

**Town of Wheelock Select Board**  
**Minutes of Public Hearing March 22, 2022, 6pm**  
Draft for distribution  
In person at Town Hall and via Zoom

Present, in person: Selectboard: Mike Richardson; Ann Lawless, chair.

Karen Geraghty, planner, Northern Community Investment Corp.

Present, via Zoom: Enid Ellis; Eileen Boland; Vanessa Seguin

Absent: Selectboard member Jim Blackbird

At 6:06pm, Ann opened the meeting, stating its purpose as a warned Public Hearing regarding a proposed application by the town to the Community Development Block Grant program of the State of Vermont. She asked for any additions to the agenda. There being none, she welcomed and introduced Karen Geraghty, thanking her for coming in person.

Karen provided a general overview of the Community Development Block Grant program and of the proposed project.

☐ **General Overview of CDBG**

Community Development Block Grant funds are available to municipalities, on a competitive basis, for economic development, public facility and housing rehabilitation projects and planning grants that primarily benefit low and moderate income persons.

☐ **General Overview Project**

This is a proposed Public Facilities application to the Vermont Community Development Program for up to \$60,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds. The Town will retain up to \$500 for administrative costs. The remaining funds, up to \$59,500 will be used to conduct planning and pre-engineering studies to create plans and cost estimates for the Wheelock Town Hall accessibility project. The project is necessary to bring the building into compliance with ADA specifications to create an inclusive public space for the activities of the Town.

In addition to the fact that Vermont State law requires accessibility to places of public accommodation, public buildings, and commercial facilities by individuals with disabilities, *NVDA's 2018 Regional Plan for the Northeast Kingdom* states that the economic stability and orderly land use development of communities largely depends on the capacity of local and regional utilities and facilities. Wheelock's Town Hall is a central and important public facility in this small community and the project to improve accessibility specifically supports the Regional Plan's goal and strategy to:

- o Rehabilitate and re-use significant cultural, architectural, and historic sites, and community facilities, whenever feasible.

The project also supports the Town of Wheelock's Municipal Plan which notes the need to address the issues to create a safe and accessible Town Hall.

Questions were solicited from attendees about the CDBG process and the description of the proposed project that the funds are intended to support. Questions focused on the content of the grant application and the amount of community involvement as part of the planning process.

Mike noted that the process of developing the two 2021 concept proposals included community engagement work, a survey and public meetings. However, at Town meeting 2022 the voters turned both proposals down, as they have with past ADA proposals. Since many expressed the opinion that the estimated cost of both 2021 concepts was high, he asked if it would be possible in this project to develop a less costly proposal.

Karen replied that she is aware of the work done in the past, and that this project will allow the community to develop a plan to proceed. The plan may include importing and tweaking past work or starting over. Recognizing the significant knowledge of local people in the building trades it will be helpful to encourage input from local contractors.

Mike asked Karen to outline the next steps. She replied that the purpose of the meeting tonight is for the Selectboard to decide whether to apply for the grant or not. If it decides to apply, the next step is to develop the full application, which will include a statement of the issue to be addressed, a proposal for an inclusive community process and a proposal to develop a design and pre-engineering plan necessary to comply with the ADA goal. It will be important to give the community the scope it needs to reach the desired outcome.

- ☐ At approximately 6:25pm, Mike made a motion, seconded by Ann, to approve the submittal of the CDBG planning grant application. So voted, unanimously.
- ☐ Mike made a motion authorize Ann Lawless, Selectboard member, to submit the application and sign or execute any and all document necessary to effectuate the potential CDBG contract.

Ann thanked all the participants for attending the hearing, and especially Karen for making the effort to attend in person.

At 6:30pm, Mike made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ann. So voted, unanimously.

Scribe: Ann