

CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
ECONOMIC and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT and ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

PUBLIC HEARING

TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2011

6:00 P.M.

ATTENDANCE: Council members: Curwen; Co-chair, dePara; Co-chair, Martinez, A. Ayala, Lyons

OTHER (s): Council members: Baker, Brannelly

CITY STAFF: Kelly McDermott, Central Grants

City Department applications Program Year 37 Community Development Block Grant
Program Including CDBG, ESG, HOME and HOPWA

Co-chair Curwen the public hearing to order at 6:20 pm. He requested that everyone turn off their cell phones.

Co-chair Curwen noted that each committee member had to fill out a conflict of interest form and sign it.

Ms. McDermott gave an update on the status of the funding situation. She stated that city representatives attended the CDBG Regional Conference in Wooster, CT. She relayed that there will be CDBG grants cuts, noting that she expected to receive written communication on the status of funding shortly. She further noted that funding will be below the 30% mark, due to the uncertainty of what the final CDBG funding will be from the government. She stated that if they pass a 62% cut, it will further affect funding allocations to programs. They are currently in negotiations and the cut is expected to be between 7 ½ % to the 30-40% mark. She emphasized that it was important to know that the city legislative and the Mayor have been aggressively lobbying in Washington, DC to advocate for the funding of programs. She explained that funding supports extremely important programs in the city and the city is aware of the impact of many programs. She expressed that although it's a very emotional time waiting to find out what the final

grant will be, she noted that her office will be available to answer any questions. She reiterated that they will be allocating at 30% below of what was allocated last year.

The public hearing began with the review of city departments requests as follows. All statements have been summarized – refer to the listing of programs for detailed descriptions.

C01- CoB Bridgeport Lead-Free Program

Request - \$25,000.00

Sabine Kuczo, Central Grants and Community Development said they were extremely fortunate to receive monies for the Lead Free Program in the prior years. She stated this would be the third grant amounting to over \$9 million to date. The request requires a match, and they expect to return every year to request the amount of \$25,000. The program provides for fifty (50) jobs. And over the next three years, they will train employees in lead asbestos, so they expect a good return on the money. They are also work with United Illuminating. She noted that they have an extra \$100k geared towards homes to create safe housing, so the program involves more than just lead prevention.

C02 – CoB Veteran’s Affairs

Request - \$25,000.00

Jo Pernow, Director stated they were seeking funds for the food pantry. The money is needed to supplement the monthly allotment. They have provided for (499) families within the last month. They provide supplies, such as; milk, eggs etc. She mentioned that they are now affiliated with the Greater Bridgeport Council of Churches and they receive free surplus food. However, resources aren’t adequate enough to fulfill the demand.

C02 – CoB Veteran’s Affairs

Request - \$48,933.00

Jo Pernow, Director stated this program offers transportation to the Veterans Center for recipients to receive healthcare. They also assist with helping them obtain military documents for housing and medals that they may not have received when they were discharged. The number of veterans has increased and during November 2010, (600) troops returned to Connecticut. They register them in their office daily and there have

been (256) new veterans registered since July 2011. The funding will also allow them to place over 10,000 flags in Veteran's Park by Memorial Day.

C04- CoB Office of Persons with Disabilities

Request - \$40,000.00

The representative present for this program stated that the office went down to part-time staffers. The request is to allow one full time staff person in the office. It was explained that if someone comes to the office on a Friday, there is no one there available to assist. It was further noted that they were talking about a large number of persons with varied disabilities, including children with autism. It was expressed that the disabled are one of the most disenfranchised groups and it affects every ethnic and economic group. It was further emphasized that having only one staff person doesn't make sense. Full funding was requested to employ a full time person.

