

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
CITY OF WATERTOWN  
February 8, 2021  
7:00 p.m.**

**Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith Presiding**

**Present:** Council Member Sarah V. Compo  
Council Member Ryan J. Henry-Wilkinson  
Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero  
Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith

**Also Present:** Kenneth A. Mix, City Manager

**City staff present:** Michael Lumbis, Jennifer Voss

**DISCUSSION**

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 2021-2025 Consolidated Plan and 2021 Annual Action Plan**

Michael Lumbis, Planning and Community Development Director, began the presentation by providing Council with a brief overview of the process for developing the City's 2021-2025 Consolidated Plan and 2021 Annual Action Plan for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). He explained that every five years, the City is required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to complete a Consolidated Plan. He said that a Consolidated Plan is a plan that describes community needs, resources, priorities and proposed activities to be undertaken with CDBG funds over a five-year period. He informed Council that the annual action plan will include goals to address the needs identified each year to implement those stated goals. He confirmed that all CDBG funds must benefit low-to-moderate income people, aid in the prevention or elimination of blight or meet a need having a particular urgency. He mentioned that occasionally they use funds for demolitions, noting there have been approximately five demolitions in the last five years. He informed Council the five-year consolidated plan is approximately a 100-page document. Mr. Lumbis spoke at length about the City's obligations, and noted that by September, staff must develop a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). Lastly, he stressed that the money must be spent in a timely manner.

Jennifer Voss, Senior Planner, explained to Council that on May 1<sup>st</sup> each year there is an audit to make sure the City does not have more money than the annual allocation allows in the City's bank account. Ms Voss discussed at length the CDBG eligible activities list. She highlighted that the most popular way to spend the money is on housing. She explained that first-time homeownership assistance program is popular because it helps with down payments and some rehabilitation. She said that since 2015, owner-occupied rehabilitation has been utilized along with rental rehabilitation and housing services, such as counseling and energy audits. She then summarized some of the other eligible activities that are available, which include public facilities and improvements such as neighborhood playgrounds. She noted that the following has been done to date: parks, sidewalks, water and sewer lines, homeless or domestic violence shelters, and group homes for the disabled. She informed Council that staff has been approached by the Points North Housing Coalition about partnering for some of these facilities. She directed Council's attention to a map that shows the target areas which are eligible for the services and then informed Council of various kinds of eligible activities. She noted that it must be a new service or

quantifiable increase in the level of an existing service. She explained to Council that planning and administration can also be included with a limit of 20% of the grant money. She informed Council that Downtown is not in the target area. She then drew Council's attention to the CDBG ineligible activities, which consist of any activity not specifically authorized by the regulations, buildings for the general conduct of government, financing for political activities, purchase of equipment or personal property, operating and maintenance expenses, new housing construction (unless under very limited circumstances) or income payments.

Mr. Lumbis summarized the overview for 2021. He informed Council that the City must submit a five-year plan and an Annual Action Plan to HUD for Program Year 2021 no later than May 15, 2021, and it must identify specific projects. A CAPER must be presented by September 28 and he said the City must continue to implement projects and programs to close out grants from prior years. He told Council that tonight's meeting is the kickoff to getting the ball rolling and is looking for feedback from Council. He noted that community outreach also must be done and there are many agencies that need to be contacted in order to see where the needs are in the community. He added there will be a public hearing on March 1. He explained that a staff report will be presented to Council on March 15, with the final project ideas and budget, and a finalized draft plan is due by March 23. He then summarized that between March 25 and April 25, there will be a public comment period, and in the month of May, Council will need to approve of the Annual Action Plan so the submission to HUD can be done by July 1, 2021. He noted that July 1, 2021 will be the beginning of the program year.

Mr. Lumbis then discussed at length the current CDBG consolidated plan goals and previous projects, drawing Council's attention to the twelve CDBG 2021 Annual Action Plan preliminary project ideas.

Council Member Ruggiero asked if any playgrounds still need rehabilitation.

Mr. Lumbis said that both Portage Street and Taylor Playgrounds need improvements, but they are not in a target area. He noted that target areas do change from time to time.

Council Member Ruggiero asked about the old Ogilvie Site and noted that the City still owns the property. She said that a couple of years ago, there was talk about selling some of the lots and wondered if it was in a target area.

Ms. Voss said it is not in a target area and monies cannot be used for new construction.

Council Member Ruggiero noted that the City needs to look into options for the property and consider selling some of the lots.

Mayor Smith asked about Historic Preservation limitations.

Ms. Voss said grants cannot be spent on buildings that do government business or religious institutions.

Mayor Smith asked about doing more tree planting and replacements.

Ms. Voss explained that it can be done, as long as it is in a target area.

Mr. Lumbis said tree-planting has been implemented within the target areas that have had sidewalks replaced.

Council Member Ruggerio asked if any bus shelters have been added or fixed up.

Mr. Lumbis said one more bus stop will be added by Skyline Apartments and informed Council that the Department of Public Works has been allotted monies for bus shelters.

Mayor Smith asked if it would be possible to have police supervise playgrounds in the low- to moderate-income areas.

Mr. Lumbis said staff looked into this last year and noted it falls within eligibility, but it is very difficult for the police to have somebody assigned to a certain area. He stressed that if something should happen down the street, the officer could be called upon to handle that situation, leaving his designated post. He explained that grant funds could pay overtime for a police officer to do foot patrols.

Council Member Compo asked about funds for Wi-Fi on buses or Public Square and she also inquired whether there are good turnouts at the housing workshops.

Ms. Voss said staff will look into Wi-Fi and stated that normally there is a good turnout for the workshops, but this past year things were postponed due to COVID.

Council then discussed the ornamental lighting on the North Side and considered replacing streetlights with LED lighting.

Mr. Lumbis explained that National Grid owns the lights and is an infrastructure issue that could get messy if the City interferes with the lighting.

Mr. Mix added that all the lights come with a set fee from National Grid.

Mayor Smith suggested using Tilden Street and the surrounding neighborhood for a complete street project and maybe using this time to put in some historic lighting.

Mentioning the goal of tonight's meeting was to obtain Council's recommendations, Mr. Lumbis explained that staff will have more specifics at the March 1 meeting, and then the plan will be put out for the 30-day review.

Work session ended at 8:10 p.m.

*Margaret M. Puccia*  
Deputy City Clerk