



Town of Brookline

Massachusetts

Department of Planning and Community Development

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Alison C. Steinfeld
Director

To: Brookline Select Board

From: Joe Viola, Assistant Director for Community Planning 

Re: **Substantial Amendment to the CDBG FY 2020 Annual Action Plan**

- CDBG – CV Public Hearing on May 5, 2020 at 6:00 PM

Date: April 30, 2020

SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENT TO THE FY 20 CDBG ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

In order to program the Town's supplemental CDBG - CV funds for the uses proposed in this memorandum, the Board must vote to approve a substantial amendment to the Town's FY 2020 CDBG Annual Action Plan (AAP).

Amending the AAP requires a public notice and comment process. To that end, the Town published a legal notice in the Brookline TAB with a run date of 4/30/2020 to inform the public of the proposed AAP amendment. The notice provides information about an abbreviated comment period, as allowed under the March 2020 CARES Act, and provides a description of the proposed amendment. The notice also invites public comment for a five day period, which concludes on 5/5/2020. The Board's virtual public hearing, scheduled for May 5, 2020 at 6:00 PM, provides an opportunity for public input before the Board takes action on the amendment.

At the conclusion of the virtual public hearing, the Board should vote to approve a substantial amendment for specific activities and authorize the Chair to execute forms and certifications that will serve as an application to HUD for CDBG-CV funding. We also request that the Board vote to delegate the responsibility of executing administrative documents necessary to program the CDBG funding to the Director of Planning and Community Development or her designee.

FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on conversations with community partners about increased needs due to COVID-19, and after consultations with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development about allowable uses for supplemental CDBG-CV funds, the Planning and Community Development Department offers the following funding recommendations to the Brookline Select Board for your consideration and approval.

Required Votes:

- Vote to approve a Substantial Amendment to the Town’s FY 2020 (FFY19) Annual Action Plan for the use of CDBG – CV funds, as follows:

PUBLIC SERVICES		
Brookline Safety Net Program	\$ 325,000.00	Funding for emergency housing and subsistence needs
Family Aid	\$ 10,000.00	Funding for PPE and sanitization
Food Security		
▪ Senior Center	\$ 39,337.00	Funding for a food delivery program for seniors
▪ Food Pantry	\$ 160,663.00	Funding for food inventory and delivery
SUBTOTAL	\$ 535,325.00	
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
EDLTP Business Assistance	\$ 200,000.00	Funding for working capital grants to businesses
PUBLIC HOUSING		
BHA – coronavirus response	\$ 72,337.00	Funding for PPE and sanitization
TOTAL	\$ 807,337.00	

- Vote to authorize the Chair or his designee to execute standard forms SF- 424 and 424D, which serve as an application for federal discretionary programs, and required certifications
- Vote to authorize the Director of Planning and Community Development or her designee to execute administrative and programmatic documents required to complete the substantial amendment and HUD application process

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED USES

A. PUBLIC SERVICES

CDBG-CV funds will be allocated to Public Service agencies to provide much-needed COVID-19 relief for seniors, vulnerable and at-risk residents. As economic disruption continues, these programs will help to stave off pandemic-related food and housing crises.

Safety Net (\$325,000): CDBG-CV funds will be used for the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health’s (BCCMH) Safety Net Program to augment their capability to provide relief to individuals and families affected by the COVID-19 virus. Center staff continue to report increasing requests from many Brookline community members who have never previously sought help and from vulnerable neighbors faced with urgent new challenges. To address a many-fold increase in inquiries for emergency assistance through the Safety Net program over the past several weeks, and to stay ahead of a much larger wave of assistance requests that are expected to come, a small amount of CDBG-CV funds will be used to bolster staffing capacity while a larger share will be used to provide direct, immediate assistance around housing stability, utility assistance, cleaning/disinfecting services and other basic subsistence needs.

