

**City of Bridgeport
Economic and Community Development and
Environment Committee
Public Hearing
Tuesday, March 19, 2013
6:00 PM**

ATTENDANCE: Council members: Co-chair; Brantley, Co-chair; Martinez, Banta, Lyons, Blunt.

Co-chair Brantley called the public hearing to order at 6:55 pm.

She apologized for the public hearing starting late, due to an ECDE Committee meeting that was held earlier.

AGENDA

The City of Bridgeport, through the City Council Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee, in accordance with its Citizen Participation Plan, will hold Public Hearings to solicit citizen input on projects being proposed for funding under the Program Year 39 Community Development Block Grant Program including CDBG, ESG, HOME and HOPWA on Tuesday, March 19, 2013 at 6:00pm (non-profit and other applications #1-33) in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, CT the period from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014.

Below are the (non-profit and other applications #1-33) that presented before the ECDE Committee on March 19, 2013:

1. Bridgeport P.A.L. – request \$25,000

Mike Morella stated that for the past fifty years, Bridgeport P.A.L. has sponsored the Christmas village, Easter village and Drum & Bugle Corp. He said they plan to start a computer lab. They have sixty (60) youth that participate. Five youth that were present shared their involvement with P.A.L., they learned about team work, responsibility, leadership and the difference between right and wrong. It was stated that they had a lot

of respect for Mr. Morella who helped them gain confidence. One of the parents that were present expressed that it was a good, all year round program.

Council member Lyons asked how they would sustain the \$25,000. Mr. Morella said they hold fundraisers year round and they receive community donations.

2. Hall Neighborhood House- Ella Jackson Senior Center – request \$25,000

Reggie Walker, Director of Hall Neighborhood House stated that the center support activities for fifty (50) seniors. They have arts & crafts, recreation and they help with Medicare and Insurance matters. There is also a host component of the center called Aging for Grace for fifty (50) seniors. He relayed that if the center wasn't funded, they wouldn't be able to offer that the program every Wednesday.

3. Hall Neighborhood House – Halls Art Academy – request \$30,000

Mr. Walker stated they were looking to relocate the performing arts studio to the Hall Neighborhood House building. There is one-half acre vacant land to the rear of Hall Neighborhood House with enough room to build on. He commented that there are various people involved with the program.

4. Hall Neighborhood House – HVAC – request \$20,000

There were no comments regarding this request.

5. IDEA for Autism, Inc.-Window Replacement – request \$50,000

The representative for this program stated that they provide comprehensive services for adults with autism and asperger syndrome. The request will be used for windows replacement that will be more efficient. It was stated that the windows are deteriorating and they are looking to decrease energy costs.

Co-chair Martinez asked if they already submitted an application with ABCD for energy assistance. The representative said she didn't think they were eligible since they were a business. Co-chair Brantley suggested they contact ABCD to find out if they were eligible.

6. Child and Families Guidance - request \$40,000

The representative for this request wasn't present.

7. Frank Habansky Food Pantry - request \$10,000

Mel the representative present stated that they had two locations at 15 Princeton Street and at the Bridgeport Towers. They provide food at no charge for qualified individuals. The funds will be used to purchase food not staff. They have forty-five volunteers and they have been in operation since November 2008 and they serve over 1,000 people.

Council member Lyons asked if there were any other locations in Black Rock to offset food for the pantry. It was stated that the community is supportive financially to help buy food.

Co-chair Brantley asked if they ever provide dinners during the holidays for the community. It was stated that the day before Thanksgiving, they distribute food.

Co-chair Brannelly stated that she volunteered at the pantry. She commented that it was well run and the volunteers are committed. She noted that people out of the zip code frequent the pantry and they are also given a list of other food pantries in their community.

8. Cardinal Shehan Center- request \$41,023

Terry O'Connor said the funds would be used for a hot water heater, an automatic chemical unit and valves for the pool. They will also replace the gymnasium doors and the controls for it.

9. McGivney Community Center – Center Renovations – request \$55,000

The comments below also applied to this request.

10. McGivney Community Center – Youth Program- request \$12,000

Terry O'Connor stated that the funds would be used for tutors, computer instruction and renovations to the building, gymnasium floor, windows and one bathroom.

Council member Lyons asked if they also planned to raise funds. Mr. O'Connor said they run ten (10) events per year and they hold a golf tournament in July. They also write grants and they received a grant of \$275k for the Sheehan Center. He noted that they will also begin to write grants for the McGivney Center.

