



Rochester City Council

Community Development Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Laura Hainey, Chair
Harlan “Skip” Gilman
Tim Fontneau
Amy Malone
John Larochele

Meeting Date:	Monday, February 27, 2023	
Members Present:	Laura Hainey Harlan “Skip” Gilman Amy Malone Tim Fontneau John LaRochele	Members Absent:
Guests/Staff:	Kiersten Wright, Community Development Coordinator; Shanna Saunders, Planning Director	

Councilor Hainey called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm with Councilor Hainey, LaRochele and Gilman in attendance.

Councilor Hainey arrived at 5:40pm

Councilor Fontneau arrived at 6:22pm

Councilor LaRochele stated there was a typo in the minutes from January 30th.

Requested that minutes be edited to remove “guy students” to say “Guyer students”

Hainey made a motion to approve minutes with amendment. LaRochele seconded and motion was carried.

PUBLIC INPUT	There was no public input.
Meeting with Planning Director Shanna Saunders about Orton Foundation Heart and Soul Program.	<p>Ms. Saunders introduced herself to the committee members and explained her previous work with the Orton Foundation and their Heart and Soul program when she was with the town of Laconia. She provided handouts with information on the program and the work they do with communities all over the US.</p> <p>The Heart and Soul program’s goal is to come into communities and work with the leaders and residents to determine the community’s “heart and soul” as well as their values and how to keep these values and ideas when making decisions that affect the community.</p> <p>The Orton Foundation reached out to Ms. Saunders to discuss the possibility of coming to Rochester and implementing this program. She brought this to the City Manager’s attention who suggested that she start with the Community Development Committee and</p>

see if this is a program that is worth looking into and bringing to the community.

One of the points made by Ms. Saunders throughout her presentation was that this program comes in to help decision makers learn to work with the residents, rather than against them.

Councilor LaRochelle brought up the meeting in Gonic in during the fall where there were several disrupters who were not productive to the conversation and did not provide any helpful information to the discussion being had. Councilor LaRochelle asked if this program would be something that would assist the community leaders in preventing another situation such as the Gonic Meeting. Ms. Saunders mentioned that the program and members from the program would be there to help teach the community leaders how to prevent situations like that in the future and to help work with those people and get them to be productive members of the conversations.

Councilor Malone requested to know the difference between this group and a group like Rochester Listens. Ms. Saunders explained that Rochester Listens was there to help set up the conversations, where The Orton Foundation is there to teach leaders and members of the community how to work together towards the future and facilitate better communication between the groups. Councilor Malone stated this looks like a great program but that she would like to have a deeper conversation at one of the next meetings and meet a member of the program to ask more questions. She mentioned that there are updates happening throughout the city in the next few years and this could really benefit the council and get ahead of the issues to help the community come together.

The Councilors unanimously agreed to have a member of the program come in with Ms. Saunders during the April meeting to discuss this program further with the group.

Ms. Saunders stated she would be in touch with the Orton Foundation and Ms. Wright stated she would send an update on the date and time of the April Community Development Meeting date and time.

CDBG And Municipal Fund Applicants' Presentations

Rochester Museum of Fine Arts (RMFA)- Matt Wyatt- In Person

Mr. Wyatt from the Rochester Museum of Fine Arts came to request an additional \$5,000 this year from the Rochester Municipal funding. Currently they receive \$5,000 from the Economic Department to assist with running their program located in the James Foley Community Center. Mr. Wyatt gave a background on how the Museum started 11

years ago. Originally, they wanted to get involved in the city, but they weren't sure how. They knew how to find and hang art but weren't sure how to get involved. The start of the museum was getting art into empty store fronts, specifically the downtown area to help make the area look more accessible and inviting. After working with these store front locations, they eventually ended up at the community center. Currently they have over 225 pieces that are donated and hang at the community center. They also have a short-term exhibit area that is rotating with new artists showcased throughout the year. No commission is taken from these artists, and they are able to do this because they have kept overhead so low. Not only have they added art to the Community center, but they have assisted in adding public art and murals across the city. Work with the Historic Society allowed the museum to have historic post cards from the city blown up and made into vinyl that can be found on the side of the Fire Department.

A goal of the museum was to provide accessibility to art that some people might not have had before. He brought up that to go to a regional other art museum, like those found in Manchester you would need to either drive or take the bus to that city. Once there you would then have to pay for parking, pay an entrance fee; in some cases, get lunch or dinner if you are there for a large part of the day, and eventually have to drive back home. These are expenses that some people cannot afford. The RMFA does not charge any fee to enter or enjoy the art. The museum is also housed in the Community Center which houses several public services. They work on filling the halls with plenty of artwork and create a more inviting atmosphere in what could otherwise be an unhappy or even stressful trip.

Councilor LaRochelle requested to know if they were part of the Arts and Culture committee. Mr. Wyatt stated they were, but they are not a large part of the group.

