

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
MARCH 26, 2013**

ATTENDANCE: Council Member M. Brantley, Co-Chair; Council Member L. Martinez, Co-Chair; Council Member M. Lyons; Council Member W. Blunt (6:50 p.m.); Council Member J. Banta

ALSO: Council President T. McCarthy (6:55 PM – 7:55 PM); Council Member A. dePara (6:45 pm – 7:10 PM)

STAFF: Tyler Fairbairn; Alanna Kabel; Lisa Miro

CALL TO ORDER

**** MS. LYONS MADE A MOTION TO OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING
** MS. BRANTLEY SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Co-Chair Brantley called the meeting to order at 6:23 p.m. A quorum was present. Members introduced themselves to all present. Applications #34-67 will be heard this evening.

34. Mission of Peace – Foreclosure Prevention Program – Ms. Doris Latorre presented and thanked the committee for their support. She said they are a HUD approved financial support agency servicing the residents of Bridgeport. They currently have 500 open cases of Bridgeport residents seeking foreclosure prevention support. They have 2 counselors providing help free of charge. This request would add staff to help with the caseload.

Ms. Brantley asked how long they have been in business. Ms. Latorre replied since 1993, previously called Affordable Housing Corp. Ms. Brantley asked if they get matching grants. Ms. Latorre replied yes. Ms. Brantley asked if they money was for salaries. Ms. Latorre said yes, it would be for additional counselor(s).

35. Mission of Peace – Homeowner Closing Cost Program – Ms. Doris Latorre presented. This money will assist families who want to take advantage of the low housing costs but do not have the down-payment or closings costs available. It would be used for \$5,000 each to 20-30 households and pay 1 salary.

Mr. Banta asked if there is an income cap. Ms. Latorre said they must be within 80% of the low income rate for the City of Bridgeport.

36. Bridgeport Tabernacle SDA Church – Community Development Food Initiative – Ms. Shirley Williams presented and said she appreciated their support in the past. This is a Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen that operates in the West End of Bridgeport. They also provide emergency rental and utility assistance as well. They have served over 6500 LMI families and served/provided +49,000 meals in 2012. They encourage their customers to also volunteer in their programs.

Ms., Brantley recognized the good work they do in the West Side of Bridgeport.

37. Alpha Community Services – Families in Transition – Mr. Herman ? presented. Alpha operates two homeless family shelters in Bridgeport; Brooks Street and Boston Avenue. They house 12 families in Brook St and 6 families on Boston Avenue. In 2012 they served 265 adults and 393 children in these 2 locations.

64% of the homeless they serve come from Bridgeport. They offer support services, parenting skills, financial planning, and activities for children. They are requesting this money to be used for utility costs at both locations.

Ms. Lyons confirmed that they are asking for \$50,000 for both locations.

38. Bridgeport Area Youth Ministry – BAYM – Computer Genesis – did not appear.

39. RYASAP – MYO AmeriCorps – Ms. Paige Nelson presented. They offer a program to train 32 older teens to run programs with younger teens in 7 city school after school programs. The training will be paid for by CT Commission for Community Services. The CDBG request is for supplies to be used in the after school programs.

Mr. Jose Garcia, a Senior at UB spoke in support of these programs.

40. Liberation Programs – Permanent Generator – Johnny and Henry presented. They provide supportive services to 500 plus individuals per day. These include support for person with HIV/ADS, substance and mental abuse issues and a variety of health issues. Their clients rely on them to be there 365 days a year. This request is for funds to purchase and install a permanent generator to allow them to operate in times of electrical outages.

Ms. Brantley asked if their facility is a residence. They replied it is outpatient only.

Mr. Banta asked if they solicited bids for this project. They replied they received a couple of bids.

Ms. Lyons asked if they could fund-raise this money. Johnny replied they do some fund raising for operating expenses.

41. South End Community Center YMCA – Youth Programs – Mr. Tim Bartlett presented. The YMCA operates 3 centers in the city. The YMCA has been managing the South End Community Center since 2004. They offer full day child care, after school care, summer camp and programs for children, families, teens and Seniors. This request is for continued assistance for the nursery and youth programs.

42. Bridgeport YMCA SECC– Furnace Replacement – Mr. Tim Bartlett presented. The South End Community Center is heated with 4 home-style furnace units installed in 1988. They are 25 years old and continually break down and are very inefficient. The four units need to heat 7,000 square feet 7 days a week. This funding request is for replacement of 1 unit inclusive of installation.

