

HUD Consolidated Plan Advisory Board
February 8, 2021

Introductions

Participants: Arthur Hamlin, Julia Connell, Angus Chaney, Ann Kroll, Debbie Ingram, Josh Hanford, Lily Sojourner, Nathan Cleveland, Rachel Batterson, Richard Williams, Ron Rupp, Rob Leuchs, Sarah Philips, Maura Collins, Eric Schmidt,

Arthur – this is the second annual update of 2020-24 plan, less involved than the 5-year plan.
Josh – department updates are brief and uneventful.

Advisory Board Overview

Arthur – most have been on the Board for a while, Board meets with DHCD a couple times, provides input on funding and developing Con Plan, disseminates information to help with public participation.

Plan Overview and Review Goals

Arthur – plan overview, reviewed the annual goals and objectives from 2020 plan. The four main goals are housing, create and retain jobs, homelessness, strengthen communities. We can tweak goals this year. Went over funding allocated to each goal. We have not received the allocation amounts for this year.

Special Housing Projects Update

Ann – special housing projects, trying to marry with tax credits.
Josh – was in works for a few years, last year's plan pitched the idea. How to produce more housing units using fewer public dollars, or different models, to encourage looking at differently. Four percent tax credit projects meet this goal. Have not received any specific applications under this pilot. He can send chart or information of which projects fit into this category. It is not separate from other housing grants.

Recovery Housing Update

Ann – potential to combine funds in one action plan, \$753,000 doesn't go very far. Are looking for creativity i.e., 4% tax credits, applicant should be one of our partners, needs the ability to sell the credits. Have been told we will get more money, but not sure of amount. Department is asking if we can roll into money received last year. Vermont's mortality rate increasing, why we got more money. Recovery housing not the normal world of CDBG. Services needed to make it work. It will be transitional housing so are reaching out to AHS and others.

Sarah – recovery housing outside of OEO and DCF’s purview, but worth connecting with Alison Harte, who is the AHS Secretary’s office point on housing.

Ann – interested in who else interested in funding projects. Department putting together the action plan. We have ability to do pre-agreement costs. It would be good to have some projects identified that meet the criteria. We could fund under regular CDBG then switch out the source. DHCD has to draw down 30% of funds in one year, this is challenging because projects take time. Wondering how homeless can meet the criteria for being in a recovery program.

Sarah - DCF/OEO does not fund substance use disorder (SUD) intervention, recovery, and treatment. Recovery housing is seen as a SUD intervention not a homelessness intervention. OEO focused on homeless assistance and permanent housing. We should consider leveraging service dollars.

Maura – there is a specific proposal to do a recovery residence that is different than what normally do, proposal is for 100% homeless, spans both recovery and homelessness. They want to use tax credits, but per IRS rule it has to be permanent housing unless 100% homeless. Not sure if this is a one-off project or a new model.

Richard – recovery housing referred to as sober houses, at least three in Burlington have significant issues, six to nine individuals many coming out of corrections. Not sure there is support for these types of houses. One is behind on rent; tenants contribute to rent and own personal expenses/food. These are important. Need financial support. Hope to qualify for some emergency rental money under CRF stabilization.

Ann – CDBG Recovery housing can assist only if it is a new activity, for example if the residence was expanded to serve more people. Usually are there for up to two years and then move to permanent housing. Two years is optimistic, she thinks five years is more realistic.

Program / Department Changes

DHCD up to eyeballs in Covid work, not planning to make any changes to Action Plan.

Ron Rupp – HOME program not talking about utilizing any differently, rental housing. Same true of HTF money. It has more restrictions; homeownership would be almost impossible.

Sarah – they don’t have any major changes, ESG very small part of overall funding. Don’t anticipate any changes.

Lily – just standard process will release a notice in spring, no major changes.

Advisory Board Input

Arthur requested any advisory board input or suggestions, questions about last year’s plan.

Maura – recommends not changing anything and make it as broad and wide open as possible. Money is flowing into Vermont, everyone working to make all work. Does not want Con Plan to be barrier to spending. We should welcome every good idea. Five-year plan had lot of public input and priorities are well founded.

Josh – had thought about asking for extension, since DHCD just did three amendments to accept Covid money. Staff felt better to meet deadlines and not make any changes to keep money flowing.

Richard asked if there is support for a rental rehab program. The number of small landlords served was surprising, most own 1 to 4 units, have vacant units due to lack of rent or resources. This would open a lot of affordable units.

Ann – the scattered site set-aside requires homeownership centers to try to serve private landlords to do rental rehab. The Bennington pilot is not closed out. Private landlords struggle to meet all rules of federal funds. The national objective to serve low and moderate, even for minimum of five years is tough for them. Centers can try to work with other organization to help with rental process, income verifications etc.

Josh – plans build off each other. The rental rehab requirement was three or four years in development. Have seen CRF funds go toward this successfully. It has less hoops than CDBG funds. The department will continue to support rental rehab.

Rachel – suggest other funds be given to develop more brick-and-mortar housing like VHCB. They have a track record and meet perpetual affordability. We should increase the supply of well managed affordable housing. She is a small landlord of 3 units. The State gave funds to some private landlords to bring units to code, others did that themselves without any help.

Schedule

Arthur – reminder about the link for the public hearing. Board is not required to participate but can if interested. He reviewed schedule for the rest of the plan. DHCD, VHCB and OEO draft by mid-March, then publish legal notice for the next hearing and meeting early April. Second hearing is followed by 30 day written comment period. The plan is always due to HUD 45-day before July 1 so around May 16.

Maura – April 2 is right before Easter Sunday, suggested holding next meetings the following Monday.

Ann – we need to make sure the hearing is available to public so have next one after normal work hours. DHCD will look at calendar and let Board know.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM