

**PUBLIC HEARING** on the Community Development Block Grant program for WPCP was held on Monday, July 21, 2025. The hearing began at 7:49 pm, in Council Chambers at 82 Main St., Hornell, N.Y.

**PRESENT:** John J. Buckley Mayor; City Attorney Timothy Rosell, Council members, Sutfin, Hancock, McKay, Peck, Warriner, Bassage, Davis, and Carbone, Stenographer Ellen Kerr, and City Clerk Holly Snyder.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Lauren DaCosta (LaBella), Deputy Mayor Jessica Cleveland, City Chamberlain Michele Smith, Rich Dunning, Robert McLaughlin, Brian O'Neil - WLEA and 6 members of the public

**ABSENT:** Council Members Valentine and Brown

Mayor Buckley introduced Lauryn DaCosta from LaBella Associates, who is going to talk about our CDBG application. Lauren, I appreciate you being here tonight.

Lauren DaCosta introduced herself, I'm a Grants Program Manager at LaBella Associates. I and LaBella work very closely with the City on a number of grants that they're currently administering, as well as applying for new funding streams. This public hearing tonight is in anticipation of applying to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding program. It is for public infrastructure funding. The City has previously been awarded public infrastructure funds through CDBG for Phase 1b of the Water Pollution Control Plan Improvements Project. We are now closing out that grant successfully. In anticipation of continuing on that work and moving into Phase 1c of the improvements project, we are now applying for CDBG public infrastructure funds in the 2025 Consolidated Funding Application. As part of those funds, we are required to hold a public hearing prior to submitting the application, for any public and Council Members comments and questions. It is also required, if the City is awarded funds, to hold a public hearing at the end of the project to report on what accomplishments have been achieved through the grant funds. The public infrastructure funds, is a federal funding administered through the State and there may be \$40 million available this year for infrastructure projects across the State. The maximum award that a municipality can apply for with co-funding from another State agency or another State funding source is \$2 million, we will be applying for that maximum to hopefully get those funds that we can allocate towards the Phase 1c improvements. Phase 1c is specifically related to the anaerobic digesters and continuing improvements to the sludge recirculation program, or sludge recirculation pumps, as well as new dual fuel boilers with a gas conditioning system, heat exchangers, and some electrical, mechanical-type upgrades to the control building. That's what we're applying for. We've had great success with CDBG in the past for the City. We've gotten economic development funding. We've had a number of housing rehabilitation grants approved and successfully accomplished through CDBG. We're hoping with this application, which is due July 31st, we will be able to get some more funds to the City for public infrastructure needs. This is one of the last steps, holding the public hearing, make sure we document this, and then the rest of the application is essentially in product and we plan to submit by early next week. The application is through the CFA process, and have an end of July deadline annually.

A question was asked: If we're successful, when can we expect to see the money and projects there?

Lauren DaCosta answered: That's a good question. For the CFA, awards are typically announced before the end of the calendar year. I imagine later this fall, early winter of 2025, the City will at least know if those funds have been awarded. Once the City has been awarded, we do have to go

through a process of requesting the release of funds, doing quite a bit of administrative startup. Essentially, as soon as we have construction pay apps or other relevant and eligible expenses, we can start submitting those as soon as we have a disbursement agreement in hand from CDBG. Potentially within the next year or less, we can start drawing it out with funds. With construction projects, there are bidding requirements. The bids have to be out for a certain length of time. We do have to solicit bids or make bids available to minority and women-owned business enterprises. There is a little bit of lead time with getting things off the ground. If all goes smoothly, we could be accessing funds by late next year.

Another question: So this is just for the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the facility and the ability to accelerate water use in the sewer lines throughout the City?

Lauren DaCosta answered: Correct. This project that we're applying to, the public infrastructure project, is just for the Water Pollution Control Plan

Another question: Is there ever the opportunity to bring into the grants a homemade infrastructure project or is that not something that is typically in the grants?

Lauren DaCosta answered: Yeah, no, that is possible. For the grant that we just closed out for Phase 1B, I think some of the work items in that were about repairing but, often if things are not suitable or cannot withstand continued use as is, they're replaced with new material. It is possible to theoretically apply for repair or maintenance of existing drift zones.

