

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 6, 2020**

ATTENDANCE: John Kydes, Chair; Tom Keegan, Lisa Shanahan,
Barbara Smyth, George Tsiranidis, Darlene Young
(6:24 p.m.)

OTHERS: Lori Ellyn Guttman, Norwalk Redevelopment Director of
Community Development Planning

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

Mr. Kydes asked if there was anyone present who wished to address the Committee on a matter other than the CDGB applications. No one came forward.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kydes called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m.

ROLL CALL.

Mr. Kydes called the roll. A quorum was present.

ADMINISTRATION

A. Approval of the Minutes of January 2, 2020 Regular Meeting

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 2, 2020 REGULAR MEETING.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 2, 2020 REGULAR MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH THREE (3) IN FAVOR (KEEGAN, SHANAHAN AND SMYTH) AND TWO (2) ABSTENTIONS (KYDES AND TSIRANIDIS).**

NEW BUSINESS.

Schedule a Public Hearing at the March Planning Committee Meeting for amending the current Enterprise Zone ordinance to include Census Tract 437.

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO SCHEDULE A PUBLIC HEARING AT THE MARCH PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING FOR AMENDING THE CURRENT ENTERPRISE ZONE ORDINANCE TO INCLUDE CENSUS TRACT 437.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Community Development Block Grant

a. Review and Presentation of CDBG Applications.

• The Child Guidance Center.

Ms. Gail Melanson, the Executive Director, came forward and spoke about the fact that the Center runs a comprehensive program for teens 13 years old and up. She said how there has been an uptick in youth with suicidal ideation. The treatment including weekly individual therapy, multi family groups and various other treatment modalities. The Child Guidance Center accepts all clients regardless of the insurance plan.

• ChoZen Few Entertainment.

Ms. Mellodye Ragin came forward to speak about their LIFT program, focusing on the current issues our youth encounter, such as peer pressure, substance abuse, self-esteem, and producing public service announcements in relation to issues at hand. They have now incorporated a podcast studio and would like to provide training for more children. The staff is working on a video production on grief because loss is a part of life and this will provide techniques for people to deal with grief.

Mr. Keegan asked about the availability of the grief video. Ms. Ragin said that it would be played at the local movie theater. She reminded everyone that she had lost her husband two years earlier and both she and her daughter had to deal with their loss. Now they want to help others in the same situation.

• Community Health Center.

Ms. Amy Taylor spoke about the program and said that this program would be focused on seniors. She said that dental health is important to seniors because if they can't chew, they can't feed themselves. They have had support from SWCAA, but last year, CDBG chose not to give them any funding.

Ms. Smyth asked if this group was the one that has the school dental program. Ms. Taylor said that it was, but that the funding for this would only be used for senior dental health.

• East Norwalk Improvement Association.

Ms. Sylvia Archibald came forward and explained that the group operates from the East Norwalk Library. They are not part of the Norwalk Public Library system. For the last two years, they have received CDBG funding and were able to provide two to three STEM programs each month. The number of attendees has doubled and more people are volunteering at the library. Last year, they did a two week robotic camp for the children. There is a demand for this type of programming.

Ms. Young joined the meeting at 6:24 p.m.

- **ElderHouse.**

Ms. Denise L Cesareo, the ElderHouse Executive Director, came forward to speak about how the clients at ElderHouse have chronic conditions. The clients come to Elder House and this provides the families who provide care a respite. The average age is 87 and many of the clients have chronic conditions that require care. The program provides transportation to and from the residence. This year, the focus will be on veterans. Now the Federal Government has changed the rules and will allow veterans to seek care from community health providers.

- **Greater Norwalk Hispanic Chamber of Commerce**

A representative came forward and spoke about how workforce development training services would be provided to the Hispanic population in terms of language skills and job opportunities.

Ms. Young asked about the matching funding and Ms. Shanahan asked about the membership fees, which the representative answered for them.

- **Higher Education Literacy Professionals (H.E.L.P)**

Mr. Tristan Fields came forward to speak about the program which provides access to SAT prep and college prep. He said that they have the high school juniors in the spring and then the seniors come to the program in the fall. Traditional SAT prep usually runs to about \$600 per course. They usually have 20 students in the fall, 20 in the spring and now have added an additional 20 in the summer. The group is looking for more opportunities to expand their funding which will be used to pay the instructors. Mr. Fields said that many of the students who choose out of state colleges end up returning to Connecticut because of the cost for out of state students. Because of this, he is focusing more on Connecticut colleges.

- **Malta House**

Ms. Carey Dougherty, the Executive Director of Malta House, came forward to speak about the homeless program for women with babies. The clients can stay for up to 18 months. There was a recent inspection and the inspector said that Malta House was one of most efficient homeless shelters they had seen. Ms. Dougherty also spoke about their second application submitted for the renovation of their new Norwalk location.

- **Liberation Program**

Mr. John Hamilton, came forward to speak about the program for women and children that struggle with substance abuse, which started in 1984. He said that DCF will not fund the children that are in the program with their mothers. They focus on teaching the women financial planning.

- **Open Door Shelter**

Ms. Michele Conderino, the Open Doors Executive Director, came forward to speak about the 95 bed homeless shelter and listed a number of the services that the program provides for Norwalk residents. The request is for funding for job training, job placement and sponsoring job fairs. There is a partnership with Malta House. The second request is to replace 33 windows in 3 of the affordable housing properties.