Food Security (\$200,000): The Brookline Food Pantry (BFP) and the Brookline Senior Center (BSC) have a history of managing vital community programs to ensure that all residents have regular access to food and do not go hungry. Both programs have reported a significant increase in the number of clients served since mid-March. The number of new clients served has hastened the need for additional staff and has increased expenses, especially as delivery services are expanded for COVID-positive, elderly or immune-compromised, low-income clients. These providers expect that costs will grow due to several factors:

- Increased demand for food from more clients, with more frequency
- Reaching the purchasing cap with the Greater Boston Food Bank, leading to increase of retail purchases
- Product shortages at the Greater Boston Food Bank, leading to increase of retail purchases

Pre-COVID-19, the Brookline Food Pantry offered a multi-location, multi-day food pantry serving residents of Brookline and those who have children in public schools. While the BFP will maintain its existing three locations, two of which are within Brookline Housing Authority developments, and operate five sessions per week, their food accessibility model may continue to expand toward delivery service.

The Senior Center, which has seen a significant increase in the number of seniors who require food delivery in order to remain socially distant and virus-free, will create a food delivery service in place of on-site congregate meals. The program will acquire, package and deliver food to seniors who are isolated from the community.

Both programs routinely serve diverse, low/moderate income households, some of whom have language barriers.

Family Aid (\$10,000): Family Aid Boston runs a 35-household, 100-person congregate shelter for low-income, homeless families in Coolidge Corner – the only shelter for homeless households located in Brookline. Throughout Greater Boston, the agency works to provide shelter, homelessness prevention, rapid rehousing, and housing stabilization for over 300 families and is currently working to mitigate the effects of the current crisis by providing emergency supplies and support to these vulnerable households.

While Family Aid is not specifically a domestic violence organization, many residents served by Family Aid have experienced domestic violence in the past. The organization is much like Pine Street Inn but works with families instead of individuals. Family Aid has requested support for food, diapers, personal hygiene products, PPE and cleaning supplies/services for its shelter in Brookline. We believe that residents can avail themselves of the Safety Net for food and needed personal supplies but, given the congregate nature of the shelter and the vulnerability of its residents, we advocate supporting their emergency needs for increased cleaning, cleaning supplies, and PPE.

B. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Business Assistance (\$200,000): Brookline's Economic Development and Long Term Planning Division will utilize CDBG-CV funds to assist 20-30 small to medium-sized businesses through grants ranging from \$5,000 - \$15,000. The funding will be targeted to small businesses owned by low/moderate (L/M) income people or for other businesses with at least 51% L/M employees that need financial assistance to retain or create jobs. Funding could be used as working capital for business-related expenses, such as assisting with rent and utility bills, reimbursing owners for perishable stock and inventory, or assisting businesses with a transition from storefront to a delivery or e-commerce model.

Applications will be processed on a weekly basis. It is expected that businesses served will be:

- for-profits
- under 50 employees
- have been in operation in Brookline since November 2019

- types of business in which, prior to March 1st, a majority of the revenue was through in-person transactions or in-person services
- businesses that show a loss compared to normal business operation periods, due to COVID-related limitations on business operations

Prioritization of grants to businesses could be based on the following criteria:

- demonstrate a higher low-mod employee retained/hired to grant request ratio
- were denied EIDL or PPP loans
- prior to COVID-19, did not have an existing banking relationship other than a checking/savings account
- have contacted their landlord, bank, insurance company, and/or utility companies to assist with immediate cash flow issues
- demonstrate a high likelihood for a resilient future (adding online or delivery systems, changing or adapting business offerings, profitable business prior to March 1st)

Additionally, in accordance with HUD's guidance on WBE/MBE outreach and the Select Board's FY 2020 objectives, we will ask applicants to voluntarily report whether a majority of their ownership and/or employees are one or more of the following: women, minorities, and/or members of the LBGTQ community. This voluntarily-reported data will not be used to compare or prioritize applications. We will be monitoring this demographic data to further focus marketing efforts between granting rounds, with the goal of receiving a diverse pool of applicants.

C. PUBLIC HOUSING

PPE and Sanitization Costs (\$72,337): CARES Act funding available to Public Housing Authorities is required to be used for federal public housing. The Brookline Housing Authority does not expect to receive any assistance for state public housing, which makes up a substantial portion of their portfolio. The BHA is taking on coronavirus expenditures based on urgent needs, with no funding identified in their operating budgets to cover them. Assistance with these expenses from CDBG - CV funds will assist the BHA to sustain their coronavirus response. Funds will be used to both reimburse and pay for future costs to sanitize certain developments within their state housing portfolio. Funds may also be used for the purchase of PPE and other safety-related equipment that will be utilized by various support staff to conduct on-site, work-related tasks.