Ms. Brantley asked if Mr. Bartlett had to choose program money or money for a new furnace, which would he choose. Mr. Bartlett replied he would choose program money.

43. AIDS Project Danbury – did not appear.

44 -45 - 46. Neighborhood Studios of Fairfield County — Mr. Frank Derico presented. Neighborhood Studios is 35 years old and moved in to the former Holy Rosary School in 2011. They have a dance studio, music studio, performance stage among other classrooms, etc.

He said **Saturday Studios** serves special needs youth ages 6 – 21. They are requesting funds to expand the program to allow more students to attend. The **Conservatory** is an evening program for teens ages 13-19 with classes in dance, art, theater, music, technology and a summer job program. The **Energy Efficiency** application is to replace windows that are old with new energy efficient windows and programmable thermostats.

Ms. Brantley asked if they charge any fees. Mr. Derico said the Conservatory was free, the Studio charges a nominal \$50 and the Saturday classes are tuition based on a sliding scale. Ms. Brantley mentioned the programs they run in some of the local elementary schools. She asked if they pay rent to the Diocese. Mr. Derico replied yes. She asked if the Diocese can help with the windows. Mr. Derico said they are not willing to contribute at this time.

Mr. Banta asked how long their lease is. Mr. Derico said with is for 10 years with an option for another 10 years. Ms. Martinez asked if they have an option to purchase and

Mr. Derico said yes but they are not in a position at this time to consider that.

47. United Way of Coastal Fairfield County – Bpt. HESG Collaborative – Mr. David Rich of Supportive Housing Works presented on behalf of HESG Collaborative. The Collaborative works to end homelessness in Bridgeport through a variety of programs across agencies. The United Way is serving as fiduciary for this program in partnership with Alpha Community Services, Operation Hope and Supportive Housing Works. This money will aid 40 families with utility arrears, rent, security deposits and supports ESG funding requirements. They will participate in HMIS and help the city meet the requirements of the Hearth Act and HESG. The City can also leverage HESG funds with this award.

Ms. Lyons asked for a copy of his presentation and he said he would e-mail it to them.

Ms. Brantley asked for a brief explanation of what rapid rehousing is and Mr. Rich explained that by providing gap dollars to help people to be able to stay in their home this will prevent homelessness. She asked where people go to apply for this and he replied all applications are handled by Alpha Community Services and the money is administered by United Way. He reiterated this money is for Bridgeport residents.

48. Helping Hands – Rent & Energy Assistance – Ms. Armanda Valeriano (sp?) presented. They help people going through difficult times. They assist with utility bills, rent, gift cards for food purchases, distribute winter clothes, furnish school supplies, Toys for Tots and help with bereavement funeral costs. The requested funds will help up to 33 families/individuals with rent and utility bills. There is a cap of \$100 for utility help and \$200 for rental assistance for people not eligible for other programs.

Ms. Brantley asked about their funding sources. She replied they receive money from private donors. Ms. Brantley asked if they advertise. She replied is it mostly by word of mouth, and referrals.

49. Groundwork Bridgeport – Our Folks Program – Mr. Jack Dillon presented. He said this is a unique service they offer to help low income Seniors take care of their yards which helps them be able to stay in their homes. He stressed that they have lost some sources of funding for this critical program.

Mr. Banta asked how they spread the word on this program. Mr. Dillon said they work with SWCAA, letters to churches, and word of mouth. Ms. Martinez asked how many seniors are served. He said 70 seniors were served last year, but was reduced to 53 because of budget cuts.

50. Groundwork Bridgeport – Mayor’s Conservation Corp - Mr. Jack Dillon presented. He said the mayor asked his organization to take over the administration of

the Conservation Corp, a group of young people who canvass eligible Bridgeport neighborhoods educating residents on the benefits of being Green and energy efficiencies. This will also create 10 jobs for landscaping and horticulture thru the Workplace.

Ms. Brantley asked if they had any programs to help homeowners who had tree roots buckling their front sidewalks. Mr. Dillon suggested they contact Public Works in the City.

He said last year Groundworks planted 786 trees in the City.

Ms. Brantley asked how the youth of Bridgeport find out about these jobs. Mr. Dillon said some of the workers are students in the three City high schools who are members of Ground Core as an after-school activity in their school. All other interested youth should apply through The WorkPlace.

