

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 4, 2020**

ATTENDANCE: John Kydes, Chair; Tom Keegan, Lisa Shanahan, Barbara Smyth, George Tsiranides, Darlene Young (6:40), Tom Livingston

OTHERS: Brian Bidolli, Norwalk Redevelopment Agency; Denise Cesareo, Elder House; Mariella Constagnet, Greater Norwalk Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Tracy Cramer, Person to Person; Lamond Daniels, Norwalk Chief of Community Services; Carey Dougherty, Malta House; Tristan Fields, Higher Education Literacy Professionals; Pamela George, Serving All Vessels Equally; Lori Ellyn Guttman, Norwalk Redevelopment Community Development Planning Director; Mary Ellen Hass, Family and Children's Agency; David Heuvelman, Common Council Member; Kim Kilroy, Malta House; Shawnee Knight, Filling in the Blanks; Tina Kramer, Filling in the Blanks; Boardie Kurz, Domestic Violence Crisis Center; Stuart Lane, Mid Fairfield AIDS Project; Rachel Lochowski, Bridgeport Rescue Mission; Novelette Peterkin, Carver Center; Beatrix Winter, Norwalk Senior Center

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kydes called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

PUBLIC HEARING – NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE ACT TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

Mr. Kydes stated that the applications could be viewed on the City's website and opened the public hearing.

Ms. Guttman said that there were no comments, and nobody was signed up to speak. She said they'd received 14 applications and that it would need to be approved by the committee and advanced to the Common Council, then on to the Department of Revenue Services.

PUBLIC HEARING – CDBG-CV APPLICATIONS

Ms. Guttman stated that there were thirteen applications and that all organizations were present. They'd each have three minutes to present and would then take questions.

Mr. Kydes stated that Lamond Daniels was in attendance and because of his experience in this area, and if the committee didn't object, he would also be allowed to ask questions.

Mr. Lamond introduced himself as the Chief of Community Services for Norwalk, he said he was working to help understand and identify needs in a more systemic way to serve the community in this time and beyond. He said that he would consult with the committee to ensure that the money they spent made the most impact:

Bridgeport Rescue Mission: Rachel Lochowski

Ms. Lochowski stated that BRM's mission was to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, serve the addicted. She said they'd had to change their operations during Covid to safely serve the community. She said that right now their main operation was their pantry bag operation which was serving up to 660 families a week in Bridgeport.

She said the main reason for application would be to bring the operation to Norwalk. She said that they normally served Norwalk through their mobile kitchens but could not safely do that during the pandemic. She said they would use the funds to set up drive through pantries or somewhere safe to get food to families in need. She noted that there were more people in need during this time. She noted that they also worked with the Housing Authority to identify families in need and distribute pantry bags to housebound seniors and people with autoimmune disease.

Carver Foundation: Novelette Peterkin

Ms. Peterkin said that Carver was Norwalk's largest partner for before and after school and summer programs. She said normally they served 2500 children and offered affordable high quality program for summer students. She said that this year they'd offer six virtual programs covering transition to middle school and transition to high school. She said that the proposal submitted was for two traditional camps, at the Carver Center and Columbus Magnet School. She said that they needed funding for PPE and other safety equipment.

She noted they'd be serving fewer children because of the guidelines, that usually there were 200 students at Carver, now there would be 80. And at Columbus they'd have 110 down from 200.

Domestic Violence Crisis Center, Boardie Kurz

Ms. Kurz said that they were requesting funding for PPE and safety supplies and also to reconfigure their office space for distancing.

She stated that DVCC direct service advocates were considered first responders, and were mandated reporters, documenting bruising and violence. She said it was critical that they get back to one on one direct counseling, so that clients didn't have to choose between their safety and their health.

Mr. Livingston asked if they'd seen an uptick in domestic violence during this time?

Ms. Kurz said that there hadn't been an uptick, but that people who were following stay at home protocols could not reach out for help. She said they anticipated that they'd see an influx in the coming weeks/months. She also noted that police were not able to hold abusers, and because courthouses were closed, they weren't holding hearings ever day. She said people weren't calling because they couldn't run the risk of having the abuser come home. She said estimates were that it was up by 30% and that the children were being exposed to it as well.

Elder House: Denise Cesareo

Ms. Cesareo said that Elder House was adult day center for frail older adults with multiple disease who need care and supervision. She said that they were attended by RNs, social workers and others and that they attended up to six days a week. She noted that Elder House had closed on March 13, and that left a great burden on family caregivers.

