

**PLANNING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING
YEAR 44 CDBG PROGRAM APPLICANTS
MINUTES
JANUARY 25, 2018**

In Attendance:

PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS

Paula Caron, Chair
Michael Hurley
Paul Fontaine, Jr.
John DiPasquale
Peter Capodagli
Amanda Koeck, Associate

COMMUNITY DEV/PLANNING STAFF

Tom Skwierawski
Sue Christensen
Mary Jo Bohart
Liz Murphy
Mike O'Hara

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Paul Beauchemin
Amy Green
Joel Kaddy
Sam Squailia

Paula Caron opened the CDBG portion of the meeting at 6:15 p.m. Paula explained the purpose of the CDBG hearing. Twenty three (23) CDBG proposals were received totaling \$1,371,299.00 in requests. Approximately \$940,918.00 in Year 44 funds is estimated to be available. The CDBG schedule was explained to the audience. The schedule is as follows: the Planning Board will meet on February 13th to discuss the Year 44 proposals and make a recommendation to the Mayor. The Mayor will review the Planning Board's recommendations and submit his recommendations to the City Council for their review between March 13-20. The proposed Consolidated Plan and Statement of CDBG activities will be published on March 31st. Public comments will be received up to the date of the second public hearing which is scheduled for May 1. Submission of the Year 44 Consolidated Plan -Action Plan is in May. The start-up of the new program year begins on July 1, 2018.

Tom Skwierawski, Executive Director of Community Development, referred applicants to the handouts provided in the application package that were also available at the meeting. The CDBG Program regulations were outlined. In order for a project to be eligible it must meet one of the three national objectives which include: benefitting persons of low-moderate income, eliminating slums and blight, or meeting an urgent need. Eligible activities include: public facilities, public services, demolition, economic development, rehab & preservation, planning & administration. For projects serving a low-moderate income area, at least 51% of the households must be at 80% median income or less. There is a 20% cap on planning and admin activities, and a 15% cap on public service activities. It is the city's responsibility to insure that at least 70% of CDBG funds are used to benefit low-moderate income persons over a three-year period (2015-2017). Tom thanked Migdalia Velez from MOC for providing Spanish translation services.

Paula Caron explained some housekeeping rules and welcomed comments from the audience. She stated that Migdalia Velez from MOC, a certified interpreter, was available for interpreter services.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS

<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>SPONSOR</u>	<u>YR. 44 REQUEST</u>	<u>YR. 43 AWARD</u>
<u>Sidewalk Accessibility Improvements</u>	<u>City of Fitchburg Disability Commission</u>	\$20,000.	\$5,110.

Project funds will be used to bring city sidewalks into compliance with ADA requirements. The project involves adding/improving crosswalks and removal of curbs that are obstructing universal access along Water Street, including Water Street at Spruce Street; 350 Water near Fitchburg Green; Water at Boyle Court; and Water at Fifth Street. Also the Senior Center area – Wallace Ave., Elm Street, Grove Street. Approximately 20 architectural barriers will be removed. Work will be performed by the DPW to ADA standards.

Jeffrey Wolfgang, of the Disability Commission, spoke to this application, stating that this was year 7 of the commission and they want to continue to provide accessible intersections for the residents of Fitchburg. Amy Green commented regarding Fitchburg Green, located on Water Street and Paul Beauchemin stated that we need to take care of the elderly.

<u>Goodrich Playground Project</u>	<u>Board of Parks Commissioners</u>	\$60,000.	\$71,540.
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Project funds will be used to remove existing fencing surrounding the upper athletic facilities at Goodrich Playground and the demolition of the long deteriorating tennis courts. This will be followed by leveling and installation of loam within the confines of the old tennis courts and outfield for use as a multipurpose field and the installation of new fencing and backstops on the old baseball field as well as claying of the infield. Work will be performed by the DPW and will be ADA compliant

Nate LaRose, Parks and Recreation Director, had to leave for another engagement and AJ Tourigny, Chief of Staff for Mayor Stephen DiNatale spoke to this application as being part of an ongoing capital improvement plan to address all CDBG eligible parks & playgrounds. There were no questions or comments.