COAST- Rad Nichols- In person

Mr. Nichols introduced himself to the committee and discussed the work that COAST provides the city of Rochester. First is rebuilding their workforce and removing temporary service suspensions. Councilor Malone mentioned that the suspension of the Saturday service has caused a lot of issues and she has seen a lot of people suffer because of this suspension. Mr. Nichols stated they are working and hopeful that the service will be back up by May, bearing any illnesses or other issues. Mr. Nichols stated that over the last few months they have been bringing back services and as they bring back more they hope to increase ridership.

This year they are asking for \$225,377 in funding; a 10% increase from last year for funding. COAST is looking for other funding options as right now they only receive about \$35,000 a year from the state, which equates to roughly 1 day of service.

Councilor Fontneau requested to know if COAST Has meet with members of committees and other groups with the Sate regarding getting

more funding for this service. Currently Mr. Nichols is working with several members of the state to increase funding and work to better public service across the state, especially in the Seacoast area. He has met with several leaders, including Democratic leadership in New Hampshire towards this goal. He is set to meet with several senators to work with them to gain more support for funding. Mr. Nichols mentioned that assistance from community members and that providing feedback on how COAST has benefited them will assist in this goal.

Councilor Hailey mentioned that during the Committee meeting last month that the committee met with a group that works with COAST and had inquired about the services that had been cut as they had an increase in the budget last year but saw a significant decrease in service during the year. Councilor Hailey stated that it sounds like COAST is working diligently to get back on track and get these services back to the way they were in previous years.

Easterseals NH- Laurie Duff- Virtual

Ms. Duff introduced herself as the Director of Senior Services. She stated that Easterseals is seeking \$10,000 in municipal funding for the FY24 year. This is the same amount requested the previous year. Last year, Easterseals expected to help about 150 Rochester residents, and ended up helping 180. They provided several services for residents, including: in home care and adult day program. They also have a new building, Chaplin House, that has a currently list of applicants of 92 for housing.

Ms. Duff mentioned that during one of the storms 3 weeks ago their building that holds their adult day program flooded, and since then they have been working with their residents in their homes that would normally be at their adult day program. Their goal is to be back in the building by April 8, 2023. Their estimating of Rochester residents that will be assisted in the coming year will be 170.

Currently they have a waitlist for home care due to staffing and are hoping that with funding they maybe able to increase services, including providing services for veterans.

The Committee had no questions at this time for Ms Duff.

Sharefund- Skip Smith- In Person

Mr. Smith introduced himself to the Committee and provided some handouts to review some information on the Sharefund. The Sharefund provides numerous services to Rochester, as well as several surrounding towns like Somersworth. Some of those services are Gerry's Emergency Food Pantry, The Community Clothing and thrift store, emergency financial assistance and the community diaper bank. All of these services are free to low-moderate income individuals, with the exception of the Thrift Store that will provide clothes, toys and household items to those in need but also has a store open to the general public to purchase items from. Their biggest service that they provide on a regular basis is the

food pantry. Over 200,000 pounds of food have been distributed to over 6800 households. This year the Sharefund is asking for \$12,000 in CDBG funds for rental assistance for LMI (Low-moderate income) Residents. Since the start of the year Sharefund has already distributed about \$9000 in funding, some being for other towns residents, but \$6800 of that was for Rochester residents in Community based housing assistance.

Councilor Fontneau asked, outside of CDBG funds and surrounding communities, where do they receive funding from. Mr. Smith explained that they work with several grants, individual donors as well as social clubs like the American Legion. Their Thrift Store also helps alleviate some of the costs associated with their program.

Councilor Malone mentioned that in her work she has seen how versatile Sharefund is and how easy they make it for those in the community to have access to food and clothing as well as the other services they can provide. Councilor Fontneau mentioned that with a lot of the grants and other programs ending, as well as changes to programs like SNAP, that there are concerns about residents. Mr. Smith explained that LMI residents are able to come twice a month to get food, and that they saw a 53% increase between 2022 and 2021 in food requests. Mr. Smith stated that unfortunately with the changes being made to many programs and some programs ending, he doesn't see this number dropping and in fact states they are expected to see more people coming in for assistance.

Waypoint- Mandy Lancaster- Virtual

Mandy Lancaster introduced herself to the council and stated that Waypoint is looking for \$10,000 in CDBG funding for FY24 to support their program. Ms. Lancaster gave a brief synopsis on Waypoint and what they have to offer the city. Waypoint works with younger people to provide support, especially to those dealing with homelessness. With the new Drop In Center that launched in the fall of 2022, they have been able to support more people than before.

One of Waypoint's goals is to support young people and stop homelessness from reaching adulthood. They work on building trust and relationships to help assess the situation and help make decisions on what the people's next moves are. With the drop in center there is ever more support, and they are reaching even more people every day, giving comfort and support they might not have had otherwise.

The Committee had no further questions or comments.

Triangle Club- Heather Blumenfeld (Executive Director) and Bob O'Connell (Business Manager)- In person

Ms. Blumenfeld introduced herself to the committee as well as her colleague Bob O'Connell, Triangle Club's Business Manager. Ms Blumenfeld gave an overview of Triangle Club and what they have to offer. Triangle Club provides numerous meetings, 7 days a week, 365

days out of the year (holidays are no exception). Many are 12 step programs to help with substance abuse, however they have recently been holding other types of holistic meetings, like Reiki, Yoga and Art classes to assist those battling substance abuse. They also offer some meetings for those affected by family with substance abuse problems. The group is family friendly as well, allowing children to the meetings and events. There have been 3 sober living homes added to the city of Rochester and those programs require that people join meetings, which Triangle Club is able to provide.

