

News Articles FY 2012

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HUD grant to help Section 8 families

By Kendall Hatch
Daily News Staff

MARLBOROUGH — The Community Development Authority has received a grant that will allow it to help families on the Section 8 program pull themselves into self-sufficiency.

Housing Director Doug Bushman told the Community Development Authority yesterday that he learned late last week that the CDA's approval for the Family Self Sufficiency grant had been approved.

The grant from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, for \$38,000, will pay for a new position at the authority — a family self-sufficiency coordinator.

The coordinator will work with families receiving Section 8 vouchers on developing a five-year plan with goals to improve their quality of life and get them employed in long-term jobs.

The program also establishes an escrow account for participants, into which automatic payments are made by HUD. If the participant successfully completes the program, he or she receives the money at the end of the five years. The account is managed by the Community Development Authority.

Bushman said the grant was written in house, with some technical help from the Wayland Housing Authority.

Bushman said that there are about 130 families with Section 8 vouchers in the city. According to an action plan the Community Development Authority submitted to HUD, about 46 of those families would be eligible to participate.

A participant would have to sign a contract that would stipulate a number of benchmark goals toward self-sufficiency. In order to complete the program, the participant must have gotten a suitable job and kept it for six months and all members of the household have to have been off welfare for at least a year.

A participant also must have completed all other requirements in the contract and kept their house in full compliance with their lease.

The program provides families who participate with several resource opportunities, like child care, home-ownership counseling, GED training, mental health assistance and job training.

Bushman said the program in Marlborough will also work with the mayor's office, which has established a jobs program. The mayor's office in the spring held a jobs fair and resume workshop in the city and over the summer hired students for internships and jobs with the city.

"This is another example, I think, of housing working with the city," Bushman said.

Mayor seeks \$9.5M for senior center and park

Continued from front page

the bonds, the mayor's aid declined to offer an explanation.

In a letter to the council attached to the senior center bond request, Mayor Vigeant wrote, "After many discussions, hearings and planning over the past nine months, we have reached a point where I feel we have a design in place for a building that we all can be proud of."

The plan calls for a building footprint of roughly 14,000 square feet with an additional 6,000 square foot undeveloped upper level for potential future expansion. If approved as proposed, the facility would be located at the northeast edge of Ward Park next to the current Granger Boulevard/New Street parking lot.

Commenting on the planned park upgrades, Vigeant wrote, "As I have stated on numerous occa-

sions, Ward Park has long been neglected and in dire need of investment and upgrading. The time has finally come to make a commitment to ensuring that Ward Park is given new life so that its potential can be fully utilized by families and groups of all ages and interests."

Major items listed on the Ward Park improvements budget include site preparation (\$173K), drain line replacement (\$500K), modular rest rooms/concessions facility (\$225K), raise field elevation by twelve inches (\$394K), parking lot (\$238K), two basketball courts (\$65K), one tennis court (\$44K), children's play area (\$93K) and a skate park (\$66K). Also included are four horseshoe pits (\$6K) and two bocce courts (\$6K).

There remains opposition among neighbors and others in the city to the mayor's plan to use a piece of park land for the senior center. An online fundraising tool at www.gofundme.com/save-

Proposed new Senior Center enters second phase

By Joan F. Simoneau
Community Reporter

Marlborough - Within the next six weeks, a design and an updated set of plans for the proposed new Senior Center will be presented to the City Council and residents of the city, Mayor Arthur Vigeant announced at a meeting of the council's Operations and Overview Committee March 14.

"It is a work in progress
Senior Center page 9

CDA explores regionalizing public housing

By Joan F. Simoneau
Community Reporter

Marlborough - The proposed regionalization of local housing authorities throughout the state is being explored by the Marlborough Community Development Authority (MCDA) and Public Housing Director Doug Bushman. The Massachusetts Commission on Public Housing Sustainability and Reform recently recommended a study of regionalizing certain functions, including a centralized waiting list that could diversely affect many local senior residents who are waiting for placement. Mayor Arthur Vigeant, who also chairs the MCDA, said his main concern is city residents and prefers not to accommodate residents from other communities.

While the plan states that local boards governing public housing will remain intact, at a recent meeting, CDA members questioned whether they would maintain the same level of control they have at the present time. Rent collection, maintenance and safety are among the areas being considered for a more coordinated state-wide program. In an effort to increase transparency and efficiency, it was suggested that agencies form a local tenant organization, provide training for board members, clarify city and Housing Division opera-

tions and interactions, and explore private financing.

In the report, submitted by Housing Director Doug Bushman and Andrew T. Skoog, of the MCDA-Housing Division, it states that if regionalization is either feasible and/or cost effective for Marlborough, the special relationship between the MCDA and the city should be discussed. Several functions of the MCDA-Housing Division are performed or assisted by the city, including IT support, backup snow removal, procurement, facility administration, payroll and personnel management. In addition to Bushman, the local Housing staff includes three full-time maintenance staff, one full-time State Public Housing Program administrator, one full-time Section 8 administrator, and two part-time office staff members. They maintain a total of 230 units in four locations - 29 Pleasant St., 397 Bolton St., 240 Main St. and 20 Front St.

