

The Board of Commissioners held a special meeting Thursday, November 15, 2012. Commissioners present were Clara Debnam, Gerleen Pitchford, Terry Newsom, Jimmy Kearney and Heidi Hogan. The purpose of the meeting was to hold a public hearing on a North Carolina Development Block Grant (CDBG) Catalyst Project Grant and take care of any other business brought before the Board. The sign-in sheet for the public hearing is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Mayor Diana Bobbitt called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and opened the public hearing. Mayor Bobbitt read the following notice:

Notice is hereby given that the Town of Littleton will conduct a public hearing on a proposed North Carolina Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Catalyst Project on Thursday, November 15, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. in the Town Hall located at 112 E. South Main Street, Littleton, NC, 27850. The hearing will provide explanation and description of the Town's proposal to use the CDBG Catalyst funds for housing rehabilitation and library construction/up-fitting/renovations. The purpose of this hearing is to receive public input from Town and project areas citizens regarding the proposed Catalyst Project Activities. The grant amount requested is an amount not to exceed \$500,000.00 for the Catalyst Project. The purpose of this grant is to benefit low and moderate income people and eliminate slum and blighting conditions. The hearing will also provide information regarding federal and state fair housing regulations, conflict of interest, minority business participation, etc. in accordance with the applicable CDBG requirements.

Mayor Bobbitt recognized Dennis Patton, from Upper Coastal Plain, Council of Government. Mr. Patton presented the information regarding the HUD Grant being applied for by the town.

- HUD requirements state that the town must meet the town-wide low and moderate income criteria established using the 2000 census data in order to be eligible to apply for community facilities activity. Using the HUD designated town-wide estimate (48.9%), the town was just below the necessary 51% town-wide criteria. After consulting with government officials, it was decided to look at the town of Littleton's designated low income housing sections as "Project Areas". A door to door survey was conducted and the resulting data meets the HUD, LMI requirements, allowing us to pursue the community facilities activity portion of the grant.
- Patton explained the two proposed activities of the grant:
 - HUD Housing Rehabilitation - Funds will be used to bring a low income, owner occupied house/houses up to meet housing and livability codes for approximately \$100,000-\$120,000.
 - Renovation of the former Littleton Sales Building to convert it into a town library for approximately \$300,000.
- Patton explained that the town needs to demonstrate its management plan and capabilities for sustainability of the project. We will put in writing the management process for grant submission as well as the leveraged funds to be included.

Mayor Bobbitt asked for citizen comments.

Sylvia Alston, educator and lifelong resident spoke on the need for library services in our rural area and the restoration of the property as being economically essential to the town. Many of the schools our young people attend have Title I designation, indicating economic need.

Marie Robinson championed the case of the Littleton Library in the past and spoke of the many children and adults who utilize the services of the library

Dorothy Eisenson referred to the data in the 2000 census as being far out of date as far as the economic situation that exists today

Adie Solomon, current library board chair, expressed the board's willingness to continue to work toward maintaining a town library

Christy Secrest, member of the library fund raising committee, questioned Mr. Patton on the pool of applicants for the available funds. Patton responded saying that, judging from the round of applicants for an earlier, similar grant opportunity, there were be about 50 applications from throughout the state of NC, with approximately half receiving funding. He explained the criteria used to determine grant recipients and the "point system" used in evaluating each application. Patton said that each grant is reviewed by two readers and was predicting that some announcement would be made during the month of February. General Assembly budget cuts have reduced the number of people available in the departments working with grants making the process longer.

Alfred Richardson, Haliwa-Saponi tribal official reminded the audience that the Littleton library is the closest library/technology center for the 2500 tribal members. The next nearest library/tribal facility is considerable distance away, unattainable for most of the tribe. Internet access is absent from many of the tribal homes who need computer access. The trend is for the Native Americans to move to cities where access to information and opportunity is greater. He spoke of his own personal experience with libraries and librarians where books took him through a particular difficult period in his life as a teenager. Richardson referred to the Tribal-Littleton Library Partnership which has been developed and is waiting for the space in the new location to be implemented. The need for people to job search, take classes and discover economic opportunities using the library literature and internet access was reinforced as Richardson quoted unemployment statistics in the tribal area of Hollister at 17%. In a second round of comments, Richardson ended with "There is nothing like a book!"

Larry Williams reminded the audience that the library serves areas far beyond the limits of the Town of Littleton, with lake residents depending on the town library for literary and technological services. He also commented on the great distances citizens in the community would need to drive for these services if Littleton were to lose its library.

Sherita Moore spoke on the number of elementary school assignments that require research, research that is not able to be completed at home due to lack of internet service, research that requires the reading materials and technological services the library provides. She brought out the point, that while this is at the elementary level, the need from middle school through high school is even greater.

Lynn Lassiter suggested the town look at the free and reduced lunch statistics as the schools our students attend, for additional economic need support

Brenda Williams, spoke in support of the need for library services in our rural area and asked about the timeline for grant approval. Mr. Patton responded that with the reduced staff, February is likely the earliest the Town would hear about an award.

Kim Gray, Littleton Librarian brought home the emotion associated with the thought of losing this extremely valuable asset. She used the facility growing up and is now in a position to help continue the library/technology service and help it grow. In a town with a population of 670±, the average monthly attendance/use at the library is 800. This rises to between 1100 and 1200 during the summer months. The summer reading program attracts so many young people that it has had

to move from the library to a nearby church hall. The Littleton Library is the most used branch in Halifax County.

Gabrielle Pamer stated she viewed the retention of library services and relocation to the Main Street site as continuing to revitalize the downtown community. Bringing people to town to go to the library is good for businesses

Richard Sherman asked about the “tie breaking points” in the 4 evaluation quadrants. Patton responded mentioning several areas, including the point of “shovel readiness” which gives us a considerable advantage as we are “ready to go”. He stressed that the level of community support financially has made a considerable difference in our grant applicant status.

The Mayor summarized the consensus of those attending the public hearing was the loss of the library would leave a very large literary and literacy void in an area needing and wanting these services.

Mr. Patton gave an explanation of the federal requirements to be involved in this grant if received, including but not limited to labor, language access, equal opportunity for individuals and businesses, and fair housing. He stated that the Town has done a fine job of complying and advocating these requirements in past CDBG and DENR grants.

The public hearing was closed at 11:06 am and the special session resumed.

Mayor Bobbitt read a resolution declaring a large artificial Christmas tree surplus. Commissioner Newsom made a motion seconded by Commissioner Pitchford, to adopt the **Resolution Authorizing the Disposition of Town Property (R-12-011)**, authorizing Mayor Bobbitt to dispose of the property. Following discussion including donating or selling the metal tree for scrap and the difficulty in maintaining and putting the tree up each year, the motion was voted and carried. A copy is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Following brief discussion, the Board agreed to meet Monday, November 26th, at 3:30 pm for a work session.

Their being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:19 am.

Mayor

Clerk

These minutes were approved by unanimous consent in a special called meeting by the Board of Commissioners on November 26, 2012.