

Public Hearing 1 Minutes: 12/12/2019, 5:30-7:30pm

In attendance:

JD MacEachern

Margaret "Sunny" Robinson

Fiona Coughlan, Barrett Planning Group LLC

Jill Cahill, Community Development Director

Jaimie Corliss, Grants Administrator

Kara Jameson, Senior Project Manager

Jill Cahill starts the meeting at 5:30, introducing Fiona and reiterating the purpose of the hearing and what the Consolidated Plan consists of.

Next Fiona goes through PowerPoint presentation covering CDBG in general, the Consolidated Plan proposal, the HOME program, plan timeline, previous projects and discussion topics including housing, economic development, social services and public facilities. The following feedback and major concerns were provided.

### **Housing**

- What are the most common housing problems/concerns you see in Gloucester?
- What changes have you seen in the housing situation in Gloucester over the past five years?
  - o Cost of housing has sky-rocketed
    - There is no cheap housing in Gloucester today
  - o Gloucester has been discovered as a "place to be"
    - Different from 20 years ago
  - o Local demand vs. wealthier residents
  - o Housing not affordable for people to live here, both owners and renters
    - Should consider converting single-family homes
    - Guarantee affordability
    - Increase the number of units
    - #1 priority
  - o Lack of availability – stock prices soaring
  - o Forward projects in the pipeline and increasing innovative options
    - Apply pressure
    - For example, the old YMCA on Middle St.
  - o Give seniors more options to downsize
  - o People want to live in Gloucester but cannot. It is too out of reach
  - o Intersecting issue is the lack of units, lost to short-term rental market
  - o Demand outweighs supply
  - o Competition for housing
  - o Aging stock – housing rehab funds need to be prioritized
  - o Improving resilience in the face of climate change

- Look to what is going on in other cities
- Prioritize adaptability and clean energy
- Multiple benefits from using clean energy
- The benchmarks for housing are shifting
- ADU's – can CDBG support those types of changes

### **Economic Development**

- What are the most common economic challenges you see in Gloucester today?
- What industries or economic sectors are growing?
- What sectors are shrinking?
  - Fishermen's Club
  - Fishing in jeopardy/declining
    - Consider assistance and training for new fishermen and lobstermen
    - Special assistance, technological upgrades, and training
  - Smaller families because cannot support
  - People leaving Gloucester and not making as much money
    - For example, Gloucester engineering
    - Tradespeople are leaving
      - Idea: directly engage tradespeople, craftspeople, and those industries
  - Tourism and related businesses growing
  - Want to see growth in marine industries
    - For example, Seaside Sustainability
  - Market and capture visiting populations, particularly the 400<sup>th</sup> celebration
  - Workforce supply issue for marine economy
  - Prioritize Main St.
    - Make Main St. more attractive to offer more than the mall
      - Make it more of an experience
      - Add more parking
  - Regional programming at tech./vocational school
    - There is more interest than available slots
  - Consider more programming modeled like GMGI (Gloucester Marine Genomics Institute)
  - Question: Does Gloucester have the numbers to employ people in the energy sector
    - Opportunity for growth

### **Social Services**

- What are the most common social service issues or needs in Gloucester today?
- How are Gloucester's seniors doing? How about its youth?
- What groups seem to need the most help?
  - Keep supporting HAWC
  - Shortage of mental health counselors particularly for the youth

- Weeks to access counselor when undergoing crisis
  - Youth across board but also...everyone!
- Recovery support and long-term support – continuing throughout entire life
- More language programming for those with English as 2<sup>nd</sup> language
- Strong Council on Aging
  - We need services for those who do not go to the Center
- Combining housing and social services
- Those at moderate income levels, especially seniors, struggling to afford services they need
  - Immediate area of Gloucester not serviced because lumped in with Boston metropolitan area
- Services for increasing immigrant population
- Lack of youth social recreational opportunities
  - Look to the YMCA
- Need transportation to and from programs and services
- Substance use issues – need to improve programs

### **Public Facilities**

- What do you see as the most common types of public works needs in Gloucester today? (such as road repairs, sidewalks, water/sewer improvements)
- Where in Gloucester do you see particularly obvious needs?
  - Sidewalks! They are better than they were over the past five years
    - Older sidewalks, they are buckling
    - Improvements and their effect on students walking
    - Low- and moderate-income populations are affected
    - Access around schools – improving and expanding
  - ADA compliance not there
    - Town Hall – have too much space to walk through for the elderly
    - Clear and update basement
    - No handicap bathroom on the first floor
  - Spatial obstacles – DPW functions well and tries to address need but its har
    - Capacity needed
  - Consider tree planting, growing green space
  - The Legion building is severely dilapidated
    - Work that needs to be done ranges from paint to ADA compliance
    - Significant capital repairs required
    - Could be more readily use community facility
  - Streets too narrow so unsure if feasible for bike lane
  - No alternative modes of transit other than the car
    - Not bike friendly
  - St. Ann's School in downtown – limitations?
    - Potential to leverage facility?