

MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING #1 OCTOBER 30, 2013

Mrs. Walter called the meeting to order in the Town Offices at 10 AM with Mr. Chabot also present. Mr. Smith was not present.

Also present were Andrew Loew and Shirley Stevens from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Steve Jones of the North Brookfield Water Department, and Cindy Thompson of the North Brookfield Board of Health.

Mr. Loew noted that this is the "kickoff" meeting for the Community Development Block Grant that was received by the towns of Spencer and North Brookfield. As part of this grant, North Brookfield has received \$351,000.00 for the East Side Infrastructure Planning Project and housing rehabilitation.

Mr. Loew reviewed an outline of points for discussion at today's meeting. (Attachment #1) Mr. Loew noted that Spencer is the lead community, and as such, will be responsible for the procurement of a planning consultant for the infrastructure project, but North Brookfield will be the awarding authority for that contract. For the housing rehabilitation portion of the grant, contracts will be between the homeowner and Spencer.

Mr. Loew noted that the funds for the housing rehabilitation portion of the grant should be able to fix approximately 8 to 9 units, depending on how much each unit costs. He stated that \$30,000.00 is the maximum amount for most rehab projects, and up to \$35,000.00 if lead paint is involved. The rehab program is a 15 year loan, with a declining payback schedule. The debt is erased if a homeowner keeps the home for the entire 15 years.

Mr. Loew stated that PVPC has an existing waiting list of approximately 50 residents who expressed interest in the housing rehab program during the initial application process. Applications are usually processed in the order in which they are received, but people with an emergency situation can go to the top of the list. The rehab program can only address the emergency, not anything extra. For example, if a resident has a leaking roof, the rehab program can fix the leaking portion of the roof, but not the entire roof.

Ms. Stevens noted that if she receives a call about an emergency situation, a town official such as the Building Inspector or the Board of Health must verify the emergency.

Mr. Loew stated that the entire town is eligible for the housing program, but most of the applications received have been from residents near the town's center. He noted that these CDBG grant funds must be used before December of 2014.

Mrs. Walter suggested using the \$49,892.64 that North Brookfield has in its coffers last. This is program income received when the town last did a housing rehab program in the

1990s. Mr. Loew stated that this is a good idea, since North Brookfield's money does not have any time constraints like the grant funds.

Ms. Stevens noted that the next step in the housing program process is that she will contact the homeowners at the top of the waiting list to verify that they are still interested, and start the income verification process. She noted that she is very willing to have office hours at a convenient location in town, probably the senior center, to assist residents with the application process.

Mr. Loew said that he will place a newspaper ad announcing that the housing rehabilitation funds are available and we have an existing waiting list, but if any resident has an emergency situation they should call.

Mrs. Walter asked about income eligibility requirements, and Ms. Stevens noted that a single person cannot have an income over \$45,000.00 per year, and a two person household cannot have an income over \$51,500.00. She stated that these are HUD guidelines that are updated annually. Ms. Stevens also said that the debt-to-income ratio must be 35% or above for a homeowner not to have to pay into the project. If a resident has a lower debt-to-income ratio they may have to pay a small percentage of the project.

Ms. Thompson asked if the units must be owner-occupied, and Mr. Loew said not necessarily, the payback schedule is different for investor-owned units.

Mr. Loew presented a letter from Lenard Engineering dated January 15, 2013 which lays out the scope of the proposed East Side Planning Project. (Attachment #2) Mr. Loew noted that the intent of the planning project is to inventory the infrastructure of the east side area, such as water and sewer lines, sidewalks, and road conditions. Mrs. Walter asked if the planning consultant for the infrastructure planning project is in place yet? Mr. Loew stated that Spencer will advertise for the consultant through an RFP or RFQ, but North Brookfield will review the proposals and award the contract. He expects to advertise for the planning consultant over the winter and hire an engineer, and begin work in the spring. Mrs. Walter stated that the Town has invested some funds already toward a very similar type of project, there is approximately \$3,000.00 remaining that could be used if needed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Scott Burton
Administrative Assistant