11. Precious Promises Ministries – Soup Kitchen-request \$30,000

Barbara Lewis said the program has been operating in the area for four years. They serve the community and provide food, baskets and blankets. They are looking to

expand their food donations to serve breakfast five days per week to the homeless and the needy in the community.

Council member Blunt asked if they had a location to cook the food. Ms. Lewis said yes, it's located at 1107 Stratford Avenue between 5th and 6th Street.

12. Chemical Abuse Services Agency, Inc. – CASA- request \$108,070

John Torres stated the program addresses HIV/AIDS, homelessness and substance abuse. They provide safe stable housing to help transition people to independent living within 18-months. They also promote community based services that address crisis and intervention. There are two case managers and one team leader that have professional credentials to deal with the clientele.

A participant of the program commented that he has been with involved with CASA for two years and he has seen the positive impact the program has on people.

Co-chair Brantley asked who the director of the program was. It was stated that the director is Asha Delurma; the program is located on Noble Avenue.

Council member Banta asked how much of the requested funds would go towards salaries. Co-chair Brantley stated that that information was outlined in the program's report.

Council member Banta asked the number of people they served. It was stated that they serve ten (10) men.

13. Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders-request \$50,000

John Torres stated that they serve (500) youth between the ages of five and eighteen. They operate year round and they provide sports, education and community service. He expressed that they foster an environment for the youngsters to gain leadership and confidence – *a packet of information was distributed to the committee members*. He went on to say that they were projecting a 10% increase in participation. He relayed other aspects of the program that have been successful; such as participation in blood drives, toy drives and an annual bone marrow drive. Overall, he emphasized that the program promotes a message of empowerment. He stated that 100% of the funds would go directly to the program.

Some of the participant's of the program expressed that from day one they have volunteered. It was stated that they are more like a family and the sports related activities that the young people are involved in was mentioned; such as cheerleading, softball and assistance with SAT's. Overall, it was stated that the program has had a great impact on their lives. Mr. Torres relayed that their motto was *"Giving people the belief that anything is possible"*.

Co-chair Brantley asked who provides the SAT assistance. Mr. Torres stated that they have two teachers that they are in partnership with at the University of Bridgeport; it's a 10-week course.

Council member Lyons asked what portion the families pay towards the sports component for uniforms and equipment. It was stated that they charge a nominal fee compared to other sports leagues and the fee is based on a sliding scale. He said they emphasize focus on community organization.

Council member Blunt said he had a concern about the SAT assistance and the number of registered youths. It was stated that they have thirty-two (32) juniors taking the SAT. They reach out to guidance counselors to encourage the youth to enroll, which has resulted in excellent SAT scores.

Council member Banta asked how many sponsors they had. It was stated that they currently didn't have any sponsors, but they had thirty-nine sponsors last year that contributed between \$100.00 and \$500.00.

14. Children in Placement-request \$20,000

Luz Nueves stated that the program advocates for children in abusive or neglectful situations. They train volunteers to act in the child's best interest and they work in conjunction with the Department of Children and Families. She stated that they service children at risk and those that are aging out of the system. The volunteers are assigned one child and they help the child and family decide the best place for them to live or make a determination if they can return to the home family. It was further relayed that there is an extension of the program for those aging out of the system. They offer specific ways to evaluate the choices they make. The program is piloted by CASA that stands for (Court Appointed Special Advocate) and it's a results based program.

Co-chair Martinez asked the number of youth they service. It was stated that they served eighty-eight (88) youth last year in Bridgeport and focus is on the program.

15. Recovery Network-Iranistan House/Sewer Line-request \$14,000

Dorna Stouffer stated that the request was to address the sewer line problem at one of the group homes located at 964 Iranistan Avenue.

Co-chair Martinez asked if the program was located at a house. The response was yes, they house eight (8) residents.

Council member Lyons asked if they research or raised funds to finance the repair. The response was yes, but they didn't have the specifics.

Council member Blunt asked if the sewer problem has been existing and if they had an assessment done on the system. It was stated that the problem was a broken lateral.

Co-chair Martinez asked how long they been located at Iranistan Avenue. The response was more than twenty years.

16. Catholic Charities- request \$250,000

Miriam Pratt, Coordinator said they were located at 238 Jewitt Avenue. They provide (18) subsidized units in Bridgeport. They help people that need financial assistance, medical care and help with abusive home conditions that are referred by medical case management.

