

LHAND gets \$2M federal grant

Originally Published on Monday, March 05, 2012 By Chris Stevens / The Daily Item

LYNN — Lynn Housing Authority & Neighborhood Development has picked up \$2 million in federal money for the homeless assistance programs it administers.

"Lynn would be a different city without this," said Norm Cole, director of Planning and Development for LHAND. "This has made a big difference."

Cole said LHAND, which facilitates the grant, applies for the money annually and has been fortunate to receive money every year since the mid 1990s.

This year the city was also awarded bonus money that Cole said would be used to increase housing at 33 High St., "which is really good."

The additional money will allow the Lynn Shelter Association to add another four or five living quarters earmarked for the chronically homeless with a priority for veterans.

The \$1,941,613 grant, provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is actually split between eight local agencies with the bulk of the money going to LSA, according to Cole.

LSA Executive Director Marjorie St. Paul said the grant covers the majority of the shelter's costs.

"Without that funding there would be so many people that wouldn't have a place to stay," she said.

The grant is just one piece of a total of \$1.47 billion of federal funding being spent to renew funding to more than 7,100 homeless programs across the country, which is \$62 million more than last year.

"The federal government has really increased its commitment and is projecting to increase it more while cutting other programs like the Community Development Block Grant to the city and the HOMES programs, which is used for affordable housing," he explained.

The HOMES programs include a number of initiatives aimed helping people gain and maintain housing such as a first-time home buyer program, a soft second loan program and a Neighborhood Preservation Program.

According to Cole the number of homeless actually living on the streets has dropped significantly from 24 in January 2011 to 11 in January 2012. However, St. Paul said the number of people filling the city's shelters, temporary and transitional housing units has not wavered.

"The numbers at the shelters are still high," she said. "They are never at 100 percent, they are always above. I don't see the numbers getting smaller but the type of people have changed."

According to the 2010 Annual Action Plan for Housing, Economic and Community Development Lynn has roughly 425 homeless, which includes families and individuals. More than half of that number is families with children.

St. Paul said the number of families in shelters are “off the charts” and the number of individuals has not gone down. She said she is also seeing a growing number of homeless individuals suffering from mental health issues and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

“We do provide intensive case management,” she said.

And she said LSA also has a number of success stories.

“One person went on to buy a home, others have gone to college or are working,” she said.

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