C05- CoB HR East Side Senior Center Rental

Request - \$40,000.00

C06 – CoB HR East Side Senior Center

Request - \$ 20,000.00

Martha Santiago stated she would talk about program #'s C05 and C06. Funding will pay for the annual rent for the senior center and for program expenses. She talked about programs and stated that the average daily attendance was sixty (60) seniors that visit the center from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday. The goal of the center is to assist older people, so that they can remain in their homes with maximum independence. They provide activities such as, arts & crafts, speaker series and special events. A nurse is also provided and lunch is served. In addition, they provide diabetes screening. The funding leverages an additional \$19k they received from the Center on Aging. She expressed that the center tries to create an atmosphere where seniors feel welcome, which makes them feel less hopeless and isolated.

C07- CoB HR YSB Grant Match

Request \$40,000.00

Valerie Sorrentino, Deputy Director Human Services stated this program requires a dollar for dollar match. The request will fund four (4) programs: 1) Positive Choices that

involves going to the 5th grade to teach about risky behaviors 2) GBAP involves working with ages 8 to 17 years to reduce premature sexual activity 3) Children's Mental Health Community Policing provides rapid response by a mental health therapist to police officers who need assistance 4) Council of Churches is an at-risk program to help homeless children. The request is \$40k and a \$40k match is required that will help fund other programs.

C08 – CoB Senior Citizens Leisure and Healthy Lifestyle Programs

Request – \$15,000.00

The representative for this program stated this program serves between 800 and 1,000 seniors per year. They assist seniors with the writing of their memoir. They took a survey and found that a senior can attend Housatonic for free to take art classes; the funding will provide for supplies. They also plan trips to NYC and the program is open to most senior housing units.

C09- CoB Department on Aging – Senior Citizens Programs

Request - \$39,000.00

Rosemarie Hoyt stated the funding will go towards part-time salaries that are needed to greet seniors and to assist the seniors with different services, such as; scheduling doctor appointments, hairdresser appointment, housing and Title 19 food stamps. The students also teach the seniors how to work on the computer. They also sign people up for trips.

C10- CoB Health & Social Services - Housing & Commercial Code Enforcement

Request - \$143,248.00

Richard Paoletto, Housing Code Director stated that he realized the position the committee was in this year in regard to allocating funds. He said the request would provide for one inspector to conduct CDBG allocated inspections. He recalled that HUD changed the way business is done and there is only one inspector to handle four of the targeted areas - *he referred to the packet distributed to highlight which districts were involved as outlined on the map*. He repeated that there is only one inspector to cover all the designated districts, so the funding is definitely needed.

C11 – CoB Health Department - Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

Request - \$159,103.00

Audrey Gaines stated the request is to promote the lead prevention program. She pointed out that lead poisoning affects children mentally and physically and there are serious health links related to lead poisoning, noting that exposure to lead is generally within the home. If lead is found, the landlord is fined and they are required to make the necessary repairs. They go to schools to test children's blood and they do outreach. She emphasized that lead is not biodegradable and it won't go away.

Co-chair Curwen asked the number of staff there were. Ms. Gaines said the funding would cover two (2) inspectors and two (2) administrative staff. She further noted that one inspector may be restored by HUD, total there are five (5) employees. The amount requested is for two salaries and one administrator. She clarified that her office only conducts the inspections through lead remediation. They also administer blood testing through outreach to places children frequent. There are currently (200) children that are being actively served. She noted that's a low number, because of the limited staff. If the staff is increased, they could serve up to 1,000 per year.

C13 - CoB Emergency Relocation and Hardship

Request - \$55,000.00

C19 – CoB Social Services – Landlord/Tenant Services

Request - \$5,000.00

Iris Molina, Department of Social Services requested to combine program #'s C13 and C19. She spoke about the emergency relocation program. She distributed a spreadsheet denoting the month of January. She noted that every person that comes in gets recorded by age and gender. They served (615) persons last year and most referrals are done in-house. She relayed that if a person is found to be living in substandard housing conditions, by law, they need to be relocated. They are required to do this, but they are not funded by the State of CT. from July 2011 through March 11, 2011, they have already served (450) clients.

