

Town of Adams Massachusetts 01220-2087

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET

Wednesday, July 14, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

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CALL TO ORDER: On the above date the Board of Selectmen held a meeting at the Town Hall Board of Selectmen Room. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Duval. Present from the Board of Selectmen were Chairman Duval, Vice Chairman Hoyt, Members Blanchard, Nowak and Rosenberg. Also present were Town Administrator Green, Finance Director Wojcik, Community Development Director Coughlin, Community Development Special Projects Coordinator Cesan, Community Development Program Manager Ferguson, Administrative Assistant Dunlap, and Greg Fournier from iBerkshires.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion on FY21 Community Development Block Grant Program: Discussion on FY21 Community Development Block Grant Program: It was explained that the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) cycle is beginning and there is now a well-staffed community development team. *Community Development Programs Manager Ferguson* reported there was a preliminary meeting and there will be a follow-up meeting in August. *Community Development Director Coughlin* was introduced to the Board Members. He noted that the Town has a long history of successful CDBG programs, with housing rehabilitation as a component. He noted he is hoping to apply for ten to fifteen units of housing rehabilitation, where previously the Town has done around six or eight. The proposed application would be for funding for the Hoosac Valley Park at 1 Cook Street, for around \$500,000 in construction funds. Other funding, not through the CDBG, would involve removal of contamination projects that will be completed this summer leading up to and supporting the application. He advised the hope was to get feedback from the Board at this meeting and then hold a formal hearing in August regarding the proposal, with applications due in the first week of September. A list of projects funded through CDBG and the allocation of CDBG funds across the Commonwealth was provided to Board Members. He explained the maximum award amounts. He noted that he would be looking to potentially add a Planner position through CDBG that would focus on housing rehabilitation. *Community Development Special Projects Coordinator Cesan* advised this position will give additional support. She pointed out that there was no grant funding last year and one person is single-handedly handling everything including the housing rehabilitation and Russell Field. She explained that one of the reasons there was no application for grant funding last year is because the Town did not have the staff to manage it during Covid so resources were allocated to participate in the business grant instead. She pointed out that it is a delicate balance to apply for funding, get funding and not be able to manage it due to a staffing shortage. The focus on housing rehabilitation was emphasized as so much interaction takes place between building owners, tenants and contractors and it is a lot of work. She advised that if there was a position to focus on this it would be beneficial and will allow the Community Development Programs Manager and Director to do managerial tasks and work on bigger projects to go forward. It was explained that typically there is a workshop with the Board of Selectmen to fine-tune what to apply for. A final budget has not been

put together a final budget yet. A question was posted regarding how this impacts the housing situation and who is impacted. It was explained that cumulatively it has an impact for low to moderate income home owners for 80% of their median income which encompasses a lot of the Adams residents. It would offer up to \$35,000 or \$40,000 per unit. It was pointed out that this addresses a lot of issues, as the housing stock is around 80 years old and would update electrical, mechanical issues, or lead paint removal to stretch dollars. Doing roofing allows people to retain their homes, is helpful for seniors to allow for aging in place, and does a lot for neighborhood stabilization. Targeted housing rehabilitation for certain neighborhoods was used in the past to piggyback with other programs or projects. Landlords with buildings that are owner-occupied or investor owners can apply for funding if the majority of tenants are income eligible. Adams has an internal policy of no net loss of affordable housing units, and there is a desire to build more but the Town needs to retain existing housing units and bring them to code compliance to extend usage. It was noted that in isolated cases housing is being lost because it is not being maintained. It was explained that it was decided some time ago not to make these matching grants. The grant process was reviewed and it was noted that the resident may have to take out a bank loan but local banks do discounted points for loans to do the work. It was stated that there are so many applicants that there is a wait list of 50 people that is being worked down. There are regular requests for applications and there are 20 people on the list that will be contacted to and see if they are still interested and qualify. The waiting list get priority but the Town cannot hold applications if the applicant is not ready. Sometimes there is an extreme need or a court-ordered lead program and the Town aligns with these because of the greater need. A portion of the application was reviewed with the Board Members. It was explained that Pittsfield and North Adams are entitlement communities and get some funds every year automatically. *Community Development Program Manager Ferguson* advised that there are bid ready documents for the Cook Street cleanup as well as the park project. She noted that the final park design has not changed very much. Toward the Cook Street side of the park, a small parking area will be done with gravel in case spaces change over time. The spine in the center will be for the walkway. A combined kids' play and sitting area will be part of the design with a ramp coming off of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail to come directly into the park. In the far corner will be a dog park with an off-leash dog area. A public meeting will be scheduled on this in a couple weeks to get feedback. A fence will be placed around the existing building and barn to keep the public away from them. The initial focus is on existing building remediation for hazardous materials and grant funding from Brownfields for soil remediation, petroleum removal and proper disposal. The Town obtained grant funding from the Environmental Protection Agency for cleanup, and with the application can do park work. The Community Development Department is also looking for alternative sources of funding for architects to evaluate the design and finish of the buildings to stabilize them to become an iconic landmark. Brief discussion took place about having an ice cream shop and train relics in the park. It was explained that someone from the Berkshire Scenic Railway was on the Steering Committee and train relics were a conceptual idea due to the location. It was noted that it was such an iconic business for a branch line railroad and Berkshire Scenic Railroad has historical photos with the idea was to put items in the area. A museum curator was interested in the project and a small museum in Rochester has non-operational track cars, vehicles and other equipment that it is trying to be donated. It was pointed out that the grain elevator was innovative with a series of levers and pulleys and the Town would be trying to exploit the railroad history. *Member Nowak* noted that the highlight of the parcel is the grain elevator, which is unique. He reviewed a letter to the editor from someone out of the area that noticed it and expressed that the Town of Adams should do their very best to save the grain elevator. He expressed concern that it will need some attention soon if it is going to stay, and the

