

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
ECONOMIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2014
6:00 PM**

ATTENDANCE: Co-chair Banta; Co-chair Martinez
Council members: Lyons, Martinez-Walker

NON-COMMITTEE: Council member: Halstead

REPRESENTATIVES: R. Gupta, Grants Writer, Central Grants Office
P. Carleton, Grants Writer, Central Grants Office
B. Coleman, Director, Neighborhood Development, OPED
Steve Hladun, Dept. Parks & Recreation
M. Klimas, Project Manager, Port Authority

Co-chair Banta called the meeting to order at 6:25 pm.

Approval of Committee Minutes of January 22, 2014.

**** CO-CHAIR MEMBER MARTINEZ MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

17-13 Grant Submission: re National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for a Youth Coastal Stewardship & Conservation Grant Program.

Ms. Gupta stated that this was a small grant for \$20,000. She explained that the city will hire twenty (20) students for training during the summer months and they will work for the Audubon CT and Student Conservation Corp along with biologists.

Council member Lyons asked who is funding the program. Ms. Gupta said the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will fund the program.

Council member Lyons asked if the students were already in place. Ms. Gupta said no, they hire the students every summer from The WorkPlace Inc.

Co-chair Banta asked the number of students that the grant will cover. Ms. Gupta stated that the \$20,000 doesn't include salaries – see *information below for clarification of the number of students*.

Co-chair Banta asked the length of time that the program would run. Ms. Gupta said the program will run for eight weeks. She noted that the project is only for Pleasure Beach. She further noted that the students will learn varied skills, such as how to recognize different types of birds etc.

Co-chair Martinez asked if the Student Conservation Corp already hired the students. Ms. Gupta said no, they normally hire the students during the summer. The grant is earmarked for a group out of New Hampshire that will educate the students and they will also hire two (2) crew leaders and one (1) coordinator. It was clarified that the students will be paid by The WorkPlace Inc. and noted that this is a brand new program.

Council member Lyons questioned what the breakdown of costs is. Ms. Gupta said the \$15k salary will be paid among the two crew leaders and one coordinator, noting that it's a part-time position. She added that the students will be paid an average of \$75.00 per week.

Council member Lyons recommended that the Central Grants Department provide more detailed information for future grant requests, noting that the committee needs a break down of what the grant money will actually be used for.

Co-chair Martinez expressed that she appreciated all the work that was done for the program. She commented that she would like to see some of the money stay in Bridgeport and earmarked for the crew leaders and coordinator.

**** CO-CHAIR MARTINEZ MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

***Consent calendar**

18-13 Grant Submission: re Arbor Day Foundation for TD Green Grant Program

Mr. Carleton presented this grant. He stated that it is a \$20,000 grant request with no city match. The grant will be used to plant forty (40) trees in low to moderate income communities. It will also be used to hire three (3) Bridgeport student interns to put together an annual tree manual. He noted that \$2,000 of the money will be used for community events to give people the opportunity to learn how to plant trees and maintain them. He further noted that \$1,300 will be used to create a manual to identify

the possibility of forming a Tree Commission in Bridgeport. He mentioned that one event will be held on Arbor Day during 2014 and one event will be held during the fall of 2014. The events will demonstrate to residents how to plant trees and they will actually participate in planting trees.

Council member Lyons asked where the interns come from. Mr. Carleton said they come from the City of Bridgeport Groundwork Bridgeport that works with the area high schools to hire students from Bassick, Central and Harding. He said the interns will be paid approximately \$8,000 among all of the interns and they will only work during the summer. He further noted that a portion of the money will be used to purchase trees and another portion of the money will be used to pay the interns.

Co-chair Martinez requested that they hire someone for the community events to translate in Spanish. Mr. Carleton acknowledged the request.

Council member Halstead asked if the events will tie into the watershed project. Mr. Carleton said there may be some coordination with the watershed project. Mr. Hladun referred to the watershed project and stated that there's a watershed located on Madison Avenue and on the east side. He said they have plans to do some plating around those watersheds.

Co-chair Banta asked what types of trees will be planted. Mr. Hladun said they will plant ornamental (flowering) trees and medium sized trees, depending on the location chosen.

Council member Halstead asked if there will be any fruit trees included in the planting. Mr. Hladun said those types of trees could be considered, but they haven't decided the exact trees to be planted yet.

Council member Martinez-Walker asked of the locations to plant the trees have been identified yet. Mr. Hladun said they usually look at areas where they have lost trees, noting that they would like to engage with the city council and the community to identify the best locations. He added that they will consider planting at community parks also.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO APPROVE**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

19-13 Grant Submission: re National Council on Aging for Senior SNAP Enrollment Grant Program.

Mr. Carleton stated that this program was administered and the city is requesting \$50,000 for the program and there is no city match. The grant will be used for an outreach coordinator for the SNAP Program. The coordinator will build contacts, prepare and distribute outreach brochures and let seniors know if they are eligible for the program and how they can apply. The program will run from February 2014 through January 2015. They will also provide information to the seniors for other services that they may need assistance with. There will be one Outreach Coordinator hired for one year. He explained that they currently have an employee that has been conducting the job for the last nine years, so they will transition into the newly created position that will include benefits and insurance.

Co-chair Martinez asked how the coordinator will communicate with the Latino seniors. The response from Iris who is a representative of the program explained that they have another grant that covers Bridgeport only and they have a Latino staff person to communicate. She further explained that this grant is primarily to reach out to seniors in other surrounding towns.

Council member Halstead asked if the SNAP program could be used for the farmer markets. Iris said yes. She commented that it has been difficult to reach seniors to get them to apply for SNAP, that's the primary purpose of the grant.

