

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
January 9, 2023
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith Presiding

Present: Council Member Patrick J. Hickey
Council Member Clifford G. Olney III
Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce
Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero
Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith

Also Present: Kenneth A. Mix, City Manager

City staff present: Michael Lumbis, Jennifer Voss

DISCUSSION

Proposal for a Senior Center

Robert Avallone, City of Watertown resident, addressed Council with his ideas for a proposed Senior Center in the City. He began his presentation by pointing out the costs required to support every senior in the City and how a portion of that cost could be used to build a Senior Center. He admitted that he personally does not know the amount of money needed to fund such a project and this is why he is asking Council for guidance. He told Council he is acting as a spokesperson for the senior citizens in the City. He pointed out that not all seniors are fortunate enough to have children and grandchildren and this is a big reason why a Senior Center would be beneficial. He discussed at length the benefits it will give to seniors' mental and physical health. He would like to see a place where seniors can go which will have exercise classes, entertainment and perhaps, from time to time, guest speakers to offer information on topics such as legal and medical advice. He told Council that the Village of Clayton has a Senior Center and suggested they could potentially provide guidance on how to get this started in the City. He thanked Council for taking the time to hear his presentation and is hopeful Council will make the Senior Center happen and be champions for the Seniors of Watertown.

Council Member Olney agreed that many seniors in the area are without family or friends and stated her believes there needs to be more outreach and networking for the Seniors.

Council Member Pierce thanked Mr. Avallone for bringing this idea to Council. She said that even for Seniors that do have family in the area, it can still be lonely and there is not a lot for them to do. She pointed out that when she worked for Senator Patti Ritchie, they hosted a Senior Fair every year and that event was very popular. She said that over a thousand seniors from all over the county were in attendance. She said there would be lunch and many booths available with a broad range of topics. She feels there is a big need for this type of project in the area and suggested maybe starting with the library.

Council Member Ruggiero suggested contacting Jefferson County and see if they have any thoughts or ideas on a Senior Center and added it could be nice to for the City to partner with the County.

Mr. Avallone said it might be better if a nonprofit ran the Center and pointed out he does not know the movers and shakers within the City.

Mayor Smith talked at length about coordinating a project like this. He suggested partnering with existing agencies and existing buildings such as the library, YMCA and Historical Society. He then asked City Manager Ken Mix to contact Jefferson County and see if they would be willing to participate in the program.

All Council agreed this is a good project to pursue and look forward to doing more work to see if it can come to light.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 2023 Annual Action Plan Overview and Discussion

Michael Lumbis, Planning and Community Development Director, and Jennifer Voss, Senior Planner, presented Council with a handout (on file at the City Clerk's Office) and a slideshow. Mr. Lumbis explained to Council that tonight's presentation was to update Council on the annual Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). He began by giving a quick overview of the program and drew Council's attention to the slideshow which began with CDBG National Objectives. He explained that all CDBG funds must benefit low- and moderate-income persons and can also aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight and may also meet a need having a particular urgency such as a natural disaster. He summarized CDBG program requirements which are a 5-year consolidated plan, an Annual Action Plan and a Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) to administer the program according to federal regulations and spend the money in a timely manner.

Mr. Lumbis said the annual action plan is due every year on May 15th and the CAPER is due in September. He discussed in great detail the CDBG eligible and ineligible activities and drew Council's attention to a map with the CDBG target areas for improvements. He added there have been several demolitions of properties that are not suitable for rehabilitation. He said in the last eight or nine years they have demolished five or six homes. He added that Public Services are also eligible for up to 15% of the annual Grant summarizing that such services include job training and employment services, health service and childcare among several others. He indicated planning and administration is limited to 20% of the annual grant amount and includes: planning of small area and neighborhood plans, comprehensive plan and community plans and administration tasks such as general management and preparing budgets and schedules and monitoring program activities. He pointed out that many grants do not allow the flexibility to reimburse staff for the administrative time put into the project.

Mr. Lumbis summarized the CDBG ineligible activities which include any activity not specifically authorized by the regulations, general government expenses, financing for political activities, purchase of equipment or personal property, operating and maintenance expenses, new housing construction and income payments. He then drew Council's attention to the 2023 overview which is to submit an Annual Action Plan to HUD no later than May 15, 2023, submit a CAPER by September 28, 2023 and continue to implement projects and programs and close out grants from prior years. He presented the CDBG Annual Action Plan Schedule for 2023.

Mr. Lumbis listed some important dates noting that between tonight and March 16th staff will be doing community outreach and on Thursday January 12th his department will be presenting a presentation to Advantage Watertown. He added there will be a public hearing on February 21, 2023, and between

February 22 to March 16, 2023 the department will finalize the draft plan. He mentioned March 17 to April 17, 2023 will be a 30-day public comment period and then April 18 to April 25, 2023 will finalize the plan. He went on to list May 1 as the day Council should approve the plan so it can be submitted to HUD on May 15 and the program can begin on July 1 of the program year.

Ms. Voss then drew Council's attention to the map which showed where previous projects had been completed since 2014. She pointed out the before and after pictures in the handout and noted they have constructed two playgrounds, five bus shelters, more than 100 housing units, ADA ramps and various sidewalk project as well as conducted the demolition of several houses. She noted that not shown on the map are public service projects such as fair housing education, Points North Homeless Coalition and the Watertown City School District Backpack Program.

Mr. Lumbis informed Council of the CDBG Current Consolidated Plan Goals. He pointed out there are nine goals and discussed at length what each of them are along with the 2023 Annual Action Plan Preliminary Project Ideas.

Mayor Smith applauded Mr. Lumbis' update stating that it is on target.

Council Member Olney asked who is allowed the \$25,000 home loans.

Ms. Voss explained it is for individuals that meet the low- to moderate-income threshold based on family size. She also pointed out you cannot have owned a home in the City within the last five years. She also noted the items that can be fixed or remodeled to allow the house to be considered safe for occupancy.

Council Member Pierce asked if any the CDBG grant monies had been used to serve the seniors in the area.

Mr. Lumbis said they had not but it is something that he and Ms. Voss will investigate.

Work session ended at 8:30 p.m.

Margaret M. Puccia
Deputy City Clerk