other building there has slate on the roof that is about to come off, near the bike trail. *Chairman Duval* inquired who will keep the off-leash dog area clean if it is offered. A suggestion was made to have volunteers for the dog park area. It was noted that as a Board and Town Administrator thought needs to put into who is taking care of the flowers, plants and trees plants. *Community Development Programs Manager Ferguson* advised that there will be no planting or flower areas except for an area by the river with a pollinating garden which will require mowing once a year. She noted that there has been discussion with a couple of people in town who are very excited about the dog park. It was explained that there was a group that petitioned the board about it, but it needs to be self-policing. The DPW needs to make sure it is working, but the dog park aspect can be eliminated if it isn't going to work. It was pointed out that as we move more into a tourist-based local economy, the Town has to have designated staff to maintaining streets, handling weeds in the sidewalk, and maintaining the Greylock Glen Loop Trail. It was emphasized that as the town gets more visitors there is more revenue and it works out. *Town Administrator Green* explained that people want to use the facilities and a reasonable user fee could go into a revolving fund and pay for that. Brief discussion took place about local advertising for a business that picks up after dogs, and a business with machinery may not cost that much instead of paying two or three employees to do it. The name of the park was discussed as up for debate. A final review of the potential application was noted as \$30,000 to \$33,000 per housing rehabilitation unit for funds, plus staffing. An inquiry was made if there are areas in town that are troublesome with landlords not updating units when people leave. It was pointed out that this is a great program for the elderly. It was explained that rental units sharing costs is an incentive and more attractive to improve apartments and the neighborhoods. *Community Development Special Projects Coordinator Cesan* noted that if the Town wants to target an area, it would make sense around Cook Street to focus on that area. She noted there are drainage issues, and the Town is hoping to get the Jordan Street Culvert Project moving forward so it makes sense to look at the whole area from Summer Street to Route 8. Under the program anyone can still apply and get funding but the Town could target a mailing. She inquired from Board whether there were any other areas of interest, and it was pointed out that the southern area of Commercial Street was of interest as some residents might benefit from this program to beautify the entrance corridor. *Vice Chairman Hoyt* inquired if the Town would use the Slum and Blight map from a few years ago to identify neighborhoods, and was confirmed that this would be utilized. It was clarified that the state used to require an area to be targeted but it is no longer a requirement. It was pointed out that a Target Area is good for ten years. Brief discussion took place about the row housing having been recently purchased and renters were evicted. It was explained that this is a historic building for workers during the mill period. It was also noted that the Winter Street block has been sold. It was pointed out that the Town employees are cutting down weeds on Town roads and main streets. ***Consensus was reached by Board Members to go forward with the CDBG application submission as proposed.*** It was clarified that the Town still has money from Brownfields for the Route 8 Assessment being used for the Mobil Station and Memorial School and also to get started with Curtis Fine Paper. The other grant is for both hazardous material and petroleum so part is for soil remediation and part for the building as the cleanup grant. It was emphasized that it is very important that Community Development has a good team.

Update on American Recovery Plan Funds: *Town Administrator Green* advised that legislation passed in March in Washington DC and the Town is anticipating \$2.8 Million in funds through the complicated program. It was explained that there is time to use these funds to make lasting impacts to the community. *Finance Director Wojcik* gave the Board a brief snapshot of what is known about the funds, and gave a succinct background on the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CLFRF). She noted that Adams is getting money from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a pass-through