<u>Crocker Field Grandstand Wall Restoration</u>	<u>City of Fitchburg School Department</u>	\$8,000.	\$25,000.
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Project funds will be used to remove and replace three (3) sections of wall; each section in 43” high x 30 feet long located at the front row of seats in Sections 10, 11 and 12 of the open grandstands. This wall is currently structurally unsound, according to a Registered Professional Structural Engineer, creating a safety hazard. Funding provided by CDBG will be matched equally by the School Department. Fitchburg DPW will perform design work and develop technical specifications.

Rick Kazajian of Crocker Field Restoration Committee spoke in support of this proposal. He reviewed the past projects completed with matching CDBG funds allowing for preservation of the historic site and specified the work to be done in upcoming year. John DiPasquale asked about future plans for maintenance. Rick explained the continuing efforts to maintain the facility. Amy Green asked about ongoing efforts to fundraise and Rick Kazajian indicated that fundraising was a constant goal.

<u>Streetscape Improvements</u>	<u>Community Development</u>	\$60,000.	\$51,100.
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Project funds will be used to design, install or replace sidewalks, curb-cuts, fencing, lighting, plantings or other streetscape or accessibility improvements along City Gateways, North of Main or other strategic locations. Funds may support or be used as a match for other funding under the city’s Complete Streets program or be used to apply and provide design or match for the next round of MassWorks Public Infrastructure grant program.

Tom Skwierawski spoke in support of this application. He reviewed the Complete Streets and MassWorks programs and the need for matching funding being available for projects. Paul Fontaine asked what specific projects were being earmarked and Tom Skwierawski explained that the Complete Streets plan determines locations. John DiPasquale asked how this proposal was different from the Sidewalk Accessibility project submitted by Disability Commission and Tom Skwierawski explained that they are not mutually exclusive. Mike Hurley questioned the request of \$60,000. when there was no specific plan, and; inquired about brick sidewalks.

<u>Handicapped Accessibility Improvements</u>	<u>Fitchburg Historical Society</u>	\$4,474.	n/a
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Project funds will be used to address obstacles to ADA accessibility. Handicapped elevator improvements in elevator control room; new exterior lighting at handicapped parking/entrance; newly painted symbols and lines on handicapped parking spaces and new track lighting fixtures for brighter light in public exhibition and program area. Work will be ADA compliant.

Susan Navarre of the Fitchburg Historical Society spoke in support of this application stressing that the Historical Society is a free facility for all ages, incomes and abilities. The Historical Society added an elevator to the Phoenix Building to make more accessible however they need a more efficient heater. New lights are needed for both safety and to enable seniors to see the exhibits, she also discussed the parking lot requiring new painting to indicate handicapped spots. No questions or comments were received.

<u>Handicapped Accessibility Renovations</u>	CENTRO	\$21,325.	n/a
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Project funds will be used to address obstacles to ADA accessibility at recently purchased building at One Wood Place which will host clients from DCF family stabilization program and IDCF Intensive Foster Care program. Work would include making a small first floor bathroom and kitchen into one large handicapped accessible bathroom as well as installing a handicap ramp to enable wheelchairs and other walker support devices to enter at the front of the building. Work will be ADA compliant.

Eileen Berger and Roberto Diaz, from CENTRO, spoke in support of this application. They gave a brief history of the agency and stated they have had a site in Fitchburg for seven (7) years. They spoke about CENTRO’s recent purchase of a building and need for accessibility for their clients, indicating that they had contracts with DCF. Paula Caron asked about the number of people served and Roberto Diaz replied that it averaged 100 - 150.

6 PROPOSALS - \$ 173,799.

PUBLIC SERVICES

<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>SPONSOR</u>	<u>YR. 44 REQUEST</u>	<u>YR. 43 AWARD</u>
<u>Street Homeless Intervention Program</u>	<u>Our Father's House</u>	\$28,000.	\$24,500.