Council member Lyons asked what they do to subsidize the program. Ms. Pratt said she needed to check with their fiscal department for that information. It was clarified that they specifically service the HIV/AIDS population.

17. Career Resources-Fatherwood Works – request \$15,000

Debra Cahill, stated she was there to speak on behalf of Scott Wildeman, CEO. She said the current funding source will be eliminated. The program offers services to the non-custodial parent and it teaches men to work and maintain a relationship with their children. She said the basis of the program has encouraged good results in a child's life.

Co-chair Martinez asked the age of the fathers they service. Ms. Cahill said they serve (12) fathers. They hold a weekly meeting on Thursday for twelve weeks. They also provide one on one sessions.

Council member Blunt asked how the men in the family were referred to the program. It was stated that it's a walk-in service and they also take referrals from the court system. Ms. Cahill said they will begin working with the Bridgeport Housing Authority and they plan to post flyers to promote the program. It was explained that the counselors are employed by Career Resources; they are specifically trained for this program. It was noted that it's a national program.

Ms. Cahill clarified that not all the fathers in the program have been incarcerated.

Council member Lyons asked if they had any information related to their affiliation to Career Resources. Ms. Cahill said she would provide the information.

18. Family Services Woodfield-Work Skills Program-request \$15,000

The representative present for this program stated that the funds would provide occupational skills training for resident of Bridgeport that aren't eligible for other program funds. They provide various services, such as; literacy and health services.

Co-chair Brantley stated the application outlined a different reason for the funds request. It was stated that a certain percentage of the funds would go towards staff and other components of the program would be taken care of through leverage funds.

19. Downtown Cabaret-Cabaret Training-request \$26,100

Hugh Helanan stated the program introduces children to live theatre. He recalled that they gave free tickets to Bridgeport school children last year – *he read a letter of thanks from a teacher at Roosevelt School that expressed the impact the live performances had on the children and made two grades very happy.* Mr. Helanan said they had a (700) ticket subsidy and they will subsidize half the cost that will allow them to serve 3,000 kids this year.

Council member Blunt stated it was a great venue. He asked the process for distribution of the tickets. Mr. Helanan said the group manager has contacts in the Bridgeport schools and he makes calls and does outreach to various schools.

Council member Lyons commented that the Cabaret was a gem in Bridgeport and they do a wonderful job. She urged them to continue entertaining the children.

20. ABCD - Freeman Homes- request \$203,000

Myesa Tisdale said they were seeking to create an African-America museum in the south end of Bridgeport that will consist of an education, research center and housing. She stated that during deconstruction, trainees came through the WorkPlace “Green” program and unearthed museum quality artifacts that they would like to research further. She relayed that the houses were built in 1848, which was the same year that slavery was abolished in Connecticut. She further relayed other historical information about the homes.

Co-chair Brantley asked if the building was still standing. Ms. Tisdale said no, but there are some walls and bricks that are still intact.

21. ABCD - Rental Assistance- request \$147,751

Carol Reed said they serve (200) families that are in jeopardy of being ejected from their home. Assistance is based on each individual situation that may be experiencing a domestic violence situation or other issues.

22. ABCD - Energy Assistance-request \$79,251

Carol Reed said this program provides (150) clients with emergency heating and emergency furnace repairs.

23. ABCD - St. Stephen’s Food Pantry- request \$32,520

Jenna Malone said they service low income families. They serve 1,000 citizens per month and the meals distribution has increased by 50,000; (109) families are assisted each week. The weekly expense is \$600+ per week and by the third week each month, foods is almost depleted. She relayed that they serve a diverse population and many families have children under the age of five. She went on to say that 171,825 meals were served over the last 7-months and 100% of the funds go towards food.

24. Miracle House - request \$30,000

Debra Macavoy stated that the program helps ex-offenders and women that want to change their life. The funds will be used for outreach and they have a volunteer staff.

Council member Lyons asked for details about the \$30,000 for operating expenses. Ms. Macavoy said it would be used for heating and other household expenses. They are located at 214 Beechwood Avenue and it’s a residential 2-family home that was

approved by zoning. There are currently five (5) people in the program and they can accommodate eight to ten people.

