



**Columbia County  
Community Development Block Grant – Economic Development  
Public Hearing  
Thursday, September 11, 2008, 11:30 a.m.**

The hearing was opened to the public at 11:30 a.m.

Present at the meeting were:

John H. Tramburg	Mark Witt	Kathy Cromey (Penda Corp.)
Robert R. Westby	Lois Schepp, Comptroller	Steve Sabatke (DOC)
Debra Wopat	Shonna Neary	Mary Traut
Robert L. Hamele	Ulf Buerger (Penda Corp.)	Cindy Devine

The public hearing for the Community Development Block Grant – Economic Development Program (CDBG-ED) was held in the Columbia County Accounting Office to discuss the following information:

- Basic overview of the CDBG program
- Total funds available
- Types of activities eligible using CDBG funds (Economic Development, Public Facilities and Housing)
- Housing and community development needs identified by staff/consultant
- Activities proposed for the CDBG-ED application/project.
- Potential for residential displacement

Along with discussion of the economic development needs of Columbia County, an overview of the proposed project, which includes two CDBG-ED application(s) from Penda Corporation, was provided. One of the applications is for \$120,000 and the other is for \$1,000,000 in CDBG-ED funds. The funds will be utilized by Penda Corporation to provide working capital, diversification of their product line and grow the company. If the project proceeds as planned, it could potentially create a number of new positions, besides retaining the current number of employees.

RLF/Housing Committee Chair Tramburg requested comments/questions from the audience, both for and against this grant. Mary Traut (member of the public in attendance) inquired about the project, including questions regarding:

- Number of positions coming to the facility as a result of the project
- How the project would affect low- to moderate- income level residents
- If another company is acquired, will those positions come to Portage or stay at the current location
- How many positions could come to Portage if a new company is acquired
- What the company's views/policies were on "green" technology and practices

Ulf Buergel, Penda President and CEO, thanked Traut for her questions, and described the company's current business and their request for funds for product line diversification and company growth.

Buergel noted that besides the number of employees currently employed at Penda, additional skilled employees would be needed for product diversification, positively affecting low- to moderate- income level residents in the community. If another company is acquired as many as 45 – 50 new employees could come to the Portage plant in the next 18 to 24 months.

Regarding "green" policies/practices, both Buergel and Cromey were happy to note that Penda is a very progressive energy partner, working with Alliant to improve energy usage through utilization of solar energy and recycled heat from plant equipment to heat the building. Their product (high-density polystyrene) is primarily made up of recycled materials and the plant implements a "closed loop" system.

Public hearing was closed to the public at 11:52 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

---

Robert L. Hamele, Secretary

---

Cindy Devine, Recording Secretary