- Question – is the program for temporary placement for people without shelter
Response – the program is for those found to be living in run down conditions. It's the only program in Bridgeport that provides this service.

Ms. Molina spoke about the landlord/tenant services. She said this program assists with information on how to evict a tenant. And they provide for a social worker to help

City of Bridgeport

Economic and Community Development & Environment Committee

City Department Applications

PY37 CDBG Programs

March 22, 2011

Page 5 of 13

mediate between the landlord and tenant. They have found the program to be effective in resolving landlord/tenant issues.

- Question – does this program provide financial help **Response – it's primarily an information and referral service to help avoid eviction.**

C14 – CoB OPED - Business Development Fund

Request - \$200,000.00

Tom Coble, OPED presented this item. He said this program was funded last year to fill the gap in funding for small business owners. They have an RFP out to solicit persons interested in participating. Ms. McDermott added that the application was issued and they are currently reviewing the responses received.

C15- CoB OPED - Storefront Improvement

Request - \$150,000.00

Tom Coble stated this program is to essentially help the business community with the aesthetics of a neighborhood, in the NRZ areas and the downtown area. They are looking at (53) businesses at \$1,400 each for improvements to redo sidewalks and other improvements. He noted there should be a tremendous impact as a result of the improvements.

- Question – how much money was expended last year on improvements. Ms. McDermott said zero dollars were expended last year. She explained that OPED recently released the design for the project.

Frank Borres, representative for the west end NRZ stated there were other NRZ representatives from other areas present tonight. He said the thought was that if they could impact one area with a matching program, they could make an impact.

- Question – are the finances used for the exterior of the building **Response – yes, the funds are strictly for exterior improvements and includes private businesses in the city in the targeted NRZ zones.**
- Question – are there any other monies from last year that have been spent on the program **Response - no, the design is currently being worked on.**

C16 – CoB OPED – City Wide Public Facilities Projects

Request - \$1,973,600.00

Tom Coble stated that this program consisted of city wide enhancement projects – as *outlined on the program description sheet*. It includes improvements to the waterfront and the water fountain.

Co-chair Curwen and the committee members asked the following questions:

- Question – what is the amount that has been spent on this program to date
Response – the budget for this year is just being set up through OPM and Housing Community Development, however. The projects shouldn't take long and it's just a matter of moving the projects out and then all the money will be spent.
- Question – there have been three programs funded in a row from last year and the money still hasn't been expended. Commented there is now another round of money coming forward. He felt that they should spend the first round of money before tapping into another funding pot. Ms. McDermott stated that the projects were on schedule and target for expenditure.
- Question – what is the status of the Knowlton street project
Response – the building will be demolished within the next two weeks. They will do remediation first and then the demolition. It's expected to be completed by July.
- Comment – there was a request to bring the committee up to date on projects, so they are aware of the status of each one
Response – it was difficult to begin some projects during the winter months.

C17 – CoB ONR – Planning

Request - \$88,000.00

Tom Coble stated the application was submitted this year was for the Reservoir Avenue/Trumbull Avenue corridor and the continuation of the Black Rock Village District that will be a replication of the downtown district, according to the design standards.

Joe Ianniello stated that they are looking to work with the area of Black Rock from I-95 up to Ellsworth Street, to fix up the area and make the Fairfield Avenue portion a nice place to go. He noted it's near the P.T. Barnum area and he felt that if they can get started and show some progress, they should be able to obtain matching funds from private donations. The idea is to fix up that part of the city to promote a family presence.

- Question – who will carry out the planning **Response – they will go out to bid for the planner.**
- Question – are there any other sites in Bridgeport where planning is used **Response – every neighborhood has a designated planner or group involved.**

C18 – CoB OPED – ONR Demolition

Request - \$175,000.00

Tom Coble stated this was a demolition application. The program was recommended to receive \$58,800 from the Citizen's Union. He expressed that he realized it will be a tough year, but they are hopeful to receive funding.

