

**Print****Community Preservation Act Committee Proposal Request Form FY2022 - Submission #15982**

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**Date Submitted: 10/10/2020****Instruction**

Submit proposals by Monday, October 12, 2020 at 4:30pm. CPAC will ask relevant boards, committees and commissions for their input on proposals and encourages applicants to consult with them before submission. Presentations of projects will be scheduled for CPAC meetings in October and November. Recipients of funds shall report back in writing annually about the progress of the project. Projects must be completed within three years of award and unspent funds returned to the CPA Fund.

**Criteria**

1. Feasibility of the Project; 2. Documentation for Estimated Costs; 3. Funding available: a. multiple sources of funding, b. need for additional funding in future years, c. demonstrates lack of other funding sources if applicable; 4. Urgency of the Project; 5. Estimated timeline from receipt of funding, to start and to completion; 6. Acquisition and/or preservation of threatened resources; 7. Population(s) to be served by the Project; 8. A Plan for how the project will be maintained over time; 9. Priority ranking of your Project set by relevant Town boards, committees or commissions.

**Project Title\***

Phase III Supportive Housing Program

**Funding Category\***

Check all that apply.

- Community Housing  
 Historic Preservation  
 Open Space  
 Recreation

**Amount of Funds Requested\***

\$151,140-\$226,710

**Submitting Entity\***

Amherst Community Connections

**Contact Person\***

Hwei-Ling Greeney

**E-mail Address\***

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**Project Team**

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Names and e-mail addresses for other members of your project team.

**If your proposal has an associated website, you may include a link.**

<http://www.amherstcommunityconnections.net/housing-voucher-programs-1>

**Proposal Overview\***

Amherst Community Connections (ACC) requests CPA funding to fund four to six housing vouchers for chronically homeless individuals in the town of Amherst. ACC's Phase III Supportive Housing program is a continuation of the Phase I & II Supportive Housing programs that the CPA has funded since 2016. These two programs have so far provided short-term efficiency apartments to twenty-three Amherst residents who have been chronically homeless and have severe chronic medical/mental/substance use conditions. The Supportive Housing programs feature strong, consistent, intense, and one-on-one social service provided by ACC to help these chronically homeless Amherst residents to secure permanent and affordable housing and to achieve self-sufficiency as rapidly as possible.

Before describing the proposed Phase III Supportive Housing program, it would be instructive to review the results of participant involvement in Phases I & II of the Supportive Housing program:

- 23 have been housed in studio or one-bedroom apartments provided by ACC
- 17 have graduated from, or are completing the Program; 14 of them have received permanent housing vouchers, and 3 are still working diligently to achieve housing stability
- Disabled: 100%
- Tri-mobility: 48% (co-occurring mental, substance use, and chronic medical conditions)
- No/low income: 100%
- Significant CORI issues: 52%
- People of color: 52%
- Male/Female: 65% vs. 35%
- Avg. age: ~57
- Avg. number of years being homeless: 10+ years
- Avg. time needed to graduate and receive permanent housing: 6-9 months
- Avg. housing cost/graduate: \$7,000 (funded by CPA)
- Avg. support service cost/graduate: \$5,000 (funded by ACC)
- Avg. total cost/graduate (=housing + support service): \$12,000

Phase III Supportive Housing Program:

Based on the success of Phases I & II of the Supportive Housing programs, ACC is requesting funding for Phase III to provide 4-6 housing vouchers for the chronically homeless in Amherst.

1. **Cost Effectiveness:** It has been estimated in studies that it costs taxpayers on average \$35,000 per person per year when the chronically homeless cycle in and out of jail, detox facilities, emergency rooms, crisis centers, and homeless shelters. It has been demonstrated that it is much more cost-effective for taxpayers to provide supportive housing for the chronically homeless than to have them languish on the streets.

2. **COVID-19 and Shelter-in-Place:** The current COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for people to have somewhere to shelter in place to prevent the spread of the virus. The US has only 4% of the world's population and yet, we have 20% of the global fatalities from COVID-19. Locally in Amherst, we are seeing an uptick in COVID-19 cases. The number of positive cases in Amherst in the last two weeks from September 25 to October 6 is equivalent to about 50% of the cases identified in the first six months since March 2020. In order to stamp the spread of the disease in Amherst and everywhere else, it is now more important than ever to make sure that people who are homeless have safe housing.

