



Robert F. McDonnell
Governor

James S. Cheng
Secretary of
Commerce and Trade

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

William C. Shelton
Director

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

March 26, 2010



Ms. Katherine H. Nunez
County Administrator
County of Northampton
16404 Courthouse Road
P.O. Box 66
Eastville, Virginia 23347

RE: 2010 VCDBG Planning Grants
Regional Wastewater Project for the Towns of Cape Charles and
Cheriton and Northampton County – Response to Request

Dear Ms. Nunez:

This office is in receipt of your request to move forward with planning for a regional wastewater system project that would service the Towns of Cape Charles and Cheriton and portions of Northampton County. As noted in the letter, DHCD awarded the County Southern Rivers funding in January 2008 to *identify the extent of need and recommend solutions to wastewater disposal, particularly the elimination of straight-piping directly into streams and failing septic systems, throughout the sea-side area of Northampton County*. Since those funds have not been expended, we are agreeable to redirecting the funds to assist with a portion of the study noted in letter dated February 4, 2010. We have also reserved \$3,000 in CDBG Planning Grant funding, not to exceed \$20,000, to reimburse the County for completion of the following activities by June 25, 2010:

1. Completion of an initial public meeting

The County must schedule a public meeting in each participating locality to give citizens an overview of the proposed project. Citizens must be informed about the County and Towns' intentions to identify wastewater needs within the proposed project area and to survey residents and/or potential beneficiaries to confirm needs, demand, and income status. Citizens must also be informed of potential future activities under the Study, including additional public and management team meetings and completion of engineering assessments in the final project area. The County must disclose that future Planning Grant and Community Improvement Grant funding depends on completion of these initial activities. At this meeting, energized neighborhood leaders called "sparkplugs" must be identified and included as members of the management team.

2. Completion of an initial management team meeting

The County must identify key stakeholders and secure their commitment in serving on a project management team. The management team must include, at a minimum, representatives from each participating locality, to include the Chief-Elected Official and Town Manager, the Northampton County Administrator and Public Utilities Department, a representative from the

Partners for Better Communities



www.dhcd.virginia.gov

Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission, the local building and/or zoning officials, and at least two neighborhood representatives from each participating locality. At this initial meeting, management team members must help the County to develop a plan for completing these initial Planning Grant activities.

4. Completion of infrastructure assessment

The County must complete a preliminary assessment of existing sewer conditions and how the present state of the infrastructure is impacting living conditions. This should also include information on any publicly or privately owned / operated systems in the proposed project, including number of customers, condition, rate structure, capacity, and current operational status related to revenues and expenses. The County must prepare a written summary of the findings of the assessment.

5. Completion of neighborhood surveys

The County must complete a survey of the proposed project area to collect necessary demographic information and to determine income eligibility and willingness to hook-up to a wastewater system. Survey response rates must meet the minimum DHCD established standards. Potential beneficiaries must be made aware that if implemented, there will be a charge for service. Projected rates for service should be discussed. The County must compile a written summary of survey results.

6. Identification of professional services

The County must identify engineering individuals or firms that are interested in contracting for this project. A Preliminary Engineering Reports must be completed that examines the current wastewater options, assesses the performance of the current options, and develops solutions to any noted deficiencies. The PER must examine centralized *and* decentralized collection and treatment options.

Prior to any advertisement for professional services, a draft copy of any request for proposals must be submitted to DHCD for review. The County is encouraged to develop any necessary solicitations early in the planning process in order to begin the advertisement and selection process. This will expedite the planning process and ensure that all key parties will be available to participate in the Facilitated Planning Strategy and future management team meetings. The County must not execute any contracts that will contractually obligate CDBG Planning Grant funds until you are under contract with DHCD and a DHCD representative has had the opportunity to review the proposed contract.

7. Completion of a second management team meeting

The County must schedule a meeting of the management team wherein members can review the results of the preliminary infrastructure assessment, neighborhood surveys, and draft solicitation for services, and better define the project area. Potential project activities and plan of action should be discussed at this meeting.

8. Submission of Southern Rives Documentation

The current Southern Rivers contract has expired and was not extended due to lack of progress; therefore, the contract for those funds expired on July 31, 2009. Given the renewed interest and support for the activities required as part of that contract, DHCD will agree to extend that contract with the submission of documentation illustrating which parts / activities of this study will be eligible under that program (areas do not drain into the Chesapeake Bay).

This must include specific activities that will take place under the entire study that are eligible for the Southern Rivers program and which must be tracked separately to ensure funds are spent in eligible geographic areas.

Upon completion of the survey, the preliminary assessment, initial general public and management team meetings, documentation needed for the Southern Rivers program, and drafted an RFP, the County must submit a copy of the survey instrument, the tabulated survey results, and the summary of assessment activities to DHCD. The County must submit this information by the June 25, 2010 deadline noted above.

Once DHCD has received and reviewed your response detailing the results of the above steps, a determination will be made as to the viability and eligibility of the proposed project. If the project is determined to be viable and eligible, DHCD will notify the County and you should then work with the assigned Community Representative to conduct a Facilitated Planning Strategy session with the Management Team. The purpose of this meeting is threefold: 1) To discuss with the Management Team and key stakeholders the necessary activities that need to take place to complete the planning grant; (2) Determine the timeframe for completion of these activities; and (3) Determine which individual will be responsible for completing each activity.

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING the Facilitated Planning Strategy meeting, the local government must submit a VCDBG Planning Grant proposal. This proposal must be prepared in accordance with the instructions included in the enclosed 2010 VCDBG Planning Grants Prospectus and Proposal Format.

If the local government completes the activities outlined above (# 1-8) by June 25, 2010, the local government will have access to the \$3,000 reserved. The actual funding amount, not to exceed a total of \$40,000 (up to \$20,000 in Southern Rivers funding and up to \$20,000 in CDBG funding), will be dependent upon costs to complete the identified and agreed upon activities. If the local government fails to complete the identified activities and / or fails to submit a Planning Grant proposal, no Planning Grant funding will be awarded.

A copy of the 2010 Planning Grant RFP and Manual is enclosed for your reference. Should you have any questions, please call Denise Ambrose or Chris Thompson at (804) 371-7061.

Sincerely,



Denise H. Ambrose
Associate Director

Enclosure

cc: Katherine Nunez, County Administrator, Northampton County
Heather Arcos, Town Manger, Town of Cape Charles
The Honorable Robert Lewis, Mayor, Town of Cheriton
Elaine Meil, Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission
Denise Ambrose, VDHCD
Chris Thompson, VDHCD