

**NH Community Development Finance Authority  
Meeting of the Board of Directors**

**Littleton Community Center  
120 Main Street  
Littleton, NH 03561**

**October 8, 2024, 10:00 AM  
MINUTES**

CDFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRESENT: Benjamin Gaetjens-Oleson, *Chair*; Peter Rayno, *Vice Chair*; Diane Fitzpatrick, *Secretary/Treasurer*; Cynthia Harrington, Ross Bartlett, and Carmen Lorentz.

STAFF: Katherine Easterly Martey, *Executive Director*; Ian Hart, *Chief Financial Officer*; Melissa Latham, *Director of Policy & Communications*; Rebecca Boisvert, *Director of Community Centers Investment Program*; Justin Parker, *Program Administrator, Community Centers Investment Program*; and Maureen Quinn, *Board Relations and Tax Credit Program Manager*.

PUBLIC: Suzanne Gaetjens-Oleson, *Northern NH Human Services*; George Mitchell, Kate Smith, and Mary Menzies, *Littleton Community Center*.

Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson opened the meeting at 10:07 AM. He thanked Directors and staff for traveling to Littleton for the meeting and introduced the hosts from the Littleton Community Center, Mr. Mitchell, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Menzies. Mr. Mitchell welcomed the Board of Directors and CDFA staff to the Littleton Community Center and expressed his sincere appreciation for the investment made into this facility through the Community Center Investment Program. He shared a brief history of the property and how funds have been used to date to renovate this historic property in downtown Littleton.

Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson thanked Mr. Mitchell and his colleagues and expressed appreciation, on behalf of the Board, for the work of Mr. Mitchell and all of the other Board members and volunteers who are committed to the Littleton Community Center.

**Ms. Harrington arrived at 10:12 AM**

Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson noted another member of the public in attendance and welcomed Ms. Suzanne Gaetjens-Oleson of Northern Human Services to the meeting. He asked the Board and staff to introduce themselves. Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson invited Ms. Gaetjens-Oleson to discuss the work of Northern Human Services.

Ms. Gaetjens-Oleson provided a broad overview of the services Northern NH Human Services (NNHS) offers. The organization serves Coos, Carrol, and northern Grafton counties, covering the northern third of the State. NHS offers mental health services as well as services for those with disabilities, from 'cradle to grave'. She discussed the many services offered by the organization and addressed the myriad of challenges the organization faces. Some of the particular topics discussed included the following:

- NHS is an umbrella for two distinct types of agencies, one agency serves people in need of mental health services and the other agency serves people with disabilities. This dual focus requires significant effort to meet demand, which typically exceeds the organization's capacity;
- Workforce challenges are particularly persistent for mental health clinicians in the North Country.
  - An emphasis on 'grow your own' is being pursued, but creating a pipeline to provide certification through a college degree takes years to develop. Tuition reimbursement plans are being pursued and work is being done to build a bridge for students with majors like

- psychology into a career in mental health. Staff turnover costs more than tuition reimbursement so creative solutions are being pursued to improve retention
- Low wages and stressful work conditions challenge employee retention. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of housing available in the region.
  - A shortage of clinicians requires creative approaches to deploying critical services. Oftentimes, a crisis team will travel with a peer and use a videoconference platform to include a clinician
  - Workforce development for providers in the developmental services area has some of these same challenges, and while providers need a certificate, and not a degree, low wages, an expansive geographic region, and lack of affordable housing make it challenging to attract and retain employees

Ms. Gaetjens-Oleson stressed the need for NHS to be creative in their approach to those they serve and in maintaining staff to meet demand. Creative approaches to ensure engagement is happening and services deployed include some of the following:

- Relationships with Police Departments, DCYF, hospitals, school, and jails have been developed and maintained in an effort to have an expansive reach and connect to those in need of services
- Positions on Boards are assumed to help NHS stay connected to other organizations and agencies

Ms. Gaetjens-Oleson noted the reimbursement rates from Medicaid and Medicare have not kept up with costs and deficits are adding pressure to an overtaxed system. These funding shortages further complicate the challenges for NHS and other service providers.

Ms. Easterly Matey thanked Ms. Gaetjens-Oleson for her presentation. She stated to the Board that CDFA does have an opportunity in Spring of 2026 to modify the five year Consolidated Plan for HUD to include more support for both mental health services and workforce development, both issues which are in need of greater support statewide. The Board expressed their appreciation for the discussion and asked whether mentoring programs could create a positive impact on workforce development. Ms. Easterly Martey expressed her appreciation for the feedback and shared it will be something she and staff can consider moving forward.