Vigeant and other members of the MCDA suggested that Bushman contact local housing authorities surrounding Marlborough for their interest in regionalization options to improve the delivery of services. If the commission continues to go forward with regionalization, the proposal will require approval by the Legislature.

Fire initiates Marlborough's new housing director

By Joan F. Simoneau
Community Reporter

Marlborough - Marlborough's new Housing Director Douglas Bushman had a most unusual birthday this year. He was 39 days into his new job, which he began in January, when a fire broke out at the Liberty Hill Apartments, Senior Housing at 240 Main St. It appears to have started

in one unit and then spread to others, he said. At this time no specific cause for the fire has been issued.

"As someone new to Marlborough, I saw firsthand how the city's public agencies - the Police and Fire departments, Public Health and other officials acted quickly and professionally. The senior residents were sheltered, fed and, just as important, reassured that they

were safe," he said. "Several private companies stepped up and provided gift cards and food. Without question the people of Marlborough did everything possible to help."

Bushman said work on the damaged units will begin in the next few weeks and he estimated that all should be completed no later than August. He also oversees the operation of the city's other two State Elderly Housing complexes - 42 units at 29 Pleasant St., and the garden-style 60-unit complex at 397 Bolton St.

"I have had two meetings with the Marlborough Housing Tenant Council and their Executive Committee and planned meetings at all three communities. I believe it is very important for housing management to listen to the seniors - who are the customers - since we know what their concerns are and how we can respond to their needs," Bushman said.

Public safety is the new director's primary concern, that includes power outages and severe weather conditions. One of his first acts was to form a Public Safety Committee; he met with the group



PHOTO/SUBMITTED

Housing Director Doug Bushman meets with Delores Urato, president of the Marlborough Housing Tenant Association.

and suggested that it work with city services to improve their responses and ability to react to emergencies. He also encouraged employees to reach out to their counterparts and regulatory administrators at Housing and Urban Development and Housing and Community Development Authority (CDA) for training opportunities.

Bushman said he is working cohesively with the CDA, headed by Mayor Arthur Visconti, chair, and appreciates their help and guidance. He

also oversees grant activities for the group's Building Grant Program, which includes the Preston Street infrastructure project and housing rehabilitation. Before coming to Marlborough, Bushman was employed by the Westport, Conn., Housing Authority as labor counsel, where he was an advisor to the executive director. Prior to that position he was assistant to the executive director of the Housing Authority in New Britain, Conn. He is a lawyer and has also had public sector experience.

APARTMENT BUILDING BLAZE

Main Street residents evacuated after early morning fire

By Jim Ash
Publisher

A three alarm fire broke out on the third floor at Liberty Hill Apartments on Main Street in the early morning hours of Tuesday, causing an evacuation of the building and leaving four with minor, smoke-related injuries.

The apartment complex, located at 240 Main Street, is adjacent to the Senior Center and is occupied mostly by senior citizens. The unit in which the fire started was occupied by Section 8 tenants. Two residents escaped without injury but their cat was killed.

The building which is operated by the Marlborough Housing Authority has 128 units and is home to approximately 140 people. Cleaning crews were busy throughout the day and all but four apartments were reoccupied by the end of the day. The Red Cross has been assisting the displaced residents.

The Senior Center is a polling location for Ward Five, Precinct One residents and voting for Tuesday's primary election had to be moved to nearby Jacobs Hall in the Masonic Building.

There were three people transported by ambulance including two to UMass in

Worcester and one to Marlborough Hospital. Two were treated and released and one person was admitted. There was also one person who drove himself to Marlborough Hospital and was treated and released.

The fire was jointly investigated by the Marlborough Fire Department and State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal. The cause of the fire was determined to be accidental. The fire damage was mostly contained to the apartment of origin due to the type of construction. Smoke damage was extensive to the cor-

Housing rehab funds for city residents

The City of Marlborough's Community Development office has housing rehabilitation funds available to assist Marlborough residents with a variety of housing code violations such as doors and windows, electrical, heating, plumbing, roofs, lead paint and asbestos hazards. To see if you qualify, call Anne Marie Blake at 508-460-3715.

Early morning blaze on Main Street

Continued from front page

ridor and minor to the apartments which were all cleaned to be reoccupied. Damage estimate is in excess of \$300K.

Mayor Arthur Vigeant credits the swift action of Marlborough's first responders with minimizing the extent of the damage. "The most important thing in these situations is that there was no loss of life and we are very grateful for that," he said. "Our departments did a great job executing their plan of action and I'm proud of the way everyone came through during this emergency."

Vigeant thanked the residents of Main Street as well as the first

responders from neighboring communities who were very cooperative and helpful. "Our next goal is to survey the damage, get it fixed, and get our neighbors back in their homes," said the mayor.

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