Summary: Project funds will be used to pay staff salary for a 20 hour per week Street Outreach Worker solely dedicated to the homeless within the City of Fitchburg. Connections to health and social services, mental health and addiction services will be offered along with food, clothing blankets and human contact. Will work with Fitchburg PD and FD. In addition, \$8,000 would be available to pay for a chronically homeless person's first month's rent only or one-time payment in order to enable individuals to acquire and live in permanent housing and off the streets.

Kevin McLean, Street Outreach for Our Father's House, spoke to this proposal, stating that the program was in its 2nd year and has proven very successful. He indicated that a majority of the calls for Fitchburg were after 5 pm and on weekends and this allowed for direct intervention to Fitchburg homeless. He stressed the collaborative effort between OFH, the Fitchburg Police Department and Fitchburg Fire Department. Joel Kaddy supported this proposal, stating that as a retired Fitchburg Police Officer he felt this was the most important program in the City. Ernest Martineau, Chief of Police in Fitchburg spoke in support of the proposal, calling the program a phenomenal success and praised the outreach efforts of OFH, especially during the recent cold weather.

<u>Building Empowered Youth & Families</u>	<u>MOC as management company of United Neighbors of Fitchburg, Inc.</u>	\$53,000.	\$44,968.
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Project funds will be used to provide, information and referral, food pantry and bi-lingual services to at United Neighbors of Fitchburg facility. Youth programs will be offered including after-school programs for teens and kids and Teen Night programs incorporating homework help; recreation and exercise programs; leadership development and civic engagement. Funds will partially pay for staff salaries for Program Director, Afterschool Coordinator, Afterschool program assistant and Administrative support as well as buildings and equipment. It is estimated that 110 (unduplicated count) will be served.

Leona Earley from MOC, Inc. spoke in support of this proposal which MOC applied for as the management agency for United Neighbors of Fitchburg. She stated that UNF, after some issues last spring, has continued to provide services to the people of Fitchburg, specifically afterschool programming, food pantry and information & referral services. Paul Fontaine asked where is the year 43 money? Leona Earley explained that programs are still in effect, the scope of services UNF has offered in the past has just been reduced to provide for better service. Josiah Richards, former Board member of UNF spoke in support of the proposal stating that UNF had never closed but suffered a fiscal crisis and managed to cut services so as to keep the afterschool program and food pantry. Leona Earley stated that they were servicing 50 families currently and averaged 35-40 children per day. Amy Green asked if there was a plan for next year regarding staffing and if UNF will be able to self-fund. Leona Earley answered that UNF is sustainable right now.

<u>Spartacus Program</u>	<u>Montachusett Regional YMCA</u>	\$10,000.	\$8,176.
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Project funds will be used to support staff salary of the Teen Center Spartacus Program, offering services to at-risk youth between the ages of 13 and 18 who live in Fitchburg. Emphasis will be on Youth Development, Healthy Living and Social Responsibility through physical fitness, team building, life skills training and outdoor activities. It is estimated that 60 youth (unduplicated count) will be served between September and June.

Dave Connell from the YMCA spoke in support of this proposal and explained the purpose of the Spartacus program. Members are staying in school, grades improve and court involvement declines. The program is changing the trajectory of these teenager's lives. Many participated in the annual college tour, where YMCA staff drive a group of members to visit a variety of colleges. This year, healthy eating was made a component of the program with a healthy meal being provided to students, combining the physical activity component with nutrition. Paul Beauchemin spoke in favor of this program, Boys & Girls Club and UNF, stating that there is not a lot for kids age 13-18 to do in Fitchburg and these programs keep them out of trouble. Sam Squailia asked for information regarding participation in community services projects. Mr. Connell stated that the Spartacus members volunteer at YMCA camp, area clean-ups and work to keep Main St. clean. Paul Fontaine spoke about the 15% cap and the difficulty of funding all requests while keeping within that cap.

<u>Drug Enforcement Patrol Program</u>	<u>Fitchburg Police Dept.</u>	\$70,000.	\$52,122.
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Project funds will be used to provide for police overtime expenses related to drug investigation activities in the CDBG Strategy Area and foot/motorcycle/bicycle patrols in targeted CDBG areas. Police activities include narcotics investigations, surveillance, undercover buys, search warrant services and arrests. CDBG funds will be used by the Drug Suppression Unit to conduct thorough investigations on mid to high level dealers in the City of Fitchburg, particularly targeting the heroin and opioid market in designated CDBG areas.