Council member Martinez-Walker asked if the outreach coordinator will also assist seniors with the application process when she reaches out to the community. Iris said yes and the coordinator will also process everything on-line, conduct follow up and prepare a 6-month assessment.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO APPROVE**
**** CO-CHAIR MARTINEZ SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

21-13 Proposes Resolution to donate its share of surplus equipment acquired with a federal grant to another Clean Vessel Act Program within the State of Connecticut.

Ms. Klimas, Bridgeport Port Authority stated she was looking for the city council to approve the donation of equipment for a pump out boat that was originally purchased in 1998. The grantor will reimburse the city for 75% of the cost, so they are considered the owner of the assets of the program. The equipment has been surveyed per a request from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the boat and trailer were appraised at a cost of \$2,000. She noted the share breakdown is: \$1,175.00 – DEP

share and \$825.00 City share. They will require them to either sell, trade-in or donate the existing equipment. She commented that they don't think the equipment is in sellable condition because it's outdated, so the DEP is asking them to donate it at their discretion within the program.

Co-chair Banta asked if there were any associated fees required. Ms. Klimas said it's a free service. She noted that the boat operates on Friday, Sunday, Monday and sometimes Thursday. However, she explained that it's tough to keep employees on the job; she said they had college students working, but they eventually return to school. She noted that she has reached out to other agencies to fill the position, but many aren't interested because they don't want to deal with the weekend activity on the water. She said the Aquaculture School has referred students to them and she noted that it's not necessarily a fun job, but it's not a difficult job.

Co-chair Banta asked where the boat is stored. Ms. Klimas said the boat is stored at Captain's Cove. She added that the job runs from Memorial Day to the beginning of October. She further noted that Terry Backer runs the program in Bridgeport.

Co-chair Banta asked who pays for the boat maintenance. Ms. Klimas said the Port Authority pays for the maintenance.

Co-chair Banta asked if they considered contacting military schools to recruit them for the job. Ms. Klimas said it gets to be a stretch to get anyone for the job that isn't located locally.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

***Consent calendar**

22-13 Proposed Resolution authorizing the extension of a Tax Incentive Agreement for the Sycamore Place Apartments, an Affordable Housing Development located at 285 Maplewood Avenue

Mr. Coleman distributed an amendment that he said would need to be amended by substitution. He noted that Ken Lindsey, of The Wishcamper Companies, Inc. was present to discuss the development.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO ENTER EXHIBIT-1-22-13-2-19-14
RE: THE WISHCAMPER COMPANIES, INC. – SYCAMORE PLACE
APARTMENTS – TAX ABATEMENT INTO THE RECORD
** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mr. Coleman stated that he was there to ask the committee to consider a tax incentive agreement for the building located on the west side of Bridgeport known as Sycamore

Place Apartments that is senior and disabled housing. The agreement was put in place during 1972 and enacted during 1974 to allow tax abatements for affordable housing developments. He explained that at the time, it was agreed that if they gave a tax break to the developer, they would then pay the city back. However, the developer at that time hasn't historically paid anything, although the state has paid them. He referred to the current developer The Wishcamper Companies located in Portland, Maine and noted that Ken Lindsey was present to make an offer. He stated that they are the developers of affordable housing such as Sycamore Apartments. He explained that generally, there aren't enough funds to maintain these types of apartments, so their policy is acquire the properties and take advantage of the low and moderate income tax incentive. He explained that when they purchased Sycamore Apartments in 2011, they went in and did extensive renovations while the building was still occupied, although they requested that the residents vacate the premises for one or two days to complete the renovations. He noted that there are (118) units at Sycamore Apartments. He said it was crucial to make sure that the building was totally sealed to install the new roof, new windows throughout and rebuild the two elevators. They also improved the interior of the apartments and installed new kitchens, fixtures, appliances, cabinets, counters, flooring and painting. The total amount spent was \$5.8 million that came from different funding sources and a loan.

Council member Halstead asked if this was a new tax credit. Mr. Lindsey said yes.

Mr. Coleman explained the details of extending the agreement that was due to expire. He stated that OPED looked at the numbers and they tried to come up with the best tax incentive that would benefit the developer and the city. He said it's a long term deal over time, but at a benefit to the city. Co-chair Martinez commented that she agreed.

Co-chair Banta questioned how solvent the developer's company was. Mr. Lindsey responded that his company isn't in any kind of financial crisis. He explained that although they are located in Portland, Maine; there aren't enough properties designated for this type of project, so that's why they thought Bridgeport was a good opportunity to do the development. He noted that they also own the Bridgeport Elderly Apartments on North Avenue.

Council member Halstead asked if any landscaping will be done on the property. Mr. Lindsey said the planters in the community garden will be refurbished.

Co-chair Martinez asked about the information outlined on pages 4, 5, 6 of the document. Mr. Coleman briefly reviewed details of the entire document. He reviewed the assessment analysis and he stated that when they applied the numbers, as shown on page 5; they are inclusive of the amounts from the state. He noted that the schedule of payment will be attached to the resolution to lock in the agreement.

Co-chair Martinez commented that it was a good agreement, as long as the city gets more money; noting that it's a win-win situation for the city and the seniors. She further

clarified that The Wishcamper Companies wasn't requesting funds from the city, they are only asking for the tax incentive on the building.

Mr. Lindsey recalled that the initial project created local jobs during the construction phase.

**** CO-CHAIR MARTINEZ MOVED TO ACCEPT THE AMENDED RESOLUTION BY SUBSTITUTION**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION AS AMENDED**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

ADJOURNED

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham
Telesco Secretarial Services