

CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
ECONOMIC and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
and ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

SPECIAL MEETING

TUESDAY, MARCH 1, 2011

6:30 PM

ATTENDANCE: Council members: dePara, Co-chair; A. Ayala, Brantley, Martinez, Lyons
Council President McCarthy (*sat in to make a quorum*)

CENTRAL GRANTS: A. McGoldrick, R. Gupta,
V. Sorrentino; Health & Human Services,

OPED: D. Eversley, E. Lavernoich, M. Perez

FINANCE DEPARTMENT: Dawn Norton, Interim Finance Director

Co-chair dePara called the meeting to order at 6:50 pm. He introduced the committee members.

Approval of Committee Minutes of January 19, 2011.

** **COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES**
** **COUNCIL MEMBER McCARTHY SECONDED**
** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Co-chair dePara stated that the agenda would be taken out of order as follows:

29-10 Grant Submission: re: U.S. Department of Energy EPA – 2010 LEAP (Local Energy Assurance Plans for Connecticut Municipalities) Grant Program.

Ms. McGoldrick and Ted Graybarz presented this item to the committee. Ms. McGoldrick stated that the grant wasn't a city grant and that the Town of Windham was the principal applicant. She explained that the purpose of the grant is to develop and

refine local energy assurance plans for various municipalities that will reduce energy assurance. The grant is in the amount of \$40k for a two year period.

Mr. Graybarz added that they will look at better ways to utilize energy in the city. For instance, they will look at ways to use other utilities in case of a brownout, by moving power out of the generator, which saves energy. He said in the case of a disaster, they will also look at ways to generate power on a district by district basis. He noted that the Town of Windham originated the grant.

Council member Brantley asked if there was a city match. Ms. McGoldrick said no.

Council President McCarthy stated that he was in favor of the proposal. He further congratulated Ms. McGoldrick on her recent promotion.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

***Consent calendar**

30-10 Grant Submission: re: Connecticut Department of Public Health for 2011 Lead Poisoning Prevention – Education Outreach Grant.

Ms. Sorrentino and Ms. Gupta presented this item to the committee. Ms. Sorrentino stated this item pertained to a \$40k grant received from the State Department of Public Health for lead poisoning prevention and education. They will do outreach for children under six years old.

Council member Ayala asked how they detect potential lead problems in kids under six years old in the home. Ms. Gupta said there is a state statute that requires the testing. They locate the kids through kindergarten classes, churches and wherever they need to go.

Council member Ayala asked if there was a specific number they have to report, to qualify for the following year. Ms. Sorrentino said no, it's based on meeting their goals.

Council member Martinez asked if they had any outside partners. Ms. Sorrentino said yes.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

***Consent calendar**

40-10 Grant Submission: re: Southwest Community Health Center for 2011-2012 Oral Health Care Grant.

Ms. Gupta stated that the subcontractor they receive the money from will be granted \$5k from Southwest Community Health Center to provide oral health care to women and children.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

***Consent calendar**

20-10 Disposition and Redevelopment of City Owned property located at 167 Steuben Street and 95 Gilmore Street former Waltersville School and ordering public hearing relative to the same.

Council President McCarthy stated there were some issues to figure out before the committee can make a decision. He suggested that the item be tabled.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER McCARTHY MOVED TO SCHEDULE A PUBLIC HEARING AT THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL MEETING
** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER McCARTHY MOVED TO TABLE
** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

25-10 PILOT agreement with POKO Partners in collaboration with Alpha Community Services for the Clinton Commons Project a 33 unit affordable housing project at 75-101 Clinton Avenue and ordering public hearing relative to the same.

Mr. Lavernoch stated that the resolution will authorize the Mayor to enter into a PILOT agreement, noting that the total profit will be well over \$10 million benefited from multiple funding sources. There was an analysis that was run by the finance consultant and they looked at the debt burden and operating cost. They determined it will be a limited tax burden the project could shoulder. He noted there were representatives present to discuss the matter further. He went on to say that the co-sponsors for the resolution were Council members A. Ayala and Taylor-Moye and it has a lot of support.

They did an analysis of what the project will pay and he believed it will start at a cost of \$26k per year and increase accordingly.

Council member Brantley asked if the location was the former shelter. Mr. Lavernoich said yes.

Council member Ayala explained that the shelter location has been vacant for a while. They met with members of the school and the Board of Education about the hazardous conditions on site; such as dirt, debris and dead animals. He added that the property is against the fence of the playground, so there are health concerns. He mentioned that the representatives present will discuss the number of units and the phases to build the new facility. He added that the project will also provide a tax base for the city and they will submit a check for all the back taxes upon financing authorization. He urged support of the project as beneficial revitalization for the city.

Council member Martinez asked where the funds were coming from. Mr. Lavernoich said the money will come from the 2009 allocation.