Police Chief Ernest Martineau spoke in support of this application. Chief Martineau stated that this was the 15th year of CDBG funding request by the department. He spoke of the opioid crisis being a public health crisis and shared that in 2016 there were 322 overdoses and in 2017 there were 221 while the police department had 87 saves using narcan. Chief Martineau said that the focus of the program was the interdiction of drugs into the City. He described the full-time drug suppression unit, who last year served 52 search warrants resulting in 50 arrests, and seized 1200 grams of cocaine, 306 grams of heroin 20.1 grams of fentanyl and 16 firearms. Sam Squailia asked how many of the overdoses were actual deaths and the Chief explained the process and that those numbers were not available yet.

**Transportation Services
to Afterschool Program,
Project Learn STEAM**

**Boys & Girls Club
of Fitchburg and Leominster**

\$60,000.

\$15,330.

Project funds will be used to provide one-way transportation from Fitchburg schools to the Boys and Girls Club Afterschool Program located at 365 Lindell Street in Leominster. The Fitchburg schools include: Memorial, South Street, Reingold, Crocker, McKay, Longsjo, Sizer and Fitchburg High School. It is estimated that approximately 1,440 transportation trips will be provided and 300 Fitchburg youth (unduplicated) served.

Donata Martin from the Boys & Girls Club spoke in support of this project. She stated that is currently costs \$543. Per day to bus the children from Fitchburg and her January bus bill was over \$9,700 resulting in the Boys & Girls Club subsidizing these students. Paula Caron asked how many students were enrolled from Fitchburg and Donata stated that is was 314 although the City does not pay for Sizer, Monty Tech. Paul Fontaine asked if the Boys & Girls Club had ever requested funding from Sizer or Monty Tech and Donata Martin stated that this year they would be asking for funding from those two schools. Paul Fontaine also asked if she had approached the Fitchburg School Department about sharing their bus contract and Donata Martin said she had but it didn't work. Peter Capodagli asked if there a charge was for Leominster students and Donata Martin responded that Leominster paid. Paula Caron stated that this was an ongoing issue (buses crossing over City limits) and maybe there was a legislative remedy. Amy Green asked how much room they would need to have a program in Fitchburg and Donata Martin replied they would need room for 300 + children. Sam Squailia asked why Boys & Girls Club could not charge a fee if CDBG funded and Tom Skwierawski stated that is was allowed but clarified the issue with program income.

**MIHN Family Housing/
Family Pathways Project**

**Montachusett Interfaith
Hospitality Network**

\$10,000.

\$8,176.

Project funds will provide emergency housing for homeless families in North Worcester County, including case management and follow up services. It is estimated MIHN will screen at least 250 referrals during the year, and will continue to try to meet the goal of serving 30 Fitchburg residents (unduplicated count) in the shelter and emergency services. The CDBG funds will be used to partially pay for the MIHN Operations Manager salary costs.

Jon Hogue spoke on behalf of MIHN and said that they were constantly seeking grants and fundraising in order to continue to offer their services. He described the 5 bedroom house and recently renovated screen porch which is now a popular playroom for the children. He stated that this funding allows for services to Fitchburg families and their goal is to service 30 individuals. Sam Squailia asked where the shelter was located. Jon Hogue gave the address of 758 Main St. in Leominster. She also asked whether MIHN has met their goal in the past of servicing 30 Fitchburg residents. Jon Hogue said he did not have actual numbers with him. Sue Christensen stated that all subrecipients were required to submit monthly, quarterly and yearly reports and MIHN had always been at or near goal.

