

**MINUTES**  
**Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting**  
**Wednesday, December 18, 2019, 2019**  
**County Hall Building**  
**Stillman Rogers Conference Room**  
**12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431**

**Present:** Commissioners: Charles Weed, and Robert Englund (Jack Wozmak, Absent w/ Notice)

**Staff:** County Administrator Coates, Director of Finance Trombly, S. Bansley, Grants Manager and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard.

**Guests:** Keene City Counsellor Randy Filiault

At 8:31AM Commissioner Weed opened the meeting and took-up Master Agenda Item #734 - Bennett Block CDBG Application for Keene Housing Public Hearing

The Chair opened the first public hearing for discussion of the CDBG project at 8:31AM and the Chairman Commissioner Weed read the following:

*The Cheshire County Commissioners will hold two public hearings on Wednesday, December 18th beginning at 8:30 a.m. at 12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431 in the second-floor conference room.*

*The first Public Hearing will discuss an application to the NH Community Development Finance Authority for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. CDBG funds are awarded on a competitive basis in New Hampshire and may be used for housing, public facilities, economic development, and microenterprise projects which have primary benefit to low- and moderate-income people. A municipality can apply for up to \$500,000 in the housing category, up to \$500,000 in the public facilities category, up to \$500,000 in the economic development category, up to \$500,000 in the microenterprise category, as well as up to \$500,000 in emergency grants and \$25,000 for feasibility studies.*

*The proposal to be considered by the Commissioners is a CDBG application to be submitted by Cheshire County on behalf of Keene Housing for up to \$500,000. The funds, less administrative costs, will be sub-granted to Monadnock Affordable Housing Corporation (MAHC), a 501c3 nonprofit affiliate of Keene Housing. These funds, in combination with other sources, will be used for the renovation of Bennett Block, located at 32-34 Washington Street, Keene, NH. Bennett Block has 14 apartments, all of which are occupied by low- and moderate-income residents. This public hearing has been scheduled to provide specific information about the project and grant requirements. A second Public Hearing will be held to adopt the Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan specific to this project.*

*Interested people are invited to attend and comment. If you have a disability or need assistance to attend or participate in the hearing, please contact the Cheshire County Commissioner's Office, (603) 352-8215 or via Relay NH at 1-800-735-2964, in advance. Anyone wishing to submit written comments prior to the hearing should address them to the Cheshire County Commissioners, 12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431.*

*I recognize James Weatherly to address the grant request.*

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James Weatherly, Planning Technician, with SWRPC explained that *Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds are available to municipalities for economic development, public facility and housing rehabilitation projects that primarily benefit low- and moderate-income persons. Cheshire County is eligible to receive up to \$500,000 a year for public facility, up to \$500,000 for housing rehabilitation, up to \$500,000 a year for economic development projects, as well as up to \$500,000 a year in emergency funds. Feasibility Study funds are available for up to \$25,000. James Weatherly provided a handout describing the NH Community Development Block Grant Program eligible activities that included the area HUD income limits.*

*Weatherly provided a project handout. The proposal to be considered by the Commissioners is a CDBG application to be submitted by Cheshire County on behalf of Keene Housing for up to \$500,000. The funds, less administrative costs, will be subgranted to Monadnock Affordable Housing Corporation, a 501c3 nonprofit affiliate of Keene Housing. These funds, in combination with a loan from Keene Downtown Housing Corporation and additional financing secured by Keene Housing/MAHC, will be used for the renovation of Bennett Block, located at 32-34 Washington Street, Keene, NH. The total project budget is estimated at \$1 million. Bennett Block has 14 apartments, all of which are occupied by low- and moderate-income elderly and disabled residents.*

*Weatherly noted that the project is in accordance with the County's Housing and Community Development Plan, adopted January 23, 2019. The project meets the plan's housing goal to "Support community efforts to conserve and rehabilitate the aging housing stock".*

Linda Mangones of Keene Housing a project representative provided the following details about the project:

She said that the project has been held-up thus far because of a ground contamination issue from a former tenant who was a dry cleaner that contaminated the ground soil. She also said that the contamination problem and a legal issue that prevented the issuance of a clean title have both been finally resolved.

Josh Meehan, executive director of Keene Housing then spoke and recapped Mangones comments and said that they are finally done with all of the hindrances that have prevented the start of the project but that they are behind them at this point.

At 8:40PM The Chair opened the floor to public comment on the projects.

Commissioner Weed asked questions concerning the creation of jobs and adherence to the Bacon Davis federal guidelines. Both questions were answered to his satisfaction.

Commissioner Englund asked a question of how the CDBG funds flow from the federal government. James Weatherly then explained the process and said that with the new change of federal rules the County is now edible for an additional \$500K grant in 2020.

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Meehan then discussed the use of funds across the County and Commissioner Weed pointed out that a number of towns in the County would like to be included in the use of CDBG funds.

**Commissioner Weed moved to close the Public Hearing on the Project portion of the CDBG Block Grant Hearing. Seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously 2 to 0.**

**Commissioner Englund moved to approve the submittal of the application and vote to authorize the AUTHORIZED DESIGNEE (Chair of the County Commissioners or County Administrator) to sign and submit the CDBG application, and upon approval of the CDBG application, authorize the AUTHORIZED DESIGNEE to execute any documents which may be necessary to effectuate the CDBG contract. Seconded by Commissioner Weed. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously 2 to 0.**

**At 8:52AM Commissioner Weed moved to open the second public hearing for discussion of the proposed Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan. Seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.**

James Weatherly of Southwest Regional Planning (SWRPC) was then recognize and explained that if any permanent displacement takes places as a result of this project, the Uniform Relocation Act must be followed, which requires that any permanently displaced household or business in a project using federal funds must be found comparable housing in a comparable neighborhood at a comparable price.

