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Local Partners Step Up to Secure Site for Greater Berwick Homeless Shelter

Briar Creek, PA — In a powerful show of local collaboration and commitment, the Community Giving Foundation and the Columbia County Housing Authority have teamed up to help Community Strategies Group close on the acquisition of land that will serve as the future home of the Greater Berwick Area's long-awaited homeless shelter.

Located on a 3-acre partially wooded lot adjacent to the Briar Creek Plaza, the property was secured on Tuesday, June 17, after a last-minute funding challenge nearly jeopardized the project.

The collaborative effort is being developed by Community Strategies Group in partnership with Columbia County, the Columbia County Housing and Redevelopment Authorities, The Gatehouse Shelter, Central Susquehanna Opportunities, Agape, and Beyond Violence. These organizations have long envisioned a non-congregate shelter model that meets the needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the Berwick region.

Originally, the acquisition was intended to be financed in part by a HOME-ARP grant that was submitted in August 2024 by Columbia County. But as the May 2025 closing deadline approached, the grant remained unannounced and unavailable, putting the entire project in jeopardy. At a critical juncture, the Community Giving Foundation: Berwick rose to the occasion with a \$118,890 grant from its Community Response Fund, buying time for the project.

"As our local Community Giving Foundation: Berwick board and Foundation team learned more about this project, we saw its alignment in addressing a significant need in our community," shared Kara G. Seesholtz, Foundation President and CEO. "The collaboration and integration of existing processes among our dedicated nonprofits are already in place to address this need in impactful ways, and we are honored to partner with other funders to provide this service in the Berwick community."

Columbia County Housing Authority also championed interim gap funding to ensure the deal closed successfully. "We recognize that stable housing is the foundation for a stronger, healthier community," said Beth Burke, Executive Director of Columbia County Housing Authority. "By stepping in to help close the funding gap, we're proud to support our community partners in creating a shelter that will offer safety, dignity and a path forward for those experiencing homelessness."

The shelter development now moves forward thanks to this extraordinary act of local leadership, cooperation, and compassion.

“This project has been more than 20 years in the making,” said Rich Kisner, Community Strategies Group’s Executive Director. “It speaks volumes about the strength of our community that, in the 11th hour, these organizations came together to save it.”

The grant award was announced by Governor Shapiro on June 12. Shelter operations are expected to begin in the Fall of 2026. Partner agencies will continue to collaborate through the construction phase to finalize standard operating procedures and partnering roles to ensure the new shelter aligns with best practices. More information will be shared with the community via Community Strategies Group’s facebook page in the coming months.

Media Contact:

Josh Nespoli

Community Strategies Group

jnespoli@csgpa.org

570-394-4905