

Select Board Public Hearing
February 16, 2023

In attendance: David Dufresne, Chair; Rich Eichacker, Vice-chair; Derick Veliz, Clerk; James Ferrera, Town Administrator

Call Meeting to order: 6:00 p.m.
Pledge of Allegiance

1. FY22-23 Warren CDBG Public Hearing – Grant Application Chris Dunphy, Principal Planner from the Central MA Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), appeared and presented the proposed application which is being put forth by the Warren Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC). Two projects were discussed including the School Street Project – Phase 2 and a design project towards the future Improvements to the Town Common. The Application is due on March 3, 2023.

Mr. Dunphy said the School Street project is a continuation of a project funded through the FY21 CDBG. The first phase was recently bid, and that work includes a replacement water main and the rehabilitation/replacement of a large retaining wall. The wall, which supports portions of the sidewalk and road on School, is in poor condition in needs to be replaced before road and sidewalk improvements occur. This proposed Phase 2 FY22-23 School Street Improvement project will improve the street and sidewalks surfaces as well as the stormwater drain system. The project area begins at the intersection of Main Street and School Street and ends to the north at the School Street and Otis Street intersection, a total length of approximately 1,400 feet.

Dunphy began to talk about the proposed design project for the Town Common, and introduced Jeremy Olson, Highway Surveyor, and chair of the Warren Community Development Advisory Committee. Mr. Olson said the committee has been discussing this project for several months and that improvements are needed because the area does not currently function well with the activities that occur and any future planned activities such as a Farmer's market, a concert or other holiday events. The trees are positioned throughout the common in somewhat of a haphazard fashion and their roots systems are tripping hazards. There is also minimal parking that is awkward to navigate. Other improvements such as lighting, a new gazebo, accessible walkways, or paths may help towards the revitalization of Warren Center and perhaps help downtown businesses.

Mr. Dunphy continued and said that Warren has been in the process of updating its Open Space and Recreation Plan. In a survey that occurred, residents have expressed that they would like to the Town Common improved. Dunphy said the existing Common lacks functionality and for that reason, current and planned uses are difficult.

Mr. Dufresne asked if there were any comments, Jim McKeon with Emergency Management and park maintenance said he concurred with Dunphy and Olson stating that improvements are needed for some of the planned uses.

No other comments were made.

A motion to approve the formal vote and support for the proposed FY 2022-23 Warren CDBG was made by Mr. Eichacker and seconded by Mr. Veliz – unanimous.

The town approves the submission of the proposed FY 2022-23 Warren CDBG grant application and their respective activities to the DHCD (with allowance for minor budget or program adjustments), and furthermore authorizes the CEO to sign required forms when prepared. The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) will assist the town with the overall management of the grant if funded.

Respectfully Submitted by
Corinne Thibodeau



Richard Eichacker, Vice-chair

TOWN OF WARREN
FY 2022-23 CDBG Application – (Grant due date March 3, 2023)

PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA
February 16, 2023 - 6:00 PM

1. INTRODUCTION: Chris Dunphy, Central MA Regional Planning Commission
2. CDBG OBJECTIVE - The Community Development Block Grant was authorized by Congress and is funded under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has designated the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) as the state's administering agency for CDBG funding. The primary objective is: “...to develop viable, urban communities by providing decent housing and suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities principally for low- and moderate-income persons.” DHCD will fund eligible projects designed to meet this objective.

Program background

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is funded by US Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (HUD)
 - Projects must serve primarily low- to moderate-income beneficiaries or eliminate ‘blight.’
- The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) administers the program for communities below ~50,000 population. (Small cities/towns)
- This application is capped at \$1.35 million, which combines fiscal years of FY22 and FY23.
- This is a competitive grant program with 24-month performance period (previously 18 months).

3. DESCRIBE THE PROPOSED PROGRAM

FY 2022-23 Warren

- School Street Improvement Project (Phase 2) - \$1,100,000

Phase 2 proposes to rehabilitate the full length of road and sidewalk, install appropriate curbing, improve the stormwater drainage system, and conduct some minor sewer repairs.

A construction phasing plan was developed given the high costs of all needed improvements to School Street’s infrastructure.

Phase 1 – SSIP, funded through the FY21 CDBG program, will replace the approximate 1,370 l.f. of water main from the intersection of Main Street to the intersection of Otis Street. In addition, an approximately 2,150 square feet retaining wall that supports a portion of the road and sidewalk will be replaced.
- Town Common Design (\$55,000)
- General Administrative - \$95,000

Overall grant management including technical and administrative support, committee development and support, planning, travel, advertising, training and education, file maintenance, printing, accounting, communications, supplies and material, payments, etc.

ESTIMATED TOTAL GRANT = \$1.25 million

Project selection process

The proposed application is being put forth by the Warren Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC). Their mission is to meet as an appointed body, assist with the development and management of community development activities, and make recommendations which are in the best interest of the community. The committee holds monthly meetings to discuss needs and projects which fit within the framework of their mission and the Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG). Projects and activities are identified and evaluated based on the overall community need, need to low- and moderate-income persons, previous efforts to rectify the need, available sources of funds, ability to proceed, support for the project or activity, and compliance with local, state, and federal initiatives.

The School Street project is part of a strategy developed as result of a 2011 neighborhood planning engineering study, which evaluated the condition of infrastructure and identified the improvements needed to the following streets: Quaboag Street, Prospect Street, Otis Avenue, Richardson Street, Hillside Ave., Lombard Street, Moore Avenue and School Street. Their report confirmed that the area has some of the oldest infrastructure throughout the town that is inefficient, outdated and in some cases not in compliance with current standards. Improvements have occurred to Quaboag, Lombard and Moore. Work is scheduled to begin on School Street and Prospect Street this year. As the needed work on School Street exceeded available grant funds as part of a single application, proposed work has been phased. The water main and the reconstruction of a retaining wall will occur this year through the FY2021 CDBG. Road, sidewalks, curbing, drainage improvements and minor sewer repair are being recommended as part of this proposed Phase 2 – FY22/23 CDBG application.

Improvements to the Town Common were identified as a priority by the Warren CDAC and the Warren Parks Commission. Needed upgrades were also identified in the town's nearly completed Open Space and Recreation Plan update. The Town Common is thought to be underutilized by the town, with its functionality in question due to its poor design and layout. Existing parking is also thought to be awkward and insufficient. The CDAC and Parks Commission believe that improvements will attract residents and provide an economic boost to Warren Center and the town overall with more vibrant use. Items to be considered as part of the design include a new bandstand/gazebo, restrooms, improved parking, utility improvements (water, electric, sanitary sewer), storage area, walkways, period lighting, etc.

Application timing

- Application due date: March 3, 2023
- Award announcement date: expected Summer 2023
- Contracts to be executed by early fall of 2023.

4. SUPPORT OF THE PROGRAMS – Testimony, Comments, Etc.

5. BOARD OF SELECTMEN APPROVAL

Formal vote of approval and support for the proposed FY 2022-23 Warren CDBG.

Proposed Motion: *The town approves the submission of the proposed FY 2022-23 Warren CDBG grant application and their respective activities to the DHCD (with allowance for minor budget or program adjustments), and furthermore authorizes the CEO to sign required forms when prepared. The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) will assist the town with the overall management of the grant if funded.*

6. OTHER CDBG COMMENTS

