Authority to answer any questions and assist with information.
Peter Testa, A & E Services my firm has been hired by the Town to prepare an application on behalf of the Town of Watertown and the Watertown Housing Authority to be submitted to the Department of Housing in the amount not to exceed $2,000,000. The applications are due to the state by May 31st at 11:59 a.m. Applications are ranked and rated; with the highest ranked applications are being funded. The funding originates from HUD and it deaminates down to the State of Ct. The State of Ct. then provides funding to entitlement communities which are communities with a population of more than 50,000 and your small towns which are town with less than 50,000 have this application process that we need to submit to. There is approximately $11.4 million available from the state in this round. The funding is provided to the Town of Watertown as a grant so there is no repayment on your part and then the funding is passed to the Watertown Housing Authority also as a grant. No repayments are due back from the Housing Authority to the Town. The Housing Authority property is part of the state sponsored portfolio which is a requirement of the state’s funding this round. It has been their focus for the last several years to provide financial assistance to the housing authority properties. The application meets the national objective of benefiting low- and moderate-income individuals, as residents at Country Ridge are at or below 80% of the state’s median income. No program income will be generated, no repayments will come back therefor no program income reuse plan is required. The Town is currently operating their housing Rehabilitation Loan program which is being funded by repayments from previous participants that have transferred title and then those funds were as a 0% interest deferred payment loan. So that money does come back to the town and it is on a revolving basis, which is then lent to eligible homeowners. The requirements of today are to seek public comments on the economic and community development needs of the community and if there is no objection to the intent of submitting of this application that would be what the town would do based on your approval.

Rachael Ryan asked on one of the hand outs it says the capital needs assessment estimated and the grant total is just over $3,000,000 but the grant would be for $2,000,000. If we were awarded the $2,000,000 would we just do $2,000,000 worth of the work, even though the grand total is estimated to be $3,000,000.

Peter Testa answered yes, this may be a multiphase project because of the limit of funding. The Housing Authority may also seek funding through the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority CHFA. They have more liberal and higher levels of funding, the CHFA funding is typically a condition of once you get the small cities funding. They are using that as leverage so then the Housing Authority could seek additional funds through the CHFA money.

Robert Retallick asked what is the downside of this? This obviously are state monies that are coming in and the town does not have to chip in at all on their side and this is just money coming in, correct, its kind of a no brainer.

Peter Testa answered there is generally a in kind service, hopefully the building permit fees could be waived and that could be used as part of your in-kind service. When your building official goes out or you're Planning and Zoning or whether is Lisa Cattaneo or anybody else who
is working on this application or the grant, as the money becomes available those are counted towards your in-kind services. There is no real out of pocket cash let’s say just in-kind services, your right there is no downside.

Chair Mary Ann Rosa asked anyone from the public who wish to ask questions.

Hearing none.

Chairwoman Janelle Wilk, Housing Authority wanted to say thank you for this because I know there is no money coming from the town but we are getting your assistance by helping. Lisa Cattaneo has done wonderful things for us, this will help us a lot, I appreciate it, thank you.

Chair Mary Ann Rosa asked how long after the application is submitted before we know whether we are going to be funded or not.

Peter Testa answered it could be anywhere from 3 to 6 months from the time that the applications are due to the time that the Governor announces. Historically it’s been anywhere six months plus.

Chair Mary Ann Rosa stated it not at the end of this fiscal year.

Peter Testa answered the money you are applying for you know say this year in 2024 if we get approved will probably become available sometime in 2025 and then the project will then go out to bid. The renovations that are proposed for Country Ridge are exterior in nature, roofing siding, door and windows are all going to be replaced and upgrades to the existing fire alarm. I was on the call today with the engineer and architect and Lori Finke up at the Housing Authority going over the particulars of the fire alarm system. They want to discuss that with the Fire Marshal to make sure that everything is going to be in compliance.

Chair Mary Ann Rosa asked there was a lot of documentation relative to the kitchens and bathrooms too, those aren’t ones that would be touched.

Peter Testa answered not at this time, because of the time crunch applications are due May 31st we need to have 90% drawings and specifications ready. In discussing with the Housing Authority this would be the most advantageous route at this point based on the time frame.

Chair Mary Ann Rosa to the exterior?

Peter Testa answered yes and secure the envelope, there is a possibility of doing some bump outs in order to create what is call ADA units. You need a certain turning radius, approach zones clearances so on and so forth. That may not work within the confines of the footprint of these
buildings or these units so there is discussion of possibly doing bump outs little additions to incorporate these spaces and if that’s the case then that would be like a second phase.

Ken Demirs asked under urgency there is only one item on here that you actually have a one and its bathrooms. I am assuming sense of urgency is 1 through 4 and item 1 and 2 would be done before 3 and 4 is that how I am looking at this or am I out in left field?

Peter Testa answered again based on the timing of it, the Housing Authority and the architect did not feel they would be able to have plans and specifications ready in time for the application, that is why we are switching the approach. To your point yes.

Ken Demirs asked Country Ride is also the first complex on the left coming up the hill, correct?

Chairwoman Janelle Wilk answered it is right across from where Crystal Rock was. If you are going up the hill it’s the second complex.

Ken Demirs stated it doesn’t seem like that long ago that the first section had siding put on them and roofs.

Chairwoman Janelle Wilk answered I think it was Truman Terrace and Buckingham and Country Ridge is without, we need roofs desperately, they are original I believe.

Ken Demirs asked we are still talking about the white units? I am saying the ones before that coming up the hill those were probably done in the last 20 years, siding.

Chairwoman Janelle Wilk answered Buckingham in the last 10 years.

Ken Demirs stated I was confusing the two complexes.

Chairwoman Janelle Wilk answered Country Ridge is up for roofs.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ann Rosa, Chair
Watertown Town Council

Approved: __________________________
Susan King, Clerk