and it is being wired through electronically. She pointed out that the Division of Local Services (DLS) put out a memo on the five eligible uses identified for the money. These include public health spending, economic impacts of the public health emergency, lost public sector revenue, premium pay for essential workers and water, sewer and broadband infrastructure. She reviewed each briefly, and explained that in order to get access to the funding there is an online application for it. She noted that the Town got confirmation of acceptance and received the first payment to the bank account. Adams will receive \$838,395, 50% receive right away and the rest after 12 months. She advised that the County reallocation has not been released yet, and she will get that at some point. She explained the Town has the money in a bank account available for use and now a decision needs to be made where to use it. She warned that the Treasury explicitly states that the funds cannot be used for Rainy Day Funds, grant matches, legal settlements, or other areas they outlined. She noted that the Commonwealth determines what is identified as an eligible expense. She advised that the funds are currently in the same account the Town receives state aid into, and it has been put aside and not to be used until that use is decided. *Member Blanchard* inquired if the account accrues interest, and it was recommended the funds be put into an interest-bearing account. Brief discussion took place on account funds and it was noted that the Town is not lacking things to spend money on. *Town Administrator Green* emphasized that a good look is needed at what the Town's needs, priorities and biggest concerns are before determining what the best pot of money is to pay them from. He noted that getting the Greylock Glen up and running will require funds. *Chairman Duval* pointed out that the Board has approved a budget, and Finance Director Wojcik has control of the budget. These are additional funds that have come to the community and going forward for the remaining funds, the Board needs to be made aware of where the money is going to be spent. It was explained that the Warrant Articles for the Annual Town Meeting outlined the use for the Wastewater Treatment Plant and re-appropriation of the flooding money because it was not known when the ARPA money would come in. It was explained that there is a \$325,000 bill to design the Wastewater Treatment Plant and once the ARPA came in the funds would replace the flooding money. It was noted that in the past discussion had taken place about funds being used for the water delivery system for the Greylock Glen. *Chairman Duval* pointed out that just as the Board discussed the \$2.3 Million going toward flooding damage, he wants to be sure as a Board it is discussed and agreed upon for the route to take. Community Development Special Projects Coordinator Cesan explained that there had been discussions about this being the one funding source for the water delivery system for the Greylock Glen. *Member Rosenberg* asked for tracking on the funding and for reports to be made to the Board on spending. Finance Director Wojcik advised she will report both to the state and to the Board. It was pointed out that the remainder of the money will be seen in at least a year and it is a complicated formula. Infrastructure is more likely going to be the use of the money because it applies to Adams most. Administrative costs are the lowest. *Town Administrator Green* pointed out that Adams does have outstanding real estate tax payments, which every community has. For the budget and receivables performance from before pandemic, and then done quarterly during the pandemic, and the Treasury will assess the revenue loss. Member Nowak expressed interest in reviewing the formula used and inquired if there was any chance of politics playing a role in what communities would receive or if it was based on population. Finance Director Wojcik noted that if a community declined the funds they would go back into the County fund. She advised that the early formula was based on the population and the delineation of whether it is an entitlement or non-entitlement community. *Town Administrator Green* advised he wished the Town had received more funds because there are many things that can be done and funds will go by fast. The Capital Improvement Plan for the Wastewater Treatment Plant will put money toward programs and the Town may not have to pay it

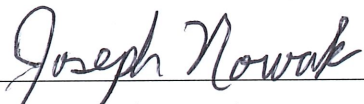
back. *Member Nowak* inquired what the Town's bond rating is, and it was noted as AA-, which puts the Town in a pretty good position for borrowing and controls what the interest rate would be.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND GOOD OF THE ORDER: *Member Nowak* noted it was a pleasure to witness history happening. He expressed gratitude for the Governor and Lieutenant Governor coming out, realizing this is a good community, wanting it to prosper and putting Adams on a good path. He emphasized as both an individual and a Board Member that we need to remain good stewards of the property. *Member Blanchard* pointed out that with all of the rain it has been difficult and that it was great that the grass was able to be mowed in the Town Common today. *Vice Chairman Hoyt* reported that there is a coffee hour in Armory Court tomorrow, which was organized by folks in town and will run from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. *Member Rosenberg* noted the huge opportunity that the town of Adams has and Governor affirmed it today. He pointed out that the history of the town is an asset. He stated the town gone from a potential to a Greylock Reservation and explained the next step is to leverage the asset to increase the economic development of the town. He emphasized that as a newcomer to the town he sees that the transformation could be a game changer. *Chairman Duval* noted that Community Development Special Projects Coordinator Cesan has and will continue to lead the way and if everyone works with her and the town will get there.

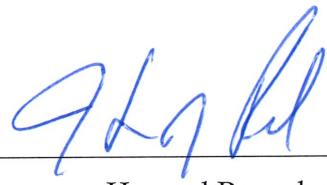
ADJOURNMENT: *Motion made by Member Blanchard to adjourn, second by Member Hoyt. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted,

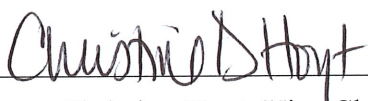
Deborah J. Dunlap, Recording Secretary



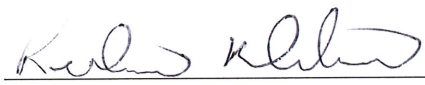
Joseph Nowak, Member




Howard Rosenberg, Member



Christine Hoyt, Vice Chair



Richard Blanchard, Member



John Duval, Chair