Some of the residents came forward to speak. They expressed that the program has been extremely helpful in their lives and they are currently employed full time. It was also stated that the program has been a blessing and many that have left the program, go back to visit as a volunteer to mentor the other women and help them succeed. It was further expressed that the program has saved lives for some that didn't have family and it taught them to get back into society and gain respect and work on their family issues.

25. Healing Tree Economic Development-Kings Pantry - request \$20,000

Janette Baptiste stated that the food pantry has three locations located on John Street, Eisenhower Street and at 30 Florence Street (off of Stratford Avenue). They serve young people and provide Easter baskets for kids at Burroughs Hall. They also provide structured games in the gym at Curiale School and they hold a holiday breakfast the first Saturday in December all free of charge. It was stated that the church is still located on the east end of Bridgeport and although they plan to move to a Park Avenue location, the pantry will remain on the east end.

26. Optimus Health - Pediatric Asthma – request \$20,000

Mr. Spinelli stated that they provide education, prevention and treatment. They have a part time PRN (Pediatric RN that addresses asthma. The registered nurse works with the schools and she will educate parents how to treat youth asthma.

Council member Lyons asked if the funds are only for Optimus patients. Mr. Spinelli said yes, however they serve anyone that needs the help.

27. NRZ Upper East Side - Neighborhood Sidewalks – request \$300,000

Helen Losak said the funds would be used to renew the sidewalks and curbs at designated streets (identified in the packet). She said many of the streets in the area have no existing curbs or sidewalks, which present a dangerous situation. The improvements will help beautify the area.

Co-chair Brantley asked if the NRZ was currently set up. Ms. Losak said they were in the process, but it hasn't been established yet. Co-chair Brantley recommended that the

NRZ should be set up first and then the request could be made. She also suggested that she contact Richard Paoletto about the sidewalks and curbs issue.

28. Inspira, Inc.- request \$183,451

Nolan Campbell and Angelo Wilkes stated that they work with the HIV/AIDS population. They provide shelter, transitional housing and affordable housing. The purpose of the program is to break the cycle of homelessness. There are two components of the program; transitional that provides housing up to 24-months and sustained housing up to 5-months. They serve 30-35 men and women annually. He also mentioned that various improvements that have been done to the building that is located in Stamford. He clarified that although they are located in Stamford, they serve the entire region including Bridgeport.

29. Mid-Fairfield - AIDS project- request \$156,263

Louise Rodriguez stated that the focus of the program was to take care of people living with HIV/AIDS and to promote an independent living program. They subsidize thirty (30) apartments and they provide case management support. They also work in conjunction with other agencies and foundations. They serve (150) people and she noted that 40% of the residents are from Bridgeport and 60% of the residents are from other surrounding areas. Their goal is to help a client become self-supporting. The funds will provide housing of 12-units.

30. Time for a Change - Ministry Induction Center – request \$228,108

Johnny Byrd stated their mission is to assist Bridgeport residents with substance abuse issues; they help them face addiction and eventually return to society and their families. The program services male adults in rehabilitative environment. They have (15) staff volunteers. The funds will be used for case management and teaching the staff. They are located on the west end in a 6-family unit building with 24-rooms at 880 Hancock Avenue. They partner with the Team Challenge program and it's a four to six month program. He explained that at the six month period, they transfer the men to Pennsylvania where Team Challenge is located. He mentioned that graduation will be upcoming on May 18 from 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm at the Seventh Day Adventist Church located at 717 Clinton Avenue. He further noted that events are held throughout the year to raise money to offset costs.

Council member Blunt asked how the men were referred to the program. Mr. Byrd said their web page has contact information and referrals are also through word of mouth and the Department of Corrections.

One of the residents expressed that it was a unique program that has changed lives. The staff is people that have gone through the program and want to give back.

31. Time for a Change - Ministry Induction Center- request \$126,256

The comments above apply to this item also.

32. The Kennedy Center- request \$64,239

It was stated that representation for this program wasn't present tonight – *they will present at the public hearing scheduled on March 25.*

33. Maplewood Ave. Condominium - Condo Complex- request \$91,650

Kathy Jalisa stated the funds would be used for 8-units located in the west end NRZ. The funds are to replace windows and siding that will improve heat efficiency. She explained that the windows are deteriorating, damaged and rotted.

Co-chair Martinez asked if they requested energy assistance. Ms. Jalisa said she didn't think they were eligible. Co-chair Brantley suggested that they also look into FEMA for assistance.

ADJOURNED

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

The public hearing was adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham
Telesco Secretarial Services

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