Council member Martinez asked how much will be allocated for home funding. Mr. Lavernoich said the amount would be between \$1 million and \$1.2 million.

Council member Martinez asked who will manage the project. Mr. Lavernoich said it will be managed by Poko Partners. He explained that Alpha Community Services found them for the project and can vouch for them. He noted that the units constructed will be for very low income persons.

Council member Martinez asked who will live in the units. The representative stated that Alpha Community Services will work with them. They expect to construct (24) 2-bedroom units; (6) 3-bedroom units and (3) 1-bedroom units. They are looking to house tenants who meet the 60% median family income criteria.

Council member Martinez asked if the money will be paid back. The representative said a portion of the money will be paid back by CHFA.

Council member Lyons asked how the tax base will be structured. Mr. Lavernoich said the breakdown will be \$10k in the first year of construction and \$26k each year thereafter. And after fifteen years they will pay full taxes.

Mr. Lavernoich said language was submitted to be published in the newspaper and a notice of the public hearing should also be published.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA MOVED TO SCHEDULE A PUBLIC HEARING
** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA MOVED TO APPROVE**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

***Consent calendar**

26-10 Approval of Sycamore Housing Associates LLP as the Purchaser and Developer of Sycamore Place Apartments.

Mr. Lavernoich presented a brief history of Sycamore Housing Associates. He stated that Rotary Housing Corporation feels the need for a major capital investment that the facility requires, noting that previous resolutions have been brought before the city council. One resolution was during 2003 and they wanted approval of the final developer that was selected to undertake the endeavor. A developer was subsequently selected, who was Eagle House Development, but they dropped out of the project, so the matter is before the committee now to present Wishcamper Companies, Inc. as the new developer. He noted that Mr. Hutcherson was present to answer questions.

Council member Brantley asked if Rotary Housing Corp. will change hands with Wishcamper Companies, who will complete the project of the 40-year run. She further questioned if they will then start the specific upgrades to the property and then Rotary Housing Corp will be done with their involvement. Mr. Lavernoich said that was correct.

Mr. Don Hutcherson, Chairman Rotary Housing Corp. stated that there's more money to be put into the building to improve it. He felt this was the best way to put life back into the building and improve the quality of life for the tenants. He noted that they plan to do some new projects in a year or two, but all the money that comes from the proceeds of Wishcamper Companies will be put back into the city.

Mr. Corey Fellowes, Wishcamper Companies, Inc. stated that his company has developed rental properties for close to forty years in thirteen or fourteen states. They've had some local experience here at 2400 North Avenue during 2008 and 2009 and the property has been stabilized for a year and a half now and they have their own management company.

Council member Brantley said both of the buildings that were mentioned were in dire conditions, like the elevators. Mr. Hutcherson replied that the first buyer couldn't complete the deal due to financing; but now that the project is back, they are trying to put those issues to rest.

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Mr. Hutcherson said the renovations for Sycamore Place Apartments work out to be \$24k per unit that includes upgrading the elevators. He added that other vital capital improvements will also be addressed. Overall, the improvements will amount to approximately \$5 million.

Council member Brantley stressed her concern about the constituents, noting that it seemed Sycamore Place Apartments have been ignored. She recalled a night when a fire occurred and tenants were stuck in the elevators. She further recalled problems the seniors had with broken down elevators that a firefighter had to resolve. She emphasized that she has received numerous complaints about the conditions in the building. She asked for a definite timeline of when the improvements will take place, so she can relay the information to her constituents. She also mentioned that there were tenants in the building that had physical limitations and disabilities who will have difficulty during a crisis or emergency. He further emphasized that there were deplorable conditions in the building. She said that although she will support the project, she stressed that she hoped to see the conditions corrected in the building.

Mr. Fellowes said he was aware the building needed a lot of work. He said his company believed strongly in clear communication and they will commit to going forward with the residents needs.

Council member Brantley asked him to keep the city council informed of the progress regarding the renovations as they take over the project. Mr. Fellowes replied of course.

Council member Brantley requested that when they start the renovations, to look at the most severe medical issues some of the tenants have, especially those that live on the top floors. She stated that they should consider bringing them down to a lower floor. Mr. Fellowes said he will look at that issue, however, he said there were ADA policies to consider.

Mr. Fellowes said they will have twelve (12) fully accessible apartments and they plan to enhance the residence service program, by having someone on staff to address the special needs of the tenants.

Council member Brantley asked if Wishcamper Companies will manage things on site. Mr. Fellowes said yes. He said the people already there will work under them and their company.

Council member McCarthy commented that as a general rule, residents rely on their district council member. He requested that they take the words Council member

Brantley expressed into consideration. He also noted that the project has gone beyond Rotary Housing Corporation capabilities, so it was good that someone else was found and it's the right thing to do. He asked if they have sat down with the residents at Sycamore Apartments to discuss the project. He said that as far as 2400 North Avenue, he asked what their game plan was there. He recalled the \$5 million improvements and asked what guarantee there was that the level of improvements will be done over a period of time. Mr. Hutcherson said expenditures to rehabilitate the building will have to be made taken into consideration tax credits.