**Ms. Gaetjens-Oleson left the meeting at 10:45 AM**

#### **A. Agenda**

Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson reviewed the meeting agenda. He noted the discussion item for Northern NH Human Services should be moved from Item 3.1 to Section 1 of the agenda. He noted he would accept a motion to approve the agenda, as amended.

**Motion – 10:46 AM**

Mr. Bartlett moved to approve the meeting agenda, as amended. Mr. Rayno seconded and the motion carried by a unanimous vote of the Board.

#### **B. Consent Agenda**

Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson reviewed the Consent Agenda, which included minutes from the following meetings:

- September 17, 2024, Board of Directors Minutes;
- August 8, 2024 Community Development Advisory Committee Minutes.

He called for questions or comments. None were offered. Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson called for a motion.

**Motion – 10:13 AM**

Ms. Lorentz moved to approve the consent agenda, as presented. Ms. Fitzpatrick seconded, and the motion carried by a unanimous vote of the Board.

### C. 2024 Book & Podcast Club Debrief – 10:54 AM

Mr. Hart provided the Board with an update on this year's Book & Podcast Club debrief. He noted that the focus of this year's study and learning was on public health and wellness. Staff had the opportunity to either read a book and/or listen to the book and listen to related podcasts. The overall response and learning experience was positive, and created an opportunity for staff to learn about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and how to mitigate and manage these challenges, hopefully with empathy and compassion. He noted public health matters and issues are related to CDFA's work and the book and podcast clubs offer staff an opportunity to learn, exchange ideas, and engage in healthy dialogue around these issues.

The Board asked how particular topics are selected. Ms. Easterly Martey noted CDFA has seen an uptick in applications from organizations providing mental health services and this presented an opportunity to learn more on relevant topics. She also noted the current strategic plan charged the Staff Health and Wellness Team with creating a positive work culture for employees. Incorporating time for staff to learn is an investment in staff and has been well received by the staff. CDFA will offer a HOPE training to staff, a next step in understanding ACEs and personal wellness, critical to staff, partners, and grantees alike.

Ms. Easterly Martey noted that an overlay of CPIs on things like ACEs and particular trends in applications enables CDFA to consider which communities may be thriving and which may benefit from investments. She suggested the Board consider some of these trends in February 2025 before new funding rounds are underway.

### D. Outreach and Engagement – 11:08 AM

Ms. Latham provided the Board with an overview of CDFA's Outreach and Engagement strategies, an important process undertaken to help ensure CDFA reaches communities, partners and organizations statewide. She shared the following key points:

- The goals of outreach and engagement are to increase awareness of CDFA externally, while supporting organizational and programmatic goals. Embedded in this is:
  - Positioning CDFA as a thought leader
  - Increase awareness of CDFA's impact on communities throughout the State
  - Engage a broad array of key stakeholders and expand the foundation of CDFA applicants
  - Improve customer-centric mentality and understanding of community needs, and
  - Support overarching program goals and strategies.
- Connecting to CDFA's Strategic Plan
  - Amplify/diversify CDFA's engagement with respect to policy development and integration of community voice (lived-experience) into decision making and organizational policies
- Key Components & Diversifying Approaches
  - Leverage multiple communications channels (website, press releases, social media, etc.)
  - Engage with partners to deepen connections and broaden understanding of needs
  - Provide applicant support from idea/concept to project implementation/management
  - Develop training, education to create ease of access to CDFA resources

Ms. Easterly Martey and the Board thanked Ms. Latham for her presentation. Ms. Easterly Martey stated the Directors each play a critical role for CDFA, serving as ambassadors for the organization and its statewide mission. She asked the Directors to consider what tools they need, and what resources can be enhanced to build on existing relationships and perhaps develop new relationships. She discussed the layered investments CDFA has made in communities like Franklin, Keene, Concord, Laconia, Manchester, and Lancaster, and the transformative impact this can have. These cities and towns are examples which can readily be shared with members of the public.

The Board asked whether Ms. Easterly Martey could provide some talking points to support this initiative for broader engagement with the public. Ms. Easterly Martey offered CDFA would provide some case studies to

highlight impact investments and to hopefully stimulate interest in the tax credit program from potential business donors.