**Accessible, No-Cost
Exercise Opportunity**

Community Health Connections

\$50,000.

n/a

\$40,000 in project funds will be used to buildout a fitness center at 326 Nichols Rd. that will be free to Community Health Center patients and \$10,000 will be used for equipment. Proposed project activities are building the fitness center, locker rooms, bathrooms, space for staff person and physical therapist intern to aid patients. Goal is to serve up to 350 people a year, providing opportunity for CHC patients to improve their overall health outcomes, encouraging activity, creating a healthier lifestyle and aiding in the treatment of medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity

Jackie Buckley, COO of CHC spoke in support of this proposal, giving a brief overview of the services currently offered by CHC and stated that a majority of their patients were below the poverty line and unable to join a commercial gym. Many had high risk medical conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, etc. and this project would assist in making free exercise programs available to those who could not afford it. Jackie Buckley stated that the area was partially built and plumbed but they lack the funds to finish it. Paul Beauchemin asked whether or not insurance companies could pay for these services and Jackie Buckley replied that only 15% of CHC patients had commercial insurance which would allow for that. Paula Caron commented about the road up to their facility as an issue.

**Bike Loan Program at
Fitchburg Library**

Joel Kaddy

\$10,000.

n/a

Project funds will be used to expand the Bicycle Loan Program which started in 2017 with a soft opening and will be going public in the spring of 2018. The intent of the program is to promote physical activity and its health benefits, as well as alternative transportation, to all Fitchburg residents. Future plans will include a safe bike program. Funding will provide for routine maintenance for all bikes and preparing donated bikes for use.

Joel Kaddy spoke in support of this proposal stating that it aligns with the Complete Streets agenda and will improve the quality of life in Fitchburg. He wants to get the program off the ground soon and stated that many residents in Fitchburg are unable to afford a car or even a bicycle. Amana Koeck asked if this funding was to purchase bikes and Joel Kaddy responded that it would only be used for repairs of bicycles that had been donated, also stating that this program is operated out of the Fitchburg Public Library and is covered under the Library liability insurance. Donata Martin stated that this would be a great opportunity for collaboration with the Boys & Girls Club members, teaching new skills. Paula Caron commented if the \$10,000 was required and could it work with less funding.

8 PROPOSALS - \$291,000.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

<u>Small Business Technical Assistance Program</u>	<u>NewVue Communities</u>	\$25,000.	\$20,440.
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Project funds will provide outreach and technical assistance to businesses. This program leverages loans for small businesses. It is estimated that 40 businesses will be served (unduplicated count), 65 jobs will be created/retained, 43 businesses will be counseled, 4 loans with a value of \$100,000 total will be facilitated and 26 business plans developed. Funds will be used to pay staff salary.

Ray Belanger from NewVue Communities spoke in support of this application saying that over the past eight (8) years of this program, it has worked with 272 individuals, developed 96 business plans and helped 32 individuals obtain over a million dollars in loans. Mary Jo Bohart spoke in support of the proposal stating that Ray Belanger has been an invaluable resource to many small businesses. Donata Martin stated that the program has been a help to Boys & Girls Club student who recently launched a business. Jay Bry stated that Fitchburg State supports this program and will be collaborating with NewVue. Sam Squailia asked for an example of a business assisted and Ray Belanger said that the services are confidential however he did share a story of a local success.

<u>533 Main Street Social Enterprise Restaurant/Cafe</u>	<u>GAMMHA, Inc.</u>	\$32,500.	n/a
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Program funds will support a training and employment program that will be part of a proposed restaurant to be opened on the first floor of 533 Main Street. This “fast casual” restaurant will focus on locally sourced, healthy ingredients, including those grown by people in recovery on GAAMHA’s new supportive housing/farm project in Athol and baked goods sourced from GAAMHA’s social enterprise bakery opening in Gardner. CDBG funds will be used to hire a head chef/caterer to run the social enterprise and develop a training curriculum. It is estimated that 20 people will be enrolled in the culinary training and employment program.

Shawn Hayden, COO of GAAMHA, Inc. spoke in support of this application sharing that GAAMHA is working with a developer to acquire and renovate the building located at 533 Main Street, with the intent of 10 sober housing apartments on the upper levels and a bakery/café open to the public on the street level. Shawn Hayden spoke about the history of GAAMHA and its mission. Paula Caron asked if this was similar to their project in Gardner. Shawn Hayden replied that it was. GAMMHA purchased and renovated a building in Gardner, which now contains 12 studio apartments and two commercial spaces, one of which will contain a bakery/café and the other is rented to Alyssa’s Place. Amy Green stated that she had toured the Gardner facility and it is the gold standard and offered support for this proposal.