3. **Homelessness Prevention:** Many towns and cities in Massachusetts have used CPA funds to help renters and homeowners who are impacted by COVID-19 to pay their rent and mortgages. Locally, in June 2020, the Amherst Municipal Housing Trust approved \$200,000 received from CPA funds to help town residents as well to prevent them from becoming homeless. The use of CPA funds to fund Phase III of the Supportive Housing program to help the chronically homeless obtain long-term permanent housing serves a similar purpose.

The high housing costs in Amherst as a result of the competition for housing from UMass students have made it unaffordable for the general public to find housing in the town of Amherst, not to mention those who rely on social security disability with a mealy income of about \$750/month. The average one-bedroom apartment in Amherst is more than \$1,000/month. The perpetuate discrepancy in our participants' income and the cost of housing has contributed greatly to the presence of chronic homelessness in Amherst. Compounding the cost issues are nuanced housing barriers, such as poor credit history, eviction history, and significant CORI issues that make it very challenging, if not impossible, for a chronically homeless person to apply for and obtain housing vouchers without support service and assistance.

With the successful experience of operating a supportive housing program for Amherst's chronically homeless residents, ACC is requesting CPA funding to continue its work to find a permanent solution for the homeless in Amherst. The Phase III Supportive Housing Program will be similar to the Phase I and II programs where the chronically homeless were provided with housing and support service. Building on the expertise it has mastered and the success of these programs, ACC wishes to apply for a three-year funding period with six housing vouchers available each year. This would be at the same level of funding that the CPA awarded to ACC in 2019 when the agency was operating the Phase I and II Supportive Housing Programs simultaneously with six vouchers.

Amherst residents who have been chronically homeless for a year or more and have severe chronic medical or mental/substance use issues will be eligible to participate in Phase III of the Supportive Housing Program. Participants will receive short-term temporary housing from ACC while working with ACC's caseworkers to secure permanent affordable housing and achieve self-sufficiency. On average, with intense and concentrated case management, we have been able to graduate participants in about six months before they exit homelessness and get into their own housing.

**Support Service Plan:** With the level of deficiency seen in the participants (see the Participants Summary above), ACC will secure its own funding from other sources to provide intense and on-going support service to each voucher holder. In order to make sure that the chronically homeless have a good shot at achieving long-term stability, the support service is an essential part of the journey. The support service plan covers the following areas which have been the corner stones of success in Phases I and II of the Supportive Housing Program. See

1. Housing: Securing permanent affordable housing in six months

2. Financial Security: Increasing income through employment, social security disability income, and public benefits programs
3. Wellness: Strengthening mental and physical wellbeing through networking with health care providers
4. Foundation Building: Removing housing obstacles through criminal record expunging, budget/debt counseling, and referrals for substance use treatment programs

Include specific details of your project, including deliverables, items to be repaired, specific purchases, etc. Once your proposal is approved by Town Council, no changes will be allowed.

#### Description of Funding Needed\*

Cost Estimates and Sources of Funding:

A. CPA-funded Housing Cost: The funding requested would be for housing related expenses such as direct rent payment to landlords. While ACC is requesting funding for six housing vouchers each year for three years totaling \$226,710, we have also included budgets for four and five housing vouchers. Please see the attached budget. Please note the budget could be lowered by about \$40,000 if participants pay 25% of their income toward their housing. Most of the participants have social security income at about \$750/month.

B. ACC-funded Support Service Costs: To provide the essential necessary support service to the voucher holders, ACC estimates that it costs \$5,000 per person. It is our track record that ACC provides intense and compressed case management to help voucher holders to graduate and secure permanent affordable housing in 6-9 months. It is our estimate that it will cost ACC \$180,000 for support service for Phase III over three years. So far, we have secured two sources of funding totaling \$45,000. We will apply for various grant funding and will do private fundraising to provide the wrap-around support service.

Include cost estimates and other sources of funding.

#### Budget\*

Attachment-Budget, 2021-2024.docx

Attach your project budget.