Mayor Buckley introduced Chief Operator Rich Dunning and Robert McLaughlin, who operate the plant. Mayor Buckley spoke about this project is part of a larger project. Initially, the first phase of the project, or the original phase of the project, captured a lot more different items in it and when we went out to bid, the bid numbers came back more than double what our expected budget was. What we did at the time was, the Board of Public Works rejected the bid. Then we split the project into sections. What that allowed us to do is complete the project into portions or into phases, as we refer to it. It allowed the city to go back to the funding sources for example CDBG, WEA, there's a host of different funding programs out there through the state. We were awarded \$1.25 million through the federal government and now it allows us to go back to those funding streams and reapply for funding for those other phases. That minimizes the local impact on our tax base by bringing those grant monies home to Hornell.

Chief Operator Rich Dunning talked about a little bit of background. Last year afforded us the opportunity to have all the engineering study that's going into Phase 1C completed last year. This makes us appealing to the people that award the grant. It's something that it's going to score well on the score sheets. Some of the hardware, the anaerobic digesters are sealed to grow the anaerobic bacteria without the presence of air. The domes are 35 years old, and there are large fist-sized holes through it where the hydrosulfite gas is eating through the steel. It's time to replace these, the digesters won't work properly unless they're sealed. Any questions?

A question was asked: You mentioned that the bidding had been prioritized for minority women-owned businesses, I was wondering if that prioritization was local businesses, or if non-local minority-owned businesses would be prioritized over local businesses.

Lauren DaCosta answered: Great question. All state funding is required, if a project is going on for bid, to make bids available to minority women-owned business enterprises. Minority women-owned business enterprises have to be registered with the state to receive that certification. Part of our role as administrators of the grant at LaBella is accessing that registry and searching

specifically for MWBE contractors who do the work that we're looking for and also are within the work radius that we're looking for. Ideally, contractors will be local, because they're going to be the ones that will respond to these types of opportunities, not someone who lives down in the Hudson Valley or in a city area or wherever. We use that registry and we hone in on the local area where the project is taking place and make sure that we're finding certified contractors that are within the work – within the project's radius, as well as contractor that advertise themselves as working in this area as well. We do prioritize local contractors. I just wanted to piggyback on something that Rich said, too. We are hopeful that this project will be very competitive when it goes through the review process for a couple reasons. One is that, like Rich said, because we've already done Phase 1B, the preliminary engineering report and environmental review record, which are requirements to submit the grant, are already completed, because they were completed for the full project. That's, you know, before we kind of sectioned it off into Phase 1A, Phase 1B, Phase 1C. That's one reason that it will be competitive, is because those things are already done. The second reason is because the city has successfully completed their CDBG grant for Phase 1B. The city is able to show the state that they were ready to go. We did have to submit for a scope amendment, like the mayor said, so that we could make it into Phase 1B and Phase 1C. Once that happened, we were ready to go, we were able to start submitting construction payouts for reimbursement and have basically zeroed out the balance of the grant prior to the grant ending. The state looks very favorably on that, Municipalities who can one, show that they would make good grant recipients, and two, actually demonstrate that they have the capacity and the knowledge to get the project done and completed as required and making sure all of those achievements and accomplishments are met as originally outlined. I think that also goes a long way in showing that the city is prepared to move into another phase and get that done as well.

Mayor Buckley commented, that's an important point, because with a lot of funding agencies, whether it's infrastructure, parks, or anything across the board, the funding agencies do look at your municipality's ability to carry out the project, There's a complexity to these projects. You don't just simply hand in an application, they look at it, and, okay, here you go, here's a pot of money. It doesn't work that way. You have to get the money ahead of time, bond, do all those things, and then most of these grants are reimbursable. There are local shares involved with some of these things. We do have a pretty healthy track record of being able to carry out these projects and do it pretty efficiently and effectively. Anything else for Lauren? Thank you, Lauren.

There being no further comment, the public hearings were closed at 7:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Holly Snyder*

Holly Snyder

City Clerk