

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 18, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Mary McBride-Lee, Co-chair; Maria Valle, Co-chair;
Scott Burns, Jorge Cruz, Sr.

OTHERS: Council Member(s): Aidee Nieves, Council President; Dasha Spell & Richard Ortiz; Ashley Aguilera, Director, Legislative Services; Chadwick Schroeder, Office of Sustainability; Joseph Katz, Central grants; Cathy Fletcher, Planning Director; Tammy Papa, Dept. of Health & Social Services

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair McBride-Lee called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. There was a quorum present at the time of roll call.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

- **November 20, 2024 (REGULAR MEETING)**
- **COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 20, 2024 (REGULAR MEETING).**
- **COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

01-24 Grant Submission: re United States Department of Energy – Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (#24453).

Mr. Katz shared this grant was received based on a formula, in which they received \$183,700 dollars that would be awarded in vouchers. From the list of projects available they will be working on emissions and energy efficiency.

Council member Burns asked if they received this grant in the past.

Mr. Schroeder replied this grant was last given to the city back in 2007.

Council member Burns asked what they have done with it and what are their new goals.

Mr. Schroeder replied apart from having community discussions they will be focusing on the residential side of reducing emissions and with the industrial side of the city they would like to help them get access to cleaner energy sources. They will be using the plan created by METROCOG to have informed conversations with the community.

Council member Cruz likes the community engagement part of the project. He asked if this would be in collaboration with the fire department.

Mr. Schroeder replied he needs to see how many hours they will receive and plan for the project. He would like to work with the Fire Department but the city might have another agenda for the community.

Council member Cruz asked if they could use some of the funds to create marketing campaigns to build more engagement.

Mr. Schroeder replied that since this grant was formulated, the funds are exclusive to certain topics. They need to first address the issues and bring awareness before they can ask for funds to resolve the issue. With every grant application he includes funds for residences participating in the program.

Dianalys Bonilla joined the meeting at 6:10 pm

Council member Burns asked who would do what.

Mr. Schroeder said they would be working EPA certified contractors to host community engagement sessions, and conducting analysis on goals, feedback, and what aligns with the state plan.

Council President suggested they work with someone who prioritizes educating the community on those who don't understand the matter. They should include pictures, video, and basic language so the community can grasp what they are talking about. She suggested to reach out to the NRZ, libraries, and schools for outreach.

Council member Valle asked who would be overseeing the grant.

Mr. Schroeder said he would be monitoring the grant and familiar with achieving all the requirements. His only concern is the engagement of the community with the information session.

Council member Valle asked when he would come back to update the committee on the project.

Mr. Schroeder replied he would need 6 months to have results to report.

Co-chair McBride-Lee added she hopes the grant application is approved.

Mr. Schroeder replied there isn't enough data collected to tell the state what they need to begin remediation.

Co-chair McBride-Lee asked if any money would go to access flooding.

Mr. Schroeder replied there are other studies being done focusing on the flooding within the city but this project would study one of the causes of flooding. Reducing emissions would help the flooding situation.

****COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ MOTIONED TO APPROVE 01-24.**

****COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

02-24 Grant Submission: re United States Conference of Mayors – 2025 Childhood Obesity Prevention/Environmental Health and Sustainability Awards (#25305).

Mr. Katz shared that the city has been awarded grant prizes in the past and this year they are submitting an application that will fund a program that connects the low income residents of the city with local food sources. They were recently awarded third place which is \$15,000 dollars.

Council President Nieves asked what the expansion entails.

Mr. Schroeder explained this is the second year running the City Fresh Program, they sourced locally grown produce within 30 miles of Bridgeport to give out to low income residences, they are serving between 2,000 to 3,00 families. With the leftover produce they would compost it to create more soil.

Council President Nieves asked how do the residents know of the program.

Mr. Schroeder replied that based on the distribution center they used, which were East End NRZ and senior housing locations, they would door knock and tell their members of the distribution day.

Council member Burns asked if they will be revising the grant submission as they awarded \$15,000.

Mr. Katz replied once the grant funds are available, they will have to make a new budget with what has been awarded and they could submit that to the committee.

Council member Burns asked if they received any feedback regarding why they got third place.

Mr. Katz replied they can request for that information but they always reach out to get applications from the city.

Council member Valle asked if the food is distributed throughout the city.

Mr. Schroeder replied they do distribute the food all throughout the city but it can only be received by low income families and seniors.

Council President Nieves shared she volunteered at a food pantry and understands the perspective of standing in a line for basic needs but she sees there a missing link of communication as she never heard of this program. She would like to know who is a partner to the program so the city can advocate for them.

Mr. Schroeder replied he can submit that to the committee.

Co-chair McBride-Lee said she doesn't see that happening in the Trumbull gardens area.

Mr. Schroeder replied they don't have people lining up for the distributions, the people in the area of distribution will receive food and recipes. He added everyone likes to eat quality food but it is a big systematic issue they are looking to fix.

Co-chair McBride-Lee shared she believes the program is a failure as those people who need the resources are not involved with the program. She believes parents need to be educated on healthy foods as she sees many children bringing in junk food for lunch and weighing more than her.

Mr. Schroeder added they pass out recipe cards to get the recipients to learn of tasty and new ways they can incorporate the produce into their diet. He gets a lot of feedback stating the quality of the produce is superb and flavorful.

Co-chair McBride-Lee said she wouldn't vote against something like this as they are helping people but they need to help people on the basis of overall health and minimizing obesity in the city.

****COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE MOTIONED TO APPROVE ITEM 02-24 WITH THE FINANCIAL UPDATES AS REQUESTED.**

****COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

03-24 Grant Submission: re CT Department of Transportation Active Transportation Microgrants Program (#25488).

Mr. Katz shared they requested for the \$5,000 dollar maximum to this grant to distribute bicycle helmets and locks during community events in partnership with the complete safe streets program.

Council member Valle asked when the distribution would take place.

Ms. Fletcher replied they would like to overlap the engagement at complete safe street community discussion to enhance the involvement of the community members. The goal is to roll the helmets and locks in the spring during the demonstrations and other community involvement.

Council member Burns asked how much inventory would they be able to purchase.

Ms. Fletcher replied they would split the money to spend half on locks and the other half on helmets. They need to look for quotes on both items.

Council member Cruz asked what streets will be involved in the complete street program.

Ms. Fletcher replied they are considering all city streets for safety improvements but they are considering Bank Street to turn it into a no car area.

Council member Cruz replied he would love to see the activity done all over the city and not just in the downtown area.

****COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ MOTIONED TO APPROVE 03-24.**

****COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

04-24 Grant Submission: re CT Department of Public Health – Best Practice Tobacco Control Programs (#25504).

Mr. Katz shared this grant submission would be in partnership with Sacred Heart University, the board of education, the police department, and a few others to implement policy to prevent the youth from easy access to tobacco products and counseling services. The grant would require a zero match from the city.

Ms. Papa added the idea is to prevent children from smoking and encourage others to stop smoking. They would be focusing on a lot of marketing for the program and Sacred Heart would do the evaluations and market research. The police department would use that information to educate store owners and stop them from selling to the youth. They will be working with six schools and the three high schools.

Council member Valle asked what schools would be participating.

Ms. Papa said it was written in the grant submission that they would be working with Barnum, Waltersville, Blackham, Batalla, Discovery Magnet, Geraldine Johnson, Jettie Tisdale, Multicultural Magnet, Read, and Roosevelt Elementary school. Those schools were selected on the basis of having the largest population size of sixth to eighth graders. They will be working with the three high schools in the city.

Council member Valle asked about the field trips.

Ms. Papa said it would be to take the students to the state capital.

Council member Valle suggested they take the students to the NLC as she has seen scholars at these conferences.

Council member Cruz asked if the bulk of the money would go towards staff.

Ms. Papa shared that the Project manager would be paid that amount for the course of over 3 years, which would be a rate of \$40 dollars hourly but the bulk of the money would be going to marketing. They will be paying Sacred Heart a small portion of the money and there will be a bridge to the schools to the project.

Council member Cruz said he cannot wrap his idea over the project manager getting paid that much but he is in support of the youth leadership program and believes they should get a stipend. He suggested they reach out to an organization to manage the project and allocate more funds to the initiative.

Ms. Papa replied the positions are 1099 contracts so the people who take the positions would have to pay taxes on the money they were paid for the job versus the city making this a salary position that includes benefits.

Council President Nieves asked what the media consisted of.

Ms. Papa replied they would be working with Hatch130 marketing forum, Connoisseur media, and Full Power Radio, and Transition Ad Outdoor LTD. They would be spending \$114,000 dollars over the three years for the marketing.

Council President Nieves asked why the media would be necessary.

Ms. Papa replied the city would be creating and pushing the campaign to this initiative.

Council President Nieves hopes they can look at bringing in the students to the NLC conference in Washington D.C. She followed up by asking about police overtime.

Ms. Fletcher replied they would be conducting the program after school to avoid interfering with the police shifts, she added it would be a small number of police officers who would be partnering in the program.

Council member Valle suggested they reach out to local colleges in DC to house the youth for the conference rather than getting hotel rooms.

Co-chair McBride-Lee asked who would be talking to the children.

Ms. Fletcher replied it would be a counsel coordinator who has done this work before to work with the student to create the curriculum and train the after school directors.

Co-chair McBride-Lee said she likes the ideas of them addressing the program before it becomes serious. She encourages them to work with the police or fire department to give children a role model and hopefully they can work with students during school hours at some point.

Ms. Fletcher replied working with the after-school program will give students to use word of mouth to encourage students not to smoke and join the program. This would be the first time they submit an application for the grant.

Council member Dasha Spell Joined the meeting at 7:31 pm.

Co-chair McBride-Lee added she is sure people in those departments would like to volunteer sometime to work with the youth.

Council member Burns asked if the overtime includes their benefits.

Mr. Katz replied that it would go under the fringe line.

Council member Burns asked for more information regarding the Stamford Medicine Tobacco Program Curriculum.

Ms. Fletcher replied they will be replicating the program at a simpler scale because it targets the age group they will be working with.

Council member Burns asked if they have been able to connect with other municipalities that have implemented the program.

Ms. Fletcher replied no, the curriculum was found online with clear direction.

Council member Spell asked if this would be similar to the D.A.R.E. Program.

Ms. Fletcher replied this would not be implemented by the police department, they would be working with the officers to set up sting operations to catch the stores who are selling to minors.

Council member Cruz said he is in support of this but can't wrap around the budget going towards staffing and police overtime.

****COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ MOTIONED TO APPROVE ITEM 04-24.**

****COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

****COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ MOTIONED TO ADJOURN AT 7:40 PM.**

****COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE SECOND THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Vianca Rivera,
Telesco Secretarial Services.

City of Bridgeport
ECD and Environment
Regular Meeting
December 18, 2024