Weatherly noted that displacement is anticipated for the proposed project. Because of the nature of the proposed project, temporary relocation of residents will be required during construction. Keene Housing will minimize relocation by holding apartments which become vacant for reasons unrelated to the project. Remaining residents will be temporarily relocated to other Keene Housing properties at no change in rent or other terms. Keene Housing staff will arrange for packing assistance, and pay all costs of temporary relocation, including the move back to the building. Under the certification section of the application, the County will certify that the Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance (RARA) Plan is in place, and a displacement implementation plan will be submitted to Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) prior to obligating or expending funds.

Chair calls for public comment and upon hearing non, opened the floor to elected officials and staff.

Commissioner Weed commented that a National Public Radio (NPR) broadcast this morning spoke to the diversity of neighborhoods and said that this project helps Keene and the County meet some of those goals.

MINUTES  
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting  
Wednesday, December 18, 2019, 2019  
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**At 8:59AM Commissioner Weed moved to close the second public hearing for discussion of the proposed RARA Plan. Seconded by Englund. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.**

**Commissioner Englund motioned to adopt the Residential Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan. Seconded by Commissioner Weed. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.**

A discussion of the number of projects managed by Keene Housing in the area was covered and the qualifying income needed for living in the public housing was covered. Also discussed was the use of solar panels for the various projects.

The Sheriff and Bansley were recognized to discuss Master Agenda Item #735: Homeland Security FY2020 Application.

Bansley said that she is seeking approval for to apply for \$174,592 to purchase and install 9 Motorola GTR 8000 repeaters in strategic locations serving the entire regional repeater system: Keene, Surry, Chesterfield, Hinsdale, Marlborough, Richmond northeast and southwest, Rindge, and Winchester.

Sheriff Rivera then spoke and said that a request for a repeater that is in the 2020 budget will be removed in favor of the submission of the grant.

**Commissioner Englund moved to authorize the submission of the grant application and was seconded by Commissioner Weed. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.**

At 9:14AM Iosue and Welsh were recognized to discuss Master Agenda Item #736: Behavioral Health - Semi-Annual Report

Iosue said that a number of years of data have finally been assembled and a detailed data driven analysis was completed and compiled into a report that will be edited and then released and placed on the County website.

An extended presentation then began and many questions and comments were discussed. ***A PowerPoint presentation that details the entire presentation and provides pertinent data will be posted to the County website in the near future.***

In response to a question from the Commissioners Iosue said that to have a participant in Drug Court costs the County \$14k per year vs. \$41K to be incarcerated at the Jail and \$31K for incarcerated at the State prison in Concord.

At approximately 10:40AM Administrator Coates was then recognized for the Weekly Operations Report.

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Coates said that the Integrated Delivery Network (IDN) meeting phone call that is held once a week took place yesterday. He said that the County has meet the criteria of adhering to the base funding of IDN for next year. He said some of the Counties are still trying to figure out the funding amounts that they will be contributing. A letter from the Governor is expected to be set asking for funding of the program.

Coates then said that a letter from Commissioner Wozmak concerning EMS services in the county looking for support from companies located in the county for release of volunteers during work hours is being prepared to send out to local companies that may employ volunteer EMS person.

Coates said that he has received the information from Sullivan County for the outside agencies but it has not been received from Hillsborough as he had requested. He will follow-up with his request.

Coates related that he and Bouchard had investigated the close out of the Jaffrey Court bond details and it clearly states that the State will be owner of the Jaffrey Courthouse. He then followed this up with a call to the State that confirmed the findings.

A meeting of the Restorative Justice staff with the local judiciary was held and there was very strong enthusiasm for implementing the program in the County courts. A meeting with one of the Judges who is considering being a sponsor for the program will be held in the near future.

Coates then said that the cost-shifting letter that the Commissioner wrote will be sent to the NHAC for a formal endorsement by the entire body.

Coates said that he has been working with the NH Coalition of Domestic and Sexual Violence to hold a forum in Delegation Hall on Human Trafficking. More planning work needs to be done but the forum will tentatively be held in April.

Commissioner Wozmak and Coates will be meeting with the City Manager to discuss local EMS services and the costs associated with the services for surrounding local towns. A discussion concerning the regionalization of services with the city is being considered.

Coates informed the Commissioners that an email has been sent to local funding organizations seeking financial support for the County's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration planned for next year.

The annual gala held by the Chamber of Commerce is on January 9<sup>th</sup>. The Commissioners and staff will attend.

Trombly said that all of the tax payments from the towns have been received and one town was one day late and will be assessed a late fee that may be appealed to the Delegation.

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The Consent Agenda Items which include the Weekly Manifests and the minutes of December 11, 2019 were then taken-up. Commissioner Englund moved to accept the Consent Agenda and was seconded by Commissioner Weed. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

**At 11:33AM Commissioner Weed moved to enter non-public to discuss RSA 91-A:3, II(c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of this board, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to include any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.**

**As a result of deliberations in non-public session no decision was made and no vote was taken.**

**At 11:38AM the Commissioners voted unanimously to return to public session.**

The Commissioners then reviewed the manifests and minutes for the week.

The calendar was then reviewed.

A discussion of the Commissioners going out to meet the various town Select boards or hosting a meeting in Keene was discussed.

**At 12:00PM there being no further public business to discuss, Commissioner Englund moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Weed, and upon vote the motion passed unanimously.**

Minutes recorded by:

R. Bouchard, Assistant County Administrator

Reviewed and submitted by:

R. Englund, Clerk