

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD MINUTES

September 8, 2008 City Hall, Planning and Development Department Rm 209, 7:00 p.m.
1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Full Members Present:

Joyce Moss, Acting Chair
Tabetha McCartney
David Banash
Carol Beard

Alternate Members Present:

Leslie Burg

Staff Present:

Steve Gartrell, Associate Director for Housing and Community Development
Amy Yuhasz, Community Development Program Manager
Trisha Guditz, Housing Program Manager
Lowell Haynes, Community Development Planner
Kathleen Cahill, Community Development Senior Planner

Public Present:

Girard Plante, Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities
Phil Whitbeck, Human Service Advisory Committee

J. Moss, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Community Development Board

- 1. Public Hearing and Action Item:** Recommendation from the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities to grant \$75,068 in CDBG funds for the installation of handicapped accessible curb cuts throughout the City.

L. Burg consented to be a voting member in order to establish a quorum. Girard Plante, a representative of the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities, described the structure and purpose of the Committee to the Board. The Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities is a nine-member committee, composed of a majority of persons with disabilities. The committee works towards obtaining two broader goals: achieving equal access to public life and activities for people with disabilities and increasing community awareness of the many barriers faced by people with disabilities. Mr. Plante indicated that the Committee is currently recommending funds to install accessible curb cuts throughout the City. Mr. Plante cited the benefit of using access funds to bring curb cuts up to state code, thereby increasing accessibility for pedestrians in Newton. Mr. Plante also pointed to the new curb cuts on Homer Street as examples of curb cuts constructed with CDBG access funds. He indicated that the Committee members spend time discussing what access projects to recommend for funding, in order to make sure monies are prudently spent. J. Moss responded that the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities has a good track record for responsible allocation. K. Cahill explained that \$69,068 of the \$75,068 will be spent on constructing accessible curb cuts, and the remaining \$6,000 will be spent on retro-fitting recently

completed curb cuts with contrasting color. Joyce expressed her appreciation of the work of the Mayors Committee for People with Disabilities to increase accessibility throughout the City. She also inquired as to what color the curb cuts will be painted. K. Cahill responded that the City will be applying Federal yellow, as a contrasting color to the curb cuts, a color which will provide the best visibility throughout the seasons.

J. Moss wondered what percentage of the total City curb cuts were made accessible. L. Haynes stated that the City has made great strides in the last five years to increase the amount of compliant curb cuts in the City. Curb cuts completed prior to 2003 are not complaint. There are a higher percentage of accessible curb cuts in public places, and about 5% of the City's curb cuts are compliant according to ADA regulations. J. Moss questioned why the percentage of access funds to be spent on curb cuts in FY09 was higher than past years. L. Haynes mentioned when he began working on this project five years ago about \$100,000 per year (over 60% of total access funds) was being spent on curb cuts. Over the years this amount decreased because the Committee took on larger projects, such as the ramp at the Police Annex and the Auburndale Branch Library. Currently, because of City budget cuts as well an increase in material costs, CDBG is paying a higher price per curb cut than in previous fiscal years. This fact contributes to the increased percentage of access funds being allocated for curb cuts. C. Beard asked if the City only provides curb cuts to buildings that have been improved through City funds. L. Haynes stated that the City is required to install ADA complaint curb cuts when a sidewalk or roadway is installed. The Mayor's Committee is the leading force in recommending the construction of accessible curb cuts.

D. Banash asked if there were any projects the Committee was forced to push back in order to allocate two-thirds of the total access funding to curb cuts. L. Haynes indicated that last year and the year before the Mayor's Committee sought but did not receive requests for funding from non-profits. They did receive requests and recommend funding for several accessible park projects. L. Haynes does not believe there is an absolute necessity that is not being addressed right now. G. Plante and K. Cahill both agreed that no projects are being sacrificed in order to allocate more funding to curb cuts.

D. Banash moved that the Board approve the recommendation from the Mayor's Committee to grant \$75,068 in CDBG funds for the installation of handicap accessible curb cuts. L. Burg seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve the recommendation from the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities to grant \$75,068 in CDBG funds for the installation of handicap accessible curb cuts throughout the City 4-0-0.

2. Discussion Item: A CPA case statement was distributed concerning the CPC's reinvestigation of setting priorities at a series of public meetings in the fall. J. Moss requested that Board members examine the case statement. The dates of the meeting are as follows: September 24th for housing, Oct 22nd for open space and recreation, and November 19th for historic preservation. J. Moss requested that Board members attend if possible. There is also a planning meeting on September 10th that Board members are invited to attend. D. Banash inquired as to the status of the legislative amendment to the CPA. It was concluded that this amendment has not made any quick advancements.

3. Action Item: Approve the minutes of the July 7, 2008, meeting of the Planning and Development Board acting as the Community Development Board and the Board of Survey.

On request of J. Moss for a motion to approve the minutes, D. Banash so moved. L. Burg, seconded the motion. The Board voted 4-0-0 to approve the minutes.

4. Public Hearing Item: Annual Performance Hearing – Newton CDBG, HOME and ESG Programs and WestMetro HOME Consortium.

Housing and Community Development staff presented a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the division's accomplishments during FY08. The presentation reviewed a breakdown of expenditures by program area. Accomplishments in the areas of housing development, economic development, human services, architectural access, neighborhood improvements, assistance to the homeless and people at-risk of homelessness and housing rehabilitation were included, and photos were shown of both completed and active projects. In addition, project highlights of the WestMetro HOME Consortium members were presented.

During the presentation J. Moss noted for the record that the Board was joined by T. McCartney. Following the presentation J. Moss called for motion to recommend approval of the FY08 CAPER. L. Burg so moved and C. Beard seconded. The Board voted 5-0-0 to recommend approval of the FY08 CAPER.

5. Other Business: D. Banash announced the public hearing on September 22nd for the Home Business Ordinance and invited Board members to attend.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen D. Gartrell
Secretary