- Comment – council member Ayala thanked Mr. Coble for his dedication to responding to anti-blight issues throughout the city.
- Comment – council member Lyons also echoed her thanks to Mr. Coble for his dedication.

C20 – OPED – Residential Rehabilitation Program Pilot

Request - \$200,000.00

Tom Coble stated that this request related to the PILOT program for the south end and will be targeted to that area. He thought it was a good program to help restore properties in the area, noting that it was formerly an at risk neighborhood. Although the streetscape program is in place, they need to address the homes for rehabilitation.

Greg, the VP/South End NRZ said they did some research in the neighborhood and they looked at blight conditions and crime in the south end. They focused on this area because it was one of the worse areas. Mr. Coble said they were looking to improve and save the area.

C21 – Office of Neighborhood Revitalization - Neighborhood Leadership Training Program

Request - \$25,000.00

Angie Staltaro stated that this program was set up to help further education training for the NRZ's and the member's implementation committee. They provide information on conferences and training and they want to take it one step beyond in the south end to conduct investment training and teach how to deal with zoning issues. Mr. Coble added that they went through a lot developing the NRZ's. He commented that there is nothing more catastrophic to people that don't have the education to move forward; as the city moves forward. He stressed that CDBG funding won't be available forever, so it's a crucial program. He noted the program was funded \$10,000 last year.

- Question – how was the money spent last year **Response – they are holding zoning and inland wetlands training.**
- Comment – recommended to contact the National League of Cities for more information and assistance.

C22- Office of Neighborhood Revitalization – Neighborhood Assistance Program

Request - \$15,000.00

Angie Staltaro stated this project isn't a public service. It's an interim assistance program to conduct block makeover. She noted that other groups will join together to kick off the project. They are looking to do a mural on the east side and other types of community projects, such as; clean ups, floral gardens and plant trees. They will also do small house jobs, such as; painting and applying house numbers on the outside.

Ms. McDermott asked her to provide more program detail, noting that interim assistance is hard to fund. Ms. Staltaro acknowledged the request.

C23 – OPED/ONR – Financial Literacy Project

City of Bridgeport
Economic and Community Development & Environment Committee
City Department Applications
PY37 CDBG Programs
March 22, 2011
Page 9 of 13

Request - \$60,000.00

Tom Coble stated this project was coming out of the south end. He explained that since it became a new NRZ last year, they were left out of the loop. They hoped to receive some funding to train twenty-five (25) individuals to perform FDIC training. They will be certified to work with people and offer guidance on home purchasing, budgeting etc. It's a significant program and all the personnel will be certified to do the training.

- Question – is the program to help people handle their financial affairs for the purpose of purchasing a home **Response – yes.**
- Question – how far a distance will the help be targeted to **Response – it can be spread out to various communities.**

C24 – CoB Department Public Facilities Parks & Recreation – Tree Planting Program

Request - \$119,000.00

Steven Hladun stated this program is to conduct an adopt-a-tree program. He noted that trees beautify the city and help air quality. They also add character and improve the quality of life. They will partner with Groundwork Bridgeport to reach more residents and blocks and they will plant smarter by choosing the right species of trees. They will be incorporated into the public infrastructure improvements responsibly. He noted that they lost a lot of trees during the tornado and it has been a challenge to replace them. They planted over (300) trees last year in multiple neighborhoods. They also engaged some businesses and beautified their properties. They also replaced trees downtown by removing the stumps.