- **Person to Person**

Ms. Nancy Coughlin, the Executive Director of Person to Person, came forward and said that they operate 3 food pantries, a mobile pantry in Stamford, along with brick and mortar pantries in Norwalk and in Darien. The request is for salary for the three Norwalk case workers. The requests for services have increased. The program also provides programs such as rental support up to \$500, utilities. They make sure that people will utilize the services.

- **Saturday Academy**

Ms. Cynthia Barnett, the CEO of the Saturday Academy came forward stating there are going to be over 15,000 ITS jobs and the program will focus on teaching girls to create apps, and become tech entrepreneurs. They will work in teams of five in high school and work on solving a community problem. This will culminate in a Shark Tank type of presentation.

- **Serving All Vessels Equally (S.A.V.E)**

Ms. Pamela George, the S.A.V.E Executive Director, came forward to speak about the mentoring program for the student and their entire family. SAVE has existed since 2006 and they would like have a full time staff member. The program has received State funding, but has been told that the funding for staff will be decreased. They had 12 youth and it increased to 20. They would like to increase the staff hours from 10 to at least 15 or 17 hours.

Ms. Young asked if the summer program would be affected if they did not receive funding. Ms. George said that they would have to stop the summer program.

- **STAR, Inc.**

Mr. Peter Saverine, the STAR Director of Philanthropy, came forward and spoke about how they had been in Norwalk since 1962. Their first request involves job placements for disabled individuals. The goal is to try to find employment for everyone who wants to work. There are two job developers in the program. The State of Connecticut does not fund the job development position. He explained that the former in-house piece work program was discontinued nationally and the focus moved to shifting people to work in the community.

- **Carver Center.**

Ms. Novelette Peterkin, The Executive Director, came forward and said that they now have the after school program. They serve about 2,500 students. They are requesting funds for an elevator to allow physically disabled teens to be able to participate in activities in their new second floor teen center.

- **Domestic Violence Crisis Center (DVCC)**

Ms. Boardie Kurz, Director of Development for DVCC came forward, mentioning the organization has two shelters, one in Norwalk and one in Stamford. The Norwalk safe house is in need of repairs, such as a replacement of the bathroom flooring or repairing the sidewalks.

- **HomeFront**

Mr. Sean O'Brien, the Executive Director of HomeFront, came forward and spoke about keeping families in their homes by helping with repairs. He spoke about some of their clients who received some assistance from his organization. There is an aging population with no immediate family nearby in this area or single parent families with one income. The group has been able to repair dangerous flooring, repair plumbing and replace cabinetry. They have repaired over 3,000 homes over the last 36 years and assisted 600 home owners in Norwalk. The request for \$17,000 would cover about three major projects for low income families.

- **Keystone House**

Ms. Kim Carter, the Keystone Development Officer, came forward to present their request. There are three group homes in Norwalk and the request was for funding to repair the bathroom at the main house on Elmcrest Terrace. They hope to install a walk in shower, grab bars and other renovations. Ms. Young asked if it was ADA accessible. Ms. Carter said that they were not wheel chair accessible.

- **New Neighborhoods, Inc.**

Mr. Jonathan Singsen, a staff member of the private, non-profit organization came forward and said that they had developed over 700 affordable housing units. They look to provide quality affordable housing. They are asking for funding to improve flooring and heating systems for the Fair Avenue units and will be working with Eversource on the heating project.

Ms. Shanahan asked if it would be possible to break any of the projects down into smaller financial amounts. The staff member said that heating would be the priority, which is \$12,000 per unit. Discussion followed about the details and the cost of corridor lighting and new corridor flooring.

- **Norwalk Housing Authority.**

Mr. Adam Bovilsky, the Executive Director of Norwalk Housing Authority, came forward and said that the Authority serves over 2,000 families along with managing

seven senior facilities. The request is to make 3 units in the Ludlow Village Housing Units senior development ADA accessible. As the seniors age, they struggle with living situation.

• **STAR, Inc.**

Mr. Peter Saverine, the STAR Director of Philanthropy, said that they would like to have a covered handicapped ramp to the main building. The initial plans did not include having a covering over the ramp, which will involve a long distance in order to provide access to the vans. He also spoke about their other application for funds to help cover the expense of a Competitive Employment Job Developer for Norwalk Residents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

Mr. Kydes asked about the status of the greenhouse. Mr. Saverine said that the greenhouse project was doing very well.

• **Norwalk Redevelopment Agency**

Ms. Lori Guttman, the Norwalk Redevelopment Director of Community Development Planning, said that the Agency had been administering the CDBG program since the 1970's.

She explained that \$184,916.00 would be needed to help with the administration of the program. HUD has capped the administrative amount at 20%. The Agency is required to place public notices for almost every program. There are both hard and soft costs, such as printing and providing the CDBG binders for the Council Members. The staff must report back to HUD about all the details.

The second application is titled City Neighborhoods. They are asking for \$333,025 which covers many programs such as economic development, community clean ups, transit orientated programs, and the Choice Neighborhoods program along with a variety of other programs.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** MR. KEEGAN MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Norwalk
Planning Committee of the Common Council
Regular Meeting
February 6, 2020