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Funding to be made available for weatherization program

By Amy Revak , Herald-Standard

The Fayette County Redevelopment Authority heard Tuesday that additional state and federal money for the authority's weatherization program could help put a dent in the longest waiting list in the state.

Executive director Andrew French said an estimated \$250 million will be provided for the state of Pennsylvania for weatherization via the stimulus package and it has to be spent in 18 months.

Fayette County has the distinction of having the longest waiting list of any county in the Commonwealth.

"We do have a long list and we will attempt to do the best we can," French said.

French said \$1 million was received each of the last two years for the county program, an increase over the \$500,000 that was received for several years. While there are hundreds of people on the waiting list, only about 150 families are helped annually.

The grant program promotes insulation improvements of low-income households, thus reducing energy consumption and resulting in substantial cost savings.

As a way to gear up to do the work this year, the authority approved a contract with the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board for program services and worksite support for the program in an amount not to exceed \$40,478.

Two part-time employees- Brian Gregor and Gerald Plum- have been hired and two more will be hired soon.

The authority also voted to hire Kaylene Guthrie as a weatherization program associate clerk at an annual salary of \$16,575 plus benefits. French said it is a newly created position that is needed to assist the current weatherization clerk.

French said in another economic stimulus matter, Fayette County may receive between \$300,000 and \$400,000 in extra Community Development Block Grant funding this year. Of that money the 11 entitlement townships would get funds, and the county would receive the remaining money to use for infrastructure improvements. The exact amount has not been determined.

French reported that the authority was successful in receiving a \$295,000 competitive CDBG allocation for Markleysburg Borough that will be used to provide water to about 33 households.

In agenda items, the authority voted to approve numerous agreements for construction projects throughout the county, including agreements that could lead to housing for homeless people with mental disabilities.

The authority approved a cooperation agreement with Fayette County to submit an application to the state Department of Community and Economic Development HOME Investment Partnerships Program for \$500,000 to support the Fayette County Community Action Agency Fayette Apartments Development in North Union Township.

French said plans are to build a 10-unit complex to help homeless people with mental deficiencies at a location on Route 119 behind the old state police barracks. Rob Sleighter, whose engineering company submitted a bid to do design work, abstained from the vote.

The authority voted to approve two subrecipient agreements for separate developments to provide housing.

One agreement is between the authority and City Mission-Living Stones Inc. for the allocation of funding through the HOME program to support the Liberty Park- Phase II development on Liberty Street in Uniontown. French said \$600,000 was received to build four units of housing for previously homeless people. A prior project included four units.

The other agreement is between the authority and Fayette County Community Action Agency for the allocation of funding through the HOME program to support the Fairweather Lodge Project in Connellsville. The project got \$267,000 to help with renovation for eight units for people with severe mental disabilities at a location on Pittsburgh Street. Sleighter abstained on that vote as well.

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The authority approved a cooperation agreement with Fayette County to submit an application to the DCED HOME Investment Partnerships Program for \$500,000 to support the county homeowner rehabilitation program. French said 30 homes could be rehabilitated with the funds.

In other action, the authority voted to sell property at 374 Curfew Road in Perryopolis to George Bozek of Smock for \$5,500. French said the authority acquired the property in a foreclosure sale, and it is in poor condition and infested with fleas. He said plans were to demolish the house before Bozek made the offer.



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