51. United Cerebral Palsy – Genesis Housing Group – no one appeared to present.

52. Recovery Network of Programs – Prospect House HOPWA – Cheryl Bell and Maureen Biggs presented on behalf of Prospect House. Prospect House Shelter services 42 individuals on a daily basis, and maintains 100% occupancy. They offer case management services, rental subsidies to 6 individuals, participate in the Ryan White Program and offer medical and psychological services on site.

Ms. Martinez asked how many people are there every night and how long can someone stay there. Ms. Bell said they can handle up to 46 people, men and women each evening. They can stay up to four months, must leave their room every morning by eight but cannot remain on site.

Ms. Lyons requested some brochures from them.

53. Marrakech Inc. – Replace Boilers – no one appeared to present.

54. Community Capital Funds – Small Business Loans – Md. Carolyn Gonzalez and Mr. William Coleman presented. Mr. Coleman explained that this is collaboration with the City to provide small business loans to businesses in the City for improvements to their operations, including façade improvements. Ms. Gonzalez said Community Capital is a certified Community Development Financial Institution providing financing for small businesses and affordable housing. These requested funds will provide affordable loans to businesses in the three neighborhoods targeted by OPED.

Ms. Brantley asked how they determine the interest rates to borrowers. Ms. Gonzalez said the rate is based on the ‘current cost to borrow’ plus 2% administrative fees. Ms.

Brantley asked why they couldn't just lend the CDBG money without the fees. Ms. Gonzalez said the fee covers administrative costs, and once the money is paid back it can be loaned to other businesses.

Mr. Coleman said the City feels if Community Capital administers the money it will go further, rather than just handing it out directly to business owners. Ms. Gonzalez said Community Capital can use the CDBG money to leverage other funding sources all of which will stay in the City. Ms. Brantley asked for a list of business owners who have benefitted from past CDBG loans. Ms. Gonzalez said she brought examples with her and would send that information to the committee.

Ms. Martinez said she was concerned when money does not go directly to city residents but to a business. Ms. Gonzalez stated this was a way for the money to stay in the community and help many more people. This is not a grant program, when money is paid back it is lent out again.

Mr. Coleman said this revolving loan fund is focused on business owners and trying to move them up the economic scale. Free technical assistance is offered as well.

Mr. Banta asked how many local banks work with Community Capital. Ms. Gonzalez said they work with Peoples United, Chase, Bank of America, Wells Fargo and CitiBank.

55. GBAPP, Inc. – MiCasa – Ms. Linera presented. She said MiCasa provides housing for pregnant teens ages 13-18 and their babies for up to 20 months. It is staffed 24-7 and is the only one in Bridgeport. The funds requested are for renovations to the home.

56. The Village Initiative – College Prep Program – Theresa Wilson and staff and students presented. She said this program started in 2001 and encourages students to explore the college experience with the hope they will pursue further education. They operate 3 college tours a year, with 15 volunteer staff, 10 of which are alumni. This year they have 150 students attending their program. They are requesting funds for transportation costs for one of their visiting tours.

Mr. Blunt asked how often they meet. Ms. Wilson said they meet every Wednesday evening September thru May. He also asked if they offer SAT preparation. Ms. Wilson said they do not but they do refer their students to the Caribe League SAT Prep Program.

Mr. Banta asked about other sources of income. Ms. Wilson said they receive donations from individuals, businesses and the Board of Education.

Ms. Brantley asked if she incorporates life skills in her program. She said from September thru January they focus on college prep skills, and January thru May they focus on life skills and current events.

Students and volunteers spoke in support of the program.

57. Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises – Green Business Hub – Ms. Adrienne Houel, staff and current job holders presented. Ms. Houel said this application is for funds to provide expertise for the Green Business Hub in order to attract new businesses with the goal of creating more new jobs in the City. Park City Green now employs 5-7 people.

Marilyn Ondrasik, Director of Research presented a short review of the goals of the Green Business Hub.

Ms. Brantley asked if they are picking up mattresses from homes. Ms. Houel said Public Works picks them up and they work with the transfer station to get them.

Ms. Martinez asked if they rent the building they are in and Ms. Houel confirmed yes.

58. Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises – Green Business Hub Renovations – Ms. Adrienne Houel presented and said the requested funds are to renovate the front of the building to accommodate Green Business Hub Enterprise. She said they have a matching grant from DECD and are counting on the City's money in order to proceed.

59. Pequonnock River Restoration – Mr. Ed Pacquett (sp?) presented. He said he is a Bridgeport resident and Business owner who has previously invested in the Knowlton corridor. He now wants to renovate this old building at the corner of East Washington and Knowlton St. He intends to restore the building into residential units on the upper floors, and a brick over pizza restaurant on the ground level. He is requesting funds for Phase I – stabilization and restoration of the exterior of the building.

Ms. Brantley asked if he owns the building and he replied yes.

Ms. Martinez asked if the building is strong enough to fix. He replied yes.

Mr. Blunt asked how many Phases he foresees. He replied 2.

Ms. Brantley asked if he has any matching funds. He said he was applying for HOME Funds and traditional bank loans.

60. Bridgeport Housing Authority - Unique and Unified – Ms. Kate Kelly presented. She said the requested funds are for the youth program operating for Marina Village and surrounding neighborhood children. They offer homework support and community activities at an after school and summer camp program. There is no charge to residents

of Public Housing. This year they have partnered with Arts for Learning Studio to present their program.

Ms. Martinez asked how many kids are registered. Ms. Kelly said 35 in the after-school and 80 kids in the summer program. Mr. Blunt asked if this is specifically in the south End. Ms. Kelly said they try to incorporate Marina, P.T. Barnum, and Green Apts.

61. Ralphola Taylor Community Center – Mr. Joshua Posey, Youth Director presented. He said they are requesting CDBG funds to support their many youth programs including, Teen Achievers, after school program, Choices Program, Seniors Program, Young Women Society, and others.

Young people participating in some of their programs came up to speak in support.

Ms. Lyons asked how many kids are serviced on a daily basis. He replied 60-80 kids after-school and nighttime program. Also Lighthouse runs a program for 125 children.

63. St. Mark's Daycare – Infrastructure Improvements – Ms. Frankie White presented. She said the requested funds are for safety improvements to their center. They need repairs to their handicap ramp and front stairs, asphalt covering on concrete emergency exit, and they need to replace the two front doors with fire safety doors, clear glass, so they can see outside and monitor who is approaching the building.

They accommodate 100 – 150 children age 8 weeks to 12 years with a staff of 42 people. Their entire budget goes mostly to salaries. They have written a \$44,000 grant to the State of CT to upgrade their security system.

64 and 65. St. John's Episcopal Church Family Center - Fr. Geoffrey Hahneman presented. He said they serve families at risk in a variety of programs. The Family Center operates a food program, after-school programs, community suppers, food pantry, clothes closet, English classes, citizenship classes, computer classes, foster grandparent program. The Early Childhood Intervention Program identifies children who are at risk and educates the child and parent/grandparent. The money pays for the Social Work who works with these children.

62. Brazilian Immigrant Center – Workers Rights Program – Fr. Geoffrey Hahneman presented. He said this is a new program, started in Nov. 2012, and is housed at the St. John's Sanford House. They service anyone who needs the services, but primarily Brazilian and Portuguese speaking immigrants. The program provides legal services for immigration, legal services for domestic worker's rights, mainly wage theft, and OSHA training. They have already recovered \$ 8,000 in lost wages.

They are currently open 1 day a week but hope to expand to 5 days a week.

Ms. Martinez said some of these domestic workers are much abused. Fr. Geoff said they do not ask clients what their immigration status is. They will help anyone, with any problem. Currently they operate on Thursdays from 10 AM – 6 PM.

66. Refocus Outreach Ministry – Cheryl (?), Case Manager from Refocus presented. She said they operate Promise House on the East End of the City. They serve 6 single individuals with HIV/AIDS. The money requested is for Facility Services and Case Management.

67. Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) - no one appeared to present.

ALSO:

CoB Housing and Community Development – HOME Program - Tyler Fairbairn presented the application for the City of Bridgeport HOME Program. The yearly allocation from HUD is for creation of affordable housing. They expect to receive \$864,469 (same as last year) which may be subject to the 5-9% cut. They use 10%, \$86,000, for Program Administration - salary to administer the program. The balance, \$778,000 goes to create and preserve affordable housing.

**** MS. BRANTLEY MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**** MS. MARTINEZ SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Jill Kuzmich
Telesco Secretarial Services