#### **E. Customer Experience Improvements – 11:31 AM**

Ms. Easterly Martey stated CDFA continues to try to improve customer experience/engagement with partners, stakeholders, and other interested parties. One example of these efforts in the GMS registration process. Through a process of feedback, stated needs and interests of new and existing registrants, efforts are being made to ensure links and access to critical information are readily available and enhance user experience. Ms. Easterly Martey also noted CDFA has distributed an RFP for a re-write of CDBG guidance materials; some partners who are familiar with CDBG offered to help develop the revised materials, using their own experience with the program to inform best practices. Ms. Easterly Martey suggested this same process may evolve from the CDBG Task Force, charged with considering how to better serve small businesses statewide.

#### **F. PRO Housing Application – 11:33 AM**

Ms. Easterly Martey noted CDFA has prepared an application for the second round of federal PRO Housing funding. She noted only two applicants were awarded in the first round and the new application is improved. Many of the proposed ideas align well with the PRO Housing program. Ms. Easterly Martey noted that if CDFA is not successful in this funding round, CDFA may seek alternative funding sources to invest in some of the projects proposed in this application. The application is due later in October 2024, and staff hopes to be informed of a decision by the end of calendar year 2024.

#### **G. Inclusion Policy – 11:35 AM**

Ms. Easterly Martey stated CDFA had adopted a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy. Staff training has taken place but the policy is a regular area of context and focus to create intentional and meaningful action. Ms. Easterly Martey stated it is the wish of the organization to ensure this policy continues to be actionable. She noted in the current environment – and to promote the integrity of the policy – it is recommended the policy be changed from a DEI policy to an Inclusion policy. Ms. Easterly Martey noted CDFA will continue to practice inclusion on all levels, with a focus on priority populations and those with less opportunity to fully participate in New Hampshire's economy. The Board suggested the term 'Inclusion' be incorporated into CDFA's mission statements. All agreed the nature of this term is broad and comprehensive and does not compromise any organizational practices or goals.

Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson called for questions or comments. None were offered. He called for a motion.

#### **Motion – 11:42 AM**

~~Mr. Rayno moved to rename the DEI policy to an 'Inclusion' policy, as recommended. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion carried by a unanimous vote of the Board.~~

#### **H. CDBG Planning Grants**

Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson stated the Community Development Advisory Committee met on October 3, 2024, and reviewed two (2) planning grant applications. Each application has been recommended for funding. He provided a summary of each application, as follows.

##### City of Concord/Justice Planning Center Study - \$25,000

The City of Concord requested \$25,000 for a planning grant to consider creation of a single location headquarters for three organization – New Hampshire Legal Assistance, 603 Legal Aid, and Disability Rights Center – New Hampshire. Based on the populations served, 94% of beneficiaries qualify as low -and moderate-income individuals.

##### City of Laconia/Community Action Program Belknap-Merrimack Counties, Inc.

The City of Laconia requested \$25,000 for a planning grant to consider rehabilitation of a current kitchen at the Laconia Senior Center into a commercial kitchen. The commercial kitchen in Laconia would allow Meals on Wheels to double the number of meals provided in the region while also relieving the Concord kitchen from preparation and shipment of meals and enabling greater meal production in Concord as well. Presumed 51% beneficiaries qualify as low -and moderate-income individuals.

Mr. Gaetjens-Oleson called for questions or comments. None were offered. He called for a motion.

**Motion – 11:44 AM**

Mr. Bartlett moved to approve both CDBG Planning Grants, each in the total amount of \$25,000, as recommended by the Community Development Advisory Committee. Mr. Rayno seconded, and the motion carried by a unanimous vote of the Board.

**I. Executive Director Update**

Ms. Easterly Martey offered a few updates for the Board.

- A presentation from the Community/Economic Development sector should be ready for November or December.
- Cody Morrison, of the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation, has been appointed to CDFA's Board of Directors. It is anticipated he will attend his first meeting in November.
- Several individuals are being considered for the Workforce Development seat on the Board. CDFA will await word from the Governor's office.
- A Labor seat on the Board remains open.

**J. Adjourn – 11:54 AM**

There being no further business before the Board of Directors, Mr. Bartlett moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Rayno seconded, and the motion carried by a unanimous vote of the Board of Directors.

Respectfully submitted,



Maureen Quinn, Board Relations Manager



Benjamin Gaetjens-Oleson, Chair Board of Directors