<u>CDBG Business Loans and Grants</u>	<u>Fitchburg Comm Development Department</u>	\$100,000.	\$76,650.
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Summary: Program funds will provide grant incentives for building owners with prospective tenants in the Main Street commercial district to encourage accessibility improvements such as elevators or lifts and code improvements including sprinkler systems, grease traps, venting and other missing elements required by code for the proposed use.al district to encourage accessibility improvements such as elevators or lifts. It is estimated that 3-5 businesses (unduplicated count) will be served; 2-6 full time equivalent jobs will be created and 1-2 units will be made handicapped accessible

Tom Skwierawski, Liz Murphy and Mary Jo Bohart spoke in support of this application. Tom Skwierawski stated that the intent was to provide incentive for businesses to locate on Main Street and was composed of two parts - - Business Loans and Grants to address ADA issues of health and safety. Paul Fontaine stated that in the past not all money was used and asked if any loans had been given out in Year 43. Liz Murphy replied in the negative. Tom Skwierawski stated that he anticipates that demand will increase as the program expands. Mike Hurley asked if its January why hasn't any money from this year been used. Tom Skwierawski stated that funding was late arriving. Paul Beauchemin asked if we are being selective on who goes downtown and what is the game plan? Tom Skwierawski stated that we cannot tell a business not to locate here but we can instead encourage a business. Amy Green stated that there are privately owned businesses on Main Street that can utilize this program and it is a tool to help business. Ray Belanger spoke in support of the program.

3 Proposals - 157,500.

REHABILITATION AND PRESERVATION

<u>Code Enforcement</u>	<u>Fitchburg BOH</u>	\$152,000.	\$153,300.
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Project funds will be used to pay 100% of two existing full-time BOH Inspector positions and 50% of one full-time Clerk position. Through the enforcement of the State's Sanitary and Building Codes, Fitchburg's housing stock will be greatly improved. To be eligible, this activity must be part of a comprehensive strategy to arrest deterioration, including housing rehab and demolition. It is estimated that 1,000 housing units (duplicated count) will be inspected in the CDBG strategy area.

Stephen Curry, Health Director, spoke in support of this application stating that it currently supported 2 full time inspectors and 1 part time clerk which allows for inspections on a daily basis in neighborhoods where blight exists. He stated that inspectors filed 70 cases in housing court and 28 receiverships resulted. Consulting with Fire Department, Police Department and Building is ongoing in addressing these issues. Inspectors also do lead inspections. Paul Fontaine asked if this position was supposed to be out of CDBG but then realized that was the Building Department inspectors. Amy Green commented that she believed that the work the 2 inspectors and the clerk did bought in more revenue that the \$152,000 requested and she was in support of the proposal.

Critical Home Repair

Habitat for Humanity

\$60,000.

n/a

Project funds will be used to fund up to 8 critical repairs in Fitchburg serving approximately 30 residents. Critical Home Repair is exterior or interior work to alleviate critical health, life and safety issues or code violations for homeowners in need. Participants must own their own home and have a verifiable need that falls within scope and capabilities and the home must be a primary principal residence, current on mortgage, property taxes and insurance. Repairs must be necessary to function in the home and homeowners must partner with Habitat.

Carolyn Reed, Executive Director spoke in support of this proposal, explaining the work that Habitat does and their wish to expand their services in Fitchburg. Paula Caron asked what the average cost per house was and Carolyn Reed stated that the average cost of repairs ran \$2,000 -\$6,000 and consists of primarily roofs, accessibility like ramps or entryways. Paula Caron asked if there was a minimum amount habitat could work with and Carolyn Reed indicated that \$60,000.00 would allow for 8 critical home repairs so the funding provided would determine the quantity. Paul Beauchemin asked if funding was in a designated area or for the whole City and Carolyn Murphy stated it was open to the whole City. Liz Murphy spoke in support of the project.

