

Housing Trust Subcommittee Minutes
Emergency Rental Assistance Program
Remote Meeting
August 5, 2020

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BELMONT, MA**

DATE: August 25, 2020
TIME: 8:46 AM

Attendees: Rachel Heller, Gloria Leipzig, Judie Feins, Betsy Lipson
Guest: Bonnie Friedman

Status Update

- By noon 8/3 MWCD had received 52 emails, 43 phone calls, and 5 applications. By mid-afternoon 8/3, they had received an additional 50 phone calls

Discussion

While the application deadline is Friday August 14, MWCD's first available date to host a drive-thru registration assistance is the following week. We discussed whether to postpone the deadline in order to provide assistance.

- By postponing, we might be helping the very group the funding is prioritizing: the below 60% AMI households. If there is more demand than funds can support, the Trust could request more CPA funding and conduct private fundraising. Discussed the reality of fundraising burden: per household, the need is about \$3K.
- Key concern: will extending the deadline delay the check disbursement? Need to discuss this further with MWCD.
- After reviewing the program guidance and communications, we are reminded that we noted in a few places that households needing special assistance with their application can get it from MWCD.
- Because we listed a deadline and noted that a lottery would be held only if necessary, we agree that delaying the deadline could force a lottery and put at a disadvantage the households who submitted their applications before the original deadline.
- Decision: not to delay the deadline. Instead, we need to communicate reminders on digital channels and remind people to apply even after the deadline.

In Person Application Assistance

1. **On-Site at MWCD.** Wednesday August 12th evening. 79 Chapel Street, Newton
2. **Belmont Housing Authority**
 - BHA has offered their site.
 - A staff person will remain on site to assist with use of their office copier
 - Gloria will ask MWCD to test WiFi before the event
 - Scheduling challenges. Consider August 19th

Next Steps

- **Gloria will ask MWCD the following:**
 1. Provide Trust with a status report on Monday
 2. Are callers indicating how they heard about the program?
 3. How MWCD provides in-person help on Wednesdays, and was it highly used for Newton program?
 4. Phone calls to date: is MWCD talking to callers or receiving messages?
 5. What is the cut-off date for receipt of a complete application that delays funding disbursement from October 1 to November 1?
- **Housing Trust needs to actively promote the program again and remind residents of the August 14th deadline**

Meeting minutes submitted by Betsy Lipson, August 6, 2020.