



## Community Development Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

**NH Community Development Finance Authority  
14 Dixon Avenue  
Concord, NH 03301**

Thursday June 6, 2024  
2:00 PM

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE PRESENT: Benjamin Gaetjens-Oleson; Elizabeth Fox; Joseph Doiron; Nancy Merrill; Matthew Walsh; Carmen Lorentz; Anne Duncan Cooley; and Ignatius MacLellan.

STAFF: Mollie Kaylor, *Director of Housing and Community Development*; Molly Donovan, *Director of Economic Development*; Melissa Latham, *Director of Communications and Policy*, Julius Peel, *CDBG Program Administrator*; and Maureen Quinn, *Board Relations Manager*.

Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson called the meeting to order at 1:59 PM. He offered one announcement, and stated the Community Development Advisory Committee will not meet in July 2024. Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson noted there were no members of the public in attendance. No public comment was offered.

### **Agenda**

Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson reviewed the meeting agenda and called for any questions or comments. None were offered. He called for a motion.

#### **Motion – 2:00 PM**

Mr. Doiron moved to approve the meeting agenda, as presented. Ms. Lorentz seconded, and the motion passed by a unanimous vote of the Committee.

#### **A. Consent Agenda**

Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson reviewed the consent agenda, which included the minutes from the May 2, 2024, Community Development Advisory Committee meeting. He called for questions or comments; none were offered. Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson called for a motion.

#### **Motion – 1:36 PM**

Ms. Lorentz moved to approve the consent agenda, as presented. Ms. Fox seconded, and the motion passed with six (6) yea votes from the Committee; there were two abstentions. Mr. Walsh was not present for the May 2, 2024 meeting and Mr. Doiron was not present for the entirety of the meeting.

## **B. Task Force of the Community Development Advisory Committee**

Ms. Donovan addressed the Committee and provided an overview of the Task Force of the Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC). She noted the intent of the task force is to review the findings of the Community Navigator Program and the NH Small Business Ecosystem Assessment to then make recommendations to CDFA to strengthen the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Microenterprise Program to better serve priority populations and improve the small business ecosystem. Ms. Donovan noted the Task Force work will span from July 2024 through December 2024 and CDAC will receive updates and recommendations based on this work.

The Committee engaged in a conversation about the composition of the Task Force and the importance of ensuring municipalities have representation in this process. Ms. Donovan noted representation will also be sought from CDFA leadership, small business resource providers, priority populations and priority communities, and the financial sector with interest and expertise in small business and entrepreneur supports, particularly those focused on priority populations. The Task Force will be comprised of 4-6 representatives and will be working to review the final reports and program evaluations of the Community Navigator Pilot Program and the NH Small Business Ecosystem Assessment. The Task Force will submit recommendations for strengthening the Microenterprise Program which may include updates to the scoring of applications. Recommendations will be considered for the next funding round.

The Committee inquired about the CDBG Economic Development funds. Ms. Donovan shared that the program is a subset of the CDBG Economic Development program which has not had significant funding demand in recent years due to the job development requirements. Discussion ensued about how Economic Development funds could be flexed in a way which could augment the Microenterprise program or align with the overall goals of the CDBG program, including addressing slum/blighted neighborhoods, downtown revitalization, façade improvements, and infrastructure, such as water and sewer work. As the 2026 Consolidated Plan is developed, there will be engagement and discussion with an opportunity to include new priority areas; the timing of the task force aligns well with this process.

Ms. Donovan thanked the Committee for their feedback and stated updates from the Task Force will be provided.

## **C. Community Development Block Grant Program Material Project**

Ms. Kaylor informed the Committee that CDFA intends to release a RFP for a Project Consultant to update existing and create new CDBG program and outreach materials. She noted CDBG materials have not been updated in nearly five years and with an increase in program activity, from both the annual CDBG allocation and the additional CDBG-CV allocation, the need to make updates was identified a CDBG-CV funds will be used to fund this project. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a broader segment of organizations sought CDBG funding – primarily through the CV program – and this highlighted the need to update resources and materials.

The Committee and staff discussed current challenges potential applicants may face finding out about the CDBG Program and then accessing funding. It was agreed there are too few grant writers and grant administrators who are well versed in CDBG applications/funding. The Committee discussed the complexity of the CDBG program and how that impacts applicants/grant writers but also significantly limits and/or deters communities which lack the capacity to apply for and manage a complex grant. It was noted that other funding programs with complex rules and regulations (i.e. LIHTC) also have the same challenge. The Committee discussed organizations – including the Regional Development Corporations and the Regional Planning Corporations – and the roles they could play a role in training grant writers or in working directly with communities interested in the CDBG program.

A variety of ideas to enhance the network of CDBG trained grant writers and grant administrators were considered. It was noted CDBG planning grants provide a less complicated introduction to CDBG, not only for

applicants, but also for CDBG grant writers and administrators. Cheshire County offers grant writing classes focused on developing this specific skill set, which is a good resource. The Committee considered whether a CDBG Academy could be developed to train community development practitioners and others in general grant writing and CDBG specific grant writing and administration. The Committee asked whether it makes more sense to invest in training rather than materials. The Committee noted that the CDBG program is highly complex with many regulations and that it is important that applicants have adequate assistance to successfully apply for and deploy CDBG funds. Ms. Kaylor indicated that it is important to develop both materials and training, and that staff would continue to work on this. The Committee asked whether CDFA's Grants Management System (GMS) could be adapted to provide more guidance throughout the application process, explaining that better descriptions and links to the types of information needed in each section of the application would be helpful. Scoring criteria could also be linked to each section of the application to help applicants understand what project information adds value to an application.

Ms. Kaylor noted this funding needs to be expended by August 2026, therefore the goal is release the RPF this summer. At the Committee's request, the staff plans to bring forth a revised RFP to CDAC in August 2024.

#### **D. Adjourn – 2:55 PM**

Ms. Merrill moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Doiron seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous vote of the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,



Maureen Quinn, Board Relations Manager



Benjamin Gaetjens-Oleson Committee Chair