- Question – what will the \$119k be broken down for **Response – they are looking to plant at least (400) trees. The cost can run between \$100 and \$200 to plant them and hire a contractor. If the city can't do the project in-house, they may be able to get a contractor to do the planting for a cost between \$50 and \$100.**
- Question – is the money controlled by Parks & Recreation **Response – yes.**

C25 – CoB Department of Parks & Recreation – Glenwood Park Tennis Court Improvements

Request - \$300,000.00

City of Bridgeport
Economic and Community Development & Environment Committee
City Department Applications
PY37 CDBG Programs
March 22, 2011
Page 10 of 13

Steven Hladun stated this application is to implement phase-2 for the Glenwood Park Tennis Court. He noted that they were granted \$25k for this project last. The purpose is to look at the tennis court conditions to make sure they're safe. When they looked at the courts, they investigated the sub-surface and cracks. They will also make improvements to the tennis for players and they will improve the picnic areas. He felt it was a tall task, noting that they are currently in the design phase and ready to go out to bid. He said he hoped they could afford to do as much as possible to also service the Wonderland of Ice.

C26 – CoB Department Parks & Recreation – Public Park Improvements

Request - \$92,000.00

Steven Hladun stated this application is to fund multiple beautification projects – as *outlined in the program description*. It will allow them to improve site access and put in benches for picnics. There are also plans to do some gardening and landscaping. He explained that the department maintains the parks, cuts the grass and picks up trash, but the enhancements go beyond that. The purpose is to find out if families are using the parks regularly. Overall, the funding goes beyond regular maintenance.

C27 – Office of Neighborhood Revitalization East End NRZ – East End Neighborhood Revitalization Zone

Request - \$5,000.00

Tom Coble stated that this program has been funded in the past two years for the east end NRZ. It impacts children and adults to assist with numerous community activities, such as an Easter egg hunt, a winter affair event, pony rides and Halloween activities. He expressed that the program provides life changing aspects to the residents that live in the neighborhood.

C28 – CoB Public Facilities Mayor's Conservation Corp

Request - \$98,285.00

No representative in attendance to present the program

C29 – CoB Central Grants/Community Development – ESG Program Administration

Request - \$7,000.00

C30 – CoB Central Grants/Community Development – HOPWA Administration Costs

Request - \$26,387.00

C32- CoB Central Grants/Community Development – CDBG Program Administration

Request - \$649,202.00

Kelly McDermott presented the above programs together. She thanked the committee for all their hard work during the CDBG funding process.

She stated that these requests pertained to all administration allocations under her office, to support the administration of the CDBG program and sub-recipient management/monitoring requirements as directed by HUD and according to federal guidelines. She noted that HOPWA expects cuts, noting that last year's budget was \$649k, but at a 30% cut, it will decrease the amount considerably. If this happens, it may result in a staff person having to go home.

- Question – how many people work in the office currently **Response – there's a total of seven (7) people working.**
- Question – who is the Financial Manager **Response – her name is Cindy DelBruno.**

C31 – CoB Central Grants/Community Development – Housing/Community Development Program Delivery Services

Request - \$140,000.00

Kelly McDermott stated this allocation will fund a construction manager. Delivery services are funded and they put projects out to bid. They will verify all the tenants' income eligibility, confirm that construction is being upheld and that the tenant is still eligible. It was noted that Joe Gambino runs the program.

C33 – CoB Central Grants/Community Development – Residential Homeowner Rehab Program

Request - \$250,000.00

Kelly McDermott stated this program was funded last year for \$25k. The program is to run an emergency rehab program strictly for seniors. With the funding in place, they will be able to run a citywide rehab program that will be open and available to

all residents. It was noted that they could complete between 20 and 25 properties this year.

- Question – how are eligible people found **Response – they are referred by outside agencies. They have to complete an in-house application. The funds are used towards various repairs, such as; furnace repair and interior repairs.**

Ms. McDermott thanked the committee members and city council for all their lobbying and advocacy work.

Council member Martinez in turn thanked Ms. McDermott for all her help through the CDBG funding process.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER dePARA MOVED TO ADJOURN
** COUNCIL LYONS SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The public hearing was adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham
Telesco Secretarial Services