IdeaLab Build Out

Fitchburg State University

\$25,000.

n/a

Project funds will be used to support the build out of the IdeaLab located in the Historic Theater Block of Main Street. In partnership with NewVue Communities and the City of Fitchburg, Fitchburg State University has developed a plan to jump-start the local economy by sparking entrepreneurial activity in the heart of downtown Fitchburg. Part of phase one, the IdeaLab consists of approximately 2,000 square feet of flexible space that will be used to launch small businesses by providing them with flexible, affordable, state-of-the-art commercial space as well as on-site technical assistance provided by NewVue Communities. CDBG funding will support critical needs including finishes, tel/data wiring, shared business equipment and shared workstations.

Jay Bry from Fitchburg State University spoke in support of this application. He explained the plans for the IdeaLab and how it was part of the Theater Block restoration which would have a positive impact on Main Street. He discussed the area that would be dedicated to students as well as the partnership with NewVue that would open up opportunities for on-site technical assistance. He also explained the concept of providing a business incubator in the downtown.

<u>Buy Fitchburg</u>	<u>Community Development Department</u>	\$80,000.00	n/a
	<u>Down payment Assistance</u>		

Project funds will provide matching funds to eligible Fitchburg homebuyers for down payment assistance, closing costs and homebuyer education scholarships. The project would seek opportunities to leverage funds with other programs to ensure homes are affordable to buyers and in good repair. It is estimated that assistance would provide approximately 14 households to become homeowners of affordable housing in Fitchburg.

Tom Skwierawksi and Liz Murphy spoke in support of this proposal, indicating that more homeownership was a stabilizing force for the City. Liz Murphy stated that there was trouble making the Buy It Fix It program work and that there is funding from 3 years ago to reprogram. Paul Fontaine asked if this was the same as the HOOP program and Liz Murphy stated that they differed. Paula Caron asked if this is replicating what NewVue does for homebuyers already and should a City department be doing this. Liz Murphy stated that this is a common practice with CDBG/HOME funds and no one else in the area provides this. Tom Skwierawski spoke about the affordable housing stock in Fitchburg and how this program provides an incentive to buyers. Paul Fontaine asked if the program was a necessity as he did not see it solving problems in the City. Tom Skwierawski spoke about the incentive aspect of attracting buyers.

4 PROPOSALS - \$317,000.

CLEARANCE ACTIVITIES

<u>Demolition</u>	<u>Fitchburg Community</u>	\$250,000.	\$240,391.
	<u>Development Department</u>		

Project funds will be used to remove abandoned structures which pose an imminent threat to public safety and which contribute to slums and blight. The entire City will be served but the principal benefit will accrue to the CDBG Strategy Area in which the proposed activities will take place. It is estimated that 7 buildings containing up to 21 units will be demolished. Consultants will be hired for specific expertise such as environmental assessment or engineering services.

Tom Skwierawksi and Liz Murphy spoke in support of this proposal. Liz Murphy stated that they are in the process of demo round now and this is planning for the next round. Tom Skwierawski stated that he was in the field taking photographs as required for demolition documents and it only underscored the critical nature of the problem as the safety hazards were apparent. Tom Skwierawski was asked how many buildings would this proposed amount cover and he answered about seven (7). Paul Fontaine said the City is making up for lost time.

1 PROPOSAL - \$250,000.

PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>SPONSOR</u>	<u>YR. 44 REQUEST</u>	<u>YR. 43 AWARD</u>
<u>CDBG Administration</u>	<u>Fitchburg Community Development Department</u>	\$182,000.	\$178,850.

Project funds will provide for the necessary administration of CDBG programs and sub-recipient contracts in accordance with federal guidelines, including staffing, technical services and planning activities. This also includes the cost of various activities such as the Consolidated Plan; Consolidated Annual Performance Report; Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing and other strategic plans and services. These funds enable the City to apply for, receive and administer additional federal and state grants. In the previous year, \$8,640,178.00 dollars in related grants were obtained.

Tom Skwierawski and Liz Murphy spoke in support of this proposal, indicating that only 20% could be spent on this category which provides staffing to implement the CDBG program. NO comments or questions were received.

1 PROPOSAL - \$182,000.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 pm.