

Nadia Khan

From: Julia Malakie
Sent: Friday, February 12, 2021 12:36 AM
To: Nadia Khan
Subject: Emergency Housing Relief - Friday Packet

Hello Ms. Khan,

Can you make sure this Q&A is included in the Friday packet this week? I assume the Covid Housing Relief item will be going to the full Council on Tuesday.

Thanks,
Julia

Julia Malakie
Councilor, Ward 3

From: Barney Heath <bheath@newtonma.gov>
Sent: Thursday, February 4, 2021 4:52 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@newtonma.gov>
Cc: Nadia Khan <nkhan@newtonma.gov>; Cassidy Flynn <cflynn@newtonma.gov>; Amanda Berman <aberman@newtonma.gov>; Lara Kritzer <lkritzer@newtonma.gov>
Subject: Emergency Housing Questions

Councilor Malakie et al,
Here are the responses to the questions you posed in your email this morning:

Following are questions related to the Covid-19 Emergency Housing Relief program in connection with the request for an additional \$1.2 million in CPA funding.

While some may be able to be addressed tonight, I'm requesting that these questions and any answers be included for the record as part of the Friday Packet prior to the vote of the full Council.

1) The 12/18/21 Planning Department memo to the CPC refers to "June 30, 2021, the proposed end date of the program." Is this in fact a definite end date?

- **Yes, we are proposing a hard stop of the program on June 30, 2021.**

-- If so, how and when will recipients and new applicants be informed?

- **The program only promises an initial 3 months of assistance – participants must “re-certify” with Metro West for each 3-month extension of assistance. Communication with the program participants is ongoing through Metro West. If the Council approves this request, the City will work with Metro West to detail out the changes in the program and how that will affect current and new households. This information will be communicated to all affected households.**

-- If not, what would determine the end date? (Considering that the latest from Dr. Fauci is that we could return to "approaching normal" when 70-85% of people are vaccinated, which he thinks could happen by late

summer or early fall, IF the virus variants can be addressed. And that won't necessarily mean all jobs will return.)

- Staff and Metro West continue to assess the situation on the ground on a very regular basis. As we near June 30th, we will continue to review the situation of participating households. However, this emergency program must have an end date at some point, and at this moment, staff feels that June 30th is an appropriate date given the information we have on hand.

-- Once in the program, will recipients who continue to qualify, get assistance indefinitely if they are unable to get their old job back, or a new job?

- No, Metro West re-certifies households every three months to ensure continued eligibility. In addition, the program will have a hard stop of June 30th.

-- When would new applications stop being accepted?

- This depends on how many new households enter the program between now and the spring. If 10 or less new households enter the program each month, we could continue to accept new applications through June. However, households who enter the program in May and June would not receive three full months of assistance, as the program is set to end on June 30th. If there is a pot of remaining funds in June, we could continue to provide additional assistance (up to a max of 12 months of assistance for any one household) for those households that are already in the program, and remain eligible.

2) The 11/12/20 Program Update from the Planning Department to ZAP states that of the 154 July cases, 134 households extended their assistance for another three months, 5 households had not responded, 6 had moved out of Newton, and 9 no longer needed assistance. The 1/12/21 memo notes that a total of 221 households had been assisted as of 1/7/21, of whom 191 were enrolled to receive assistance in January.

-- Of the other 30 households, how many have moved out of Newton and why? (e.g. for less expensive housing, to take a new job, ...)

- We do not have the exact data on why each of these households have exited the program, but anecdotally we know that these households left the program because they either moved out of Newton, have returned to full employment, or have simply stopped communicating with Metro West.

-- How many no longer needed the assistance and why? (e.g. regained old job, regained hours, got new job, regained child care that allowed them to work)

- see above answer.

-- How many did not re-enroll for other reasons and why? (e.g. got other housing assistance, or did not respond to renewal invitation)

- see above answer.

3) The 11/12/20 update notes that many households were employed in the restaurant industry and gig-economy pre-Covid. Can you provide more of a breakdown of what types of jobs or industries participants who lost income were employed in, and what prospects are for regaining employment?

- The program did not collect this level of data.

4) Are any other forms of assistance outside of CPA being provided if they will help participants be able to work (e.g. access to in-person schooling or childcare, as teachers have been offered, or access to vaccines from the city's small allocation)?

- Other housing assistance includes the state's RAFT and ERMA programs, administered through Metro Housing Boston:

<https://www.metrohousingboston.org/what-we-do/specialized-services/raft/> Households at or below 80% AMI are eligible to receive up to \$10,000 of assistance in a 12-month period.

- Through the CARES Act, CDBG-CV funds, the City is supporting a number of Human Service agencies in Newton to support low- to moderate-income individuals who have been impacted by COVID. Programs include affordable childcare through the YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Family ACCESS, to name a few:

5) In the first funding request in May 2020, we were provided with information on other city and towns' programs, with details on Boston, Cambridge, Framingham and Waltham.

-- Have you obtained current information on other city and towns' Covid housing relief programs, including which are using CPA funds and to what extent?

- There are 23 other communities in MA that use CPA funds for these housing relief programs – Waltham and Cambridge allocated \$1 million in CPA funds, down to \$16,000 from other communities. Newton has provided the greatest amount of CPA funds for this type of program.

-- Could you upload the 5/18/20 Committee of the Whole Agenda to the Council Meeting Archives (which does not seem to have made it to the new city website)? It included a 5/15/20 CPC Funding Recommendation memo with a list of clickable links for other towns' programs, many of which are very long to type.

- This is on the CPC webpage for the Covid-19 project under

<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/community-preservation-program/proposals-projects/covid-19-emergency-housing-relief-program>

The May 15th memo with the links noted above is available at

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument?id=39701>

I've attached what is currently on the websites of Boston, Cambridge, Framingham and Waltham. Boston is using federal funds. Cambridge does not give a source of funds, but they offer two months subsidy for the amount that housing cost exceeds 40% of income. Framingham is using CDBG and CARES. Waltham refers people to RAFT and ERMA.

- Cambridge is using at least \$1 million from CPA. (info from before July 1st – info was pulled from MHP database). From our knowledge, neither Boston nor Framingham are using CPA funds.

6) At the 5/18/20 City Council Committee of the Whole meeting, we passed by a 19-4 vote, Councilor Norton's resolution asking that if federal or state funds became available, they be used instead. Now that CARES funds are available to use for rental assistance, and it is a question of whether housing relief is a priority vs other uses, will the administration reconsider its request for further CPA funds?

- \$500,000 of CDBG-CV CARES Act funds supported this program. The City's additional allocation of \$600,000 of CDBG-CV3 CARES Act funds were allocated to support a second round of the Small Business Recovery Grant Program and the city's Human Services program. The Cousens Fund received \$80,000 of CDBG-CV and CV3 Human Service funds to support their utility assistance payments for LMI individuals.

7) If the intention is to continue the Covid-19 Emergency Housing Relief program past June 30, or create a more general rental assistance program for households that lose jobs for other reasons, will this be included as a line item in the FY22 operating budget?

- No. There are no plans to create a permanent program.

Barney S. Heath
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