Ms. Blumenfeld mentioned that they previously received funding in 2020 for funding the electric work. Right now they are looking to redo siding and redo the fire escape on the back of the building for safety reasons. The siding they are looking to fix is to weather tight the building. They estimate the project to cost \$31,700 with the estimate including Davis Bacon requirements included. They have broken the project down into just the siding and just the fire escape if they are unable to receive funding for both. Their main goal is to get the fire escape done for safety. Councilor Fontneau inquired if they had asked other communities for funding. Ms Blumenfeld stated that they are looking to Rochester to fund this project and are looking to other cities that utilize the Triangle Club's programs for other projects such as their parking lot. NH Charitable foundation has already agreed to finance \$10,000 for paving of the parking lot.

Councilor Fontneau inquired how many people they see per week. Ms. Blumenfeld mentioned that they average about 100 different people per day, 2800 per month and over 8400 per year. They estimate about 35% of their residents are Rochester residents. One goal they are working on is getting young people affected by addiction and trying to recover back to their hobbies and surrounded by peers. Programs like Yoga, and Reiki have offered that option. Ms. Blumenfeld mentioned that they are one of the few, if only, program in the area that offers so many meetings and different options for recover.

The Committee had no further questions for Triangle Club. All applicants have provided their presentations at this date.

Recommendations for municipal funding:

After all applicants left the Committee started discussion on the Municipal funding. Ms. Wright brought up a point made by Councilor Hainey the prior meeting, about My Friend's Place possibly receiving Municipal funding instead of CDBG funding due to their consistent work with the city and providing a necessary service. Councilor Hainey mentioned that bringing them into the Municipal funding shows that we as a city support these groups and want to make a long-term commitment. Councilor Hainey also stated that the City has other programs within their municipal funding recommendations every year, such as Easterseals, and SOS Recovery that provide necessary services to the city just as My Friend's Place does.

Councilor LaRochelle moved to recommend My Friend's Place for Municipal funding instead of CDBG funding. Councilor Malone seconded this motion with a unanimous vote from the committee. Councilor Hainey mentioned that last year they received \$13,798.40 last year in CDBG funding and are asking for \$30,000 this year.

Councilor Hainey motioned to recommend My Friend's Place receive \$15,000 in Municipal funds, with Councilor Malone providing a second for the motion. Motion was passed in favor by all members of the committee.

The Committee discussed the East Rochester Library's budget and Councilor Hainey recommended a 2% increase in funding from last year's \$7,500 budget, resulting in a recommendation of \$7,650 in funding. East Rochester Library had also applied for CDBG funding for certain projects. **Motion to change the \$11,000 recommendation for East Rochester Library to \$7650 made by Councilor Malone, with Councilor Gilman seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

Councilor Malone suggested the city fund a portion of the archival storage for some of the items at the Historic Society and made a motion to drop the recommended funding amount from \$5,000 to \$3,000. Councilor Fontneau seconded, with unanimous vote for the recommendation.

The Committee discussed their funding priorities for FY24 municipal funding and came to a consensus on the following recommendations for municipal funding:

Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation- \$225,377
SOS Recovery- \$40,000
Cornerstone VNA- \$28,826
My Friend's Place- \$15,000
Community Action Partnership of Strafford County- \$10,000
Easterseals NH- \$10,000
East Rochester Library- \$7,650
Rochester Museum of Fine Arts (RMFA)- \$5,000
Historic Society of Rochester- \$3,000

Motion made by Councilor Hainey to approve as amended above, with Councilor Malone seconded. Approved by unanimous vote. Ms Wright stated she would forward the committee's recommendation to the Finance Department for inclusion in the draft FY 2023 City Budget.

Review of Upcoming CDBG Reports

Ms. Wright informed the committee that the FY24 Annual Action Report is due May 15, 2023 to HUD. Ms. Wright stated she is currently working on this report and is working on getting a drafted

	<p>copy of this report by March 21, 2023 for the Public Hearing that will be held at before the City Council workshop the same day.</p> <p>Ms. Wright explained that the Public Hearing will coincide with the Public Comment period. Per HUD the Public Comment period must be at least 30 days. Starting March 21, 2023, the public comment period will be open to the public to submit questions or concerns about the Annual Action Plan for FY 24.</p> <p>Ms. Wright also mentioned that she was able to post Community Survey online via the Rochester Post and has already received 15 responses as of Monday, February 27, 2023. She also has placed hard copy surveys at several locations throughout the city. The surveys will be used within the Annual Action Plan report.</p>

Motion was made by Councilor Hainey to adjourn the meeting. Councilor Gilman seconded the motion. All in favor, meeting adjourned at 8:09pm.

Next Meeting – Monday, March 20, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., Coheco Conference Room, City Hall Annex, 33 Wakefield St.

Topics: Decisions on CDBG Funding applicants