Council member McCarthy asked if Mr. Lavernoich could provide a definition of the improvements and an outline of the low income tax credits from CHFA at the next city council meeting.

Council member McCarthy asked again if anyone from Rotary Housing has sat down with the residents. Mr. Hutcherson said they did initially and they have been notified of the second project. He noted there will be some temporary relocation involved during the construction period. Council member McCarthy said it was important to sit down and talk to the residents about what will take place, in terms of the improvements. Mr. Hutcherson said if enough people are interested they can do that. He noted that very few people turned out in the past when they arranged a meeting. Council member Brantley questioned whether or not they were notified.

Council member Brantley recalled a time when she visited 2400 North Avenue to bring a gift to a woman that turned 100 years old and she was denied access to the building. Mr. Hutcherson said they are sensitive about security in the building. Council member Brantley countered that's unacceptable due to her status as a council person who is there to reach out to the community.

Council member McCarthy stated they should talk more about access to the building.

Mr. Fellowes said one objective is not only to provide an opportunity for health screenings and workshops, but to also make sure they're connected to the community. He apologized for the situations that occurred and he said he would look into the problems. He noted that Council member Brantley's assistance would be vital in making sure things go well after the new improvements are implemented.

Mr. Lavernoich stated that the financing they will receive to improve the property is tied to the improvements they'll make, he asked Mr. Fellowes to submit a document indicating that. Mr. Fellowes agreed that was correct. He added that there is a lot on the line and they have a commitment to fulfill.

Council member Lyons asked if the improvements to be done would be included in the contract. Mr. Lavernoich repeated that a document will be submitted to outline that the financing received will be tied into the improvements to be done.

Council member Lyons questioned when Wishcamper Companies completes the three years taking over the responsibilities, will a new contract be required. Mr. Hutcherson said the property will go back on the tax role.

Council member Martinez asked what other units Wishcamper Companies managed. Mr. Hutcherson said they also managed Laurelwood Apartments.

Mr. Hutcherson mentioned the operation of the van and the problem they were having with HUD as far as the funding source used to operate it.

Council member Ayala piggy backed on Council member Brantley's comments regarding the seniors and access to the building. He said he realized that there's a protocol, however, he asked them to be aware that without help and support from the district council members the project doesn't work well.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA MOVED TO APPROVE**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

***Consent calendar**

Informational Session regarding presentation and discussion concerning existing economic development projects as well as potential future initiatives

Don Eversley presented an overhead presentation to give an overview of existing economic development projects and potential future initiatives. He highlighted the following information:

- Due to economic decline, they continued to see development projects move forward and they are now able to move forward.
- Core challenge involves tremendous savings and delivering services for less money.
- The plan is to invest in "Brand Bridgeport. They are looking to get a brand positive identification. It's important to do small things to give people a better impression, such as developing downtown, cleaning up the city and embrace the

waterfront with new development; such as the Steel Point project and focus on jobs.

- East Bridgeport Development Corridor involves (700) developable acres and presents dynamic development opportunity, which will start at Pleasure Beach up Seaview Avenue and across the river to Steel Point etc.
- They will obtain feasibility money from the government to do a feasibility study.

Council member Brantley asked if this involved the location south of Barnum Avenue.

Mr. Eversley said the first phase will be access for what's called passive recreation. He pointed out that development of the corridor included Barnum/Waltersville School and Seaview Avenue Industrial Park about Williston Avenue. He noted that a recycling facility will go in. He further noted the 70-acres located in the middle of the city at the old General Electric site that is a tremendous opportunity. He said they took a hard look at the buildings the city owns that are recommended for repairs and that could provide job opportunities.

Council member Lyons asked about the old Palace and Majestic theatres. Mr. Eversley said right now it's too big a venture to take on. He said it's more important to tackle small scale development. He recalled that they had some interest in the past to renovate the theatres, but when the party saw what was involved, they changed their mind.

Bill Beccaro, of the City Attorney's Office stated that City Hall and the City Hall Annex are being considered for consolidation. They looked at the improvements required, which will mean bond money, but the city is already overtaxed. There is also the matter of the fund balance and pension obligation. He noted that the sell/lease concept is not new and they found a way to do the financing tax free. The advantages are: the ability to do needed improvements and they will also reduce energy costs going forward.

Council member McCarthy asked if they could take some money to upgrade the City Council chamber's sound system. Mr. Beccaro said that might be possible.

Council member McCarthy asked about the fund balance currently was. Ms. Norton said it was \$15 million and \$4 million was a restricted fund balance for future obligations.

There was some further open discussion regarding future development initiatives.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER McCARTHY MOVED TO ADJOURN
** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham
Telesco Secretarial Services