#### Estimated Timeline\*

ACC expects to begin Phase III on September 1, 2021 when Phase II completes. It expects to complete Phase III on August 31, 2024.

Describe the project timeline from receipt of CPA funds to project completion. Include in the timeline when funds will be spent.

#### What is the urgency of the project, if any?

As previously mentioned, COVID-19 has necessitated the need for the homeless to get into their own housing in order to shelter in place to help prevent the spread of the pandemic. In addition, the loss of employment income during COVID-19 has made it very challenging for people to pay rent. The wave of evictions once the state and Federal eviction moratorium ends later this year is expected to push many evicted renters on to the streets and become homeless. ACC is witnessing a surge for our service requesting for rental assistance since March this year. The number of people on our waitlist for the current Phase II Supportive Housing Program is growing already. We urgently need to graduate those who are in the Phase II program in order to take in more people. To meet the increasing needs of those who are chronically homeless, we are hoping to double our vouchers from three to six in anticipation of more needs in the community in the town of Amherst in the next several years. Finally, the current Black Lives Matter movement has highlighted the need to help people of color who have suffered chronic homelessness disproportionately to obtain permanent housing. Based on the statistics presented earlier that over 50% of the Phase I & II participants are people of color, we at ACC believe that CPA can play a pivotal role to address the racism issues in the town of Amherst. We urge CPA to fund the expended Phase III proposal for six vouchers.

**Does this project preserve or acquire any threatened resources?\***

N/A

**What population(s) will be served by this project?\***

The Phase III Supportive Housing Program will serve only Amherst residents who have been chronically homeless. ACC expects to serve predominantly people of color in the Phase III program given our programming experience so far. Chronically homeless individuals often have special needs, which include mental illness, often times co-occurring with substance use issues, physical disabilities, and developmental disabilities. Their average income ranges from zero income to less than \$10,000 a year.

Eligible applicants must fulfill the following criteria to participate in the Phase III Supportive Housing Program. Please see the Attachment --Eligibility Criteria and Documentation

- A. Meeting the HUD definition of chronic homeless, and
- B. Being an Amherst resident, and
- C. Meeting vulnerability assessments criteria

**How will the CPA investment in your project be maintained over time?\***

To accomplish the goals for the participants to achieve individual self-sufficiency and to secure permanent housing in 6-9 months, Amherst Community Connections is committed to securing support service funding every year in the duration of the grant in order to provide the time-tested robust wrap-around service that has been the corner stones of the Phase I & II Supportive Housing Program. So far, ACC has secured two grants worth a total of \$45,000 to fund the supportive service for the Phase III program.

**What relevant Town committees or commissions are you working with?**

ACC has been invited by the Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust to share the grant proposal and to make a presentation to the Trust at its meeting on October 15, 2020.

**Please include any other information regarding the project you deem necessary for the CPAC.**

Amherst Community Connections has successfully housed chronically homeless individuals and provided outreach services at its main office, mobile sites, on-site shelter services, and through direct networking with the chronically homeless population of Amherst since 2009. ACC staff supports chronically homeless individuals in the full range of the housing process, from identifying suitable housing options and their eligibility criteria to complete numerous housing applications, to practicing for housing interviews, gathering sufficient move-in funds, and maintaining housing tenure. Despite ACC's best efforts and those of other agencies and departments serving the needs of Amherst's homeless community, these individuals' needs for low-barrier housing is far greater than the current supply. ACC hopes the CPA will balance the need for funding long-term affordable housing with the short-term need to fund rental subsidies that meet the immediate needs of Amherst residents who are burdened with rent and are facing eviction as well as those who live on the streets of Amherst with no place to call home.

**You may upload any attachments you deem useful to CPAC here.**

Attachment-Support Service Plan.docx

Suggested attachments include floor or site plans, photographs, drawings, etc.

**You may upload any attachments you deem useful to CPAC here.**

Attachment-Eligibility Criteria and Documentation.docx

**You may upload any attachments you deem useful to CPAC here.**
 No file chosen

**Affirmations\***

I understand that if my project is approved by the Town Council, my organization will have a maximum of three years from July 1, 2021 to expend its grant. After June 30, 2024, the Town may return any unused money to the CPA fund for new appropriation, unless an extension is granted.

I acknowledge the above.