

Inaugural meeting of the BH Grants Committee - July 15, 2019, 8PM, Town Hall

Attending: Tom McLean, Susan Poage, Meera Rao, Lisa DeFrancesco, Judi Sills, Adam Uanis, Liza Viana, Kathy Danneberg, Janice McLean

Regrets: Sue Pangis

The Mayor stopped by at the start of the meeting and thanked everyone.

Susan introduced the group and her vision - the idea of a grants committee was one she and Meera had presented to the last administration and been turned down, but now had been approved. There is money available for the township, its parks, volunteer services (fire and rescue), historic preservation if we organize some volunteers with the right skills ourselves to out and get it. And by becoming point people for grants within the town, we also give people a place to go to if they find an opportunity for the town to apply for a grant.

Liza emphasized the value that grants can bring to the town. There is a 2 percent cap on how much taxes can be raised in a given year, so if the town goes for several years without raising taxes and then incurs a significant cost increases like this year's recycling fee increase, it makes budgets really tight and hurts our ability to spend on value added services or to support the towns volunteer services.

We reviewed needed roles and people's interests and related skills. We need people to research grants, write applications, edit the applications, provide technical and organizational advice. Meera was nominated, seconded and confirmed as the committee Chairperson. Tom volunteered as secretary.

Person	Skills/Interest	Role
Meera Rao	Meera has a background writing grant requests for non-profits and knows how to organize this type of effort.	
Susan Poage	Susan is providing the initial vision for the committee and will be a sponsor and Liason with the town council	Town Council Liaison
Sue Pangis (not present)	Susan reviewed Sue's extensive qualifications in the area of Communications, and said that although Sue couldn't be at the meeting she is interested in contributing as writer and/or editor	Writer/Editor

Lisa DeFrancesco	Lisa has spreadsheet skills and writing skills and is interested in writing grants. She volunteered to start the grant calendar and to work on providing a shared space to store committee procedures/boilerplate	writer/ document management, spreadsheets
Tom McLean	Tom volunteered to record meetings	Secretary
Judi Sills	Judi's background is in giving grants for a foundation. She is interested in editing proposals	Editor
Adam Uanis	Adam has experience writing a significant grant proposal for the Fire Dept.	Research/writer Liason to volunteer orgs - Fire Dpt
Kathy Danneberg	Will help writing grants. Can do research	Writer
Janice McLean	Deciding whether to join the committee, but willing to help.	
Liza Viana		Town Administrator

Initial documents: Lisa volunteered to create a “grant calendar”. As described by Meera, this is a spreadsheet list of the grants to be applied for, describing the grant, relevant information and when it’s due as well as contact information. If we succeed in getting the grant, we will use this to plan follow-up, and to reapply for the grant next year. Meera will provide guidance. We will also create a “resource database” based on the document started by Susan.

Funds needed for: discussion on needs we should search for grants for, particularly with input from Liza: help with sewers, stormwater management, reducing energy at the sewer plant, EPA, first responder equipment, a generator for the rescue squad. Susan had a start on categorizing grant opportunities in the document she distributed after the meeting (and some received before the meeting).

How grants work: there was a lot of discussion about how grants work to educate the less familiar committee members, as well as some specifics related to Berkeley Heights activity

- We need a town council resolution to apply for grants before we apply. Liza and Susan will coordinate this.
- Some grants will require matching funds. We need to make sure these funds are coming from qualified sources (not from other grants, for example)
- We discussed whether we could create a pool of funds to use for matching, but this isn't going to be immediately possible.
- A lot of the information on grant proposals will be the same from proposal to proposal. We can create "boilerplates" of reusable information depending on which entity (town, rescue squad, etc) is applying for the grant.
- Not all our proposals will be accepted - we should expect this and not be too disappointed.
- Adam emphasized the importance of networking in increasing our chance for success. Knowing who is evaluating the grant can let us tailor the proposal to them and knowing people who can put in a good word can also help.
- Followup is important. Many grants can be applied for every year, so we want to be able to show a track record of using the grant successfully and in line with the purpose we requested it for.

Historical Society Grant

The immediate priority for the committee is to submit a proposal on behalf of the Berkeley Height Historical Society for a grant by Union County for operating activities.

- The committee decided the grant should be used for moving and storage of historical items that are currently in danger of exposure in the deteriorating "yellow house" to preserve the items and allow for renovation
- The proposal is due in 10 days (by July 26)
- Request is coming from the township, with matching funds from funds earmarked for the historical society
- Working backward from then (more details in Actions below)
 - Susan will hand deliver the proposal on the 26th

- Assemble the grant on the 25th. It needs to be submitted in hardcopy in 5 binders. Liza says we can use the township facilities to print.
- Finish Editing by the 24th
- Write on the 21st and 22nd
- Research by the 21st (quotes for storage, moving)
- Inventory of items needed asap to start getting quotes

Next Meeting: The next regularly scheduled meeting is to be 22nd of August at 7:30 PM. Meera may call another meeting before then (perhaps a debrief of the Historical Society grant request work).

ACTIONS summary

- **Liza** to get a list of grants that the township and rec committee apply for every year. They will continue to manage these, but we want to know about them so we don't reapply for them. We may also be able to reuse boilerplate info.
- **Lisa** to start shared resource database and work with Mira to start grant calendar
- Historical Society grant:
 - **Susan** to confirm we have go ahead from the Historical Society to request funds for \$5000 to move the historical items and to match **(complete)**
 - **Liza** to confirm funds the township has for the society **(complete)**
 - **Susan and Liza** to get a resolution so we can apply for the grant.
 - **Susan** to get the inventory of items to be moved so we can estimate storage space/moving costs
 - **Susan** to get resumes of historical society personnel (needed for application)
 - **Adam** to research costs based on this information
 - **Lisa and Kathy** to write application on the 21st/22nd.
 - **Jill** to edit on the 23rd/24th
 - Assembly on the 25th (no one assigned to this, but we can use township copiers)
 - **Susan** to deliver on the 26th