She said they'd started a reassurance call program with check in calls every day, sometimes lasting up to 45 minutes. She said they were also delivering food. She said that they'd made the request to help with new critically important support, plus PPE for when reopen. She noted that loneliness and isolation were an issue for older adults during the pandemic.

Family and Children's Agency: Mary Ellen Hass

Ms. Hass said that FCA was a multiservice agency serving 13,000 of the community's most vulnerable residents. She said that they'd been working remotely since March 18, except for 65 home care caregivers.

She said that they wanted to re-start their work with substance abusing women, noting that the isolation can cause the problem to flare up. She said that they made the request for PPE and sanitizing equipment to work with people in person.

Filling in the Blanks: Shawnee Knight, Tina Kramer

Ms. Kramer said that Filling in the Blanks fought childhood hunger, providing meals on the weekend when school lunches weren't available. She said they served over 2600 children in Norwalk, Stamford, Greenwich and New Canaan, CT as well as Bedford Hills, NY. She said that they'd expanded due to Covid.

Ms. Knight said that they'd requested money to provide 6006 weekend meal bags for children which is 24,020 meals. Ms. Kramer said that they'd started new programs in Norwalk including at Kendall, and the Umbrella program and Room to Grow Pre-school. She said this wouldn't stop after Covid.

Greater Norwalk Hispanic Chamber of Commerce: Mariella Constagnet

Ms. Constagnet said that they Hispanic Chamber of Commerce would be used for education and material support for Hispanic and other minority communities. She noted that Hispanics were deeply affected by Covid-19, due to health underlying conditions and lack of education.

She said that they would look to mitigate the spread by educating about best practice guidelines in both Spanish and English which would be disseminated via social media, mailers, on their website and via newsletters.

She said they would also support businesses as they reopened to keep the community safe. She said they would also work to provide PPE to low income families to keep them safe.

Higher Education Literacy Professionals, Tristan Fields

Mr. Fields said that HELP supported students in their college endeavors through SAT prep and college workshops. He said that the work had stopped with Covid, until they started doing SAT prep online.

He said they needed PPE and sanitation to come back and work in person with students, he said that they may need to find places to meet with students as well. He said they wanted to keep things up to code to keep working with students without spreading infection. Not elaborate, just the basics to make sure everyone safe.

Malta House: Kim Kilroy, Carey Dougherty

Ms. Kilroy said that Malta Houses' mission was to end homelessness among pregnant women and to house young mothers.

Ms. Dougherty said that Malta House had remained open throughout and they'd accepted new residents. She said they'd done staff rotation, and remote working, and had continued to provide diapers and wipes and formula to families in need. She said they were requesting the funding to keep going.

Mid Fairfield AIDS Project: Stuart Lane

Ms. Young joined the meeting at 6:40pm.

Mr. Lane said that said that the MFAP had been in Norwalk for 24 years and supported 300 clients. He said they'd branched out and developed other programs. He said they also had a drug user health program and a CCT Community Care Team. He said they'd been open the whole time; he said their HIV+ clients were more susceptible to Covid infection.

He said that the biggest problem had been loss of jobs, so they'd made the request to help cover the financial needs of their clients, as well as PPE and making the changes necessary to deliver services safely.

Mr. Daniel asked if they were working with other food programs to help supplement their clients' needs? Mr. Lane said that there was not enough food in the food banks to go around. He said they had another grant that helped feed some clients, but that it was an issue.

Norwalk Senior Center: Beatrix Winters

Ms. Winters said that the Norwalk Senior Center had been around for over 49 years and had a number of services to help seniors stay safely at home for as long as possible.

She said they'd closed during Covid, but continued to provide meals on wheels, grocery bags, telephone support and information and referrals to help seniors as they sheltered in place. She said that they were very safe in their delivery of food and services. She said that they'd requested funds to create a reserve fund for people unable to pay for meals and to cover the costs of increased staffing necessary.

Person to Person: Tracy Cramer

Ms. Cramer said that P2P they were committed to making the systemic change in the community necessary to address racism and looked forward to being active partners in making change.

She said they'd been around over 50 years providing essential services, and typically serve 20,000 people a year. She said the Norwalk site had been operating a food pantry and casework support. She said in the last few months they'd seen many changes, on significant change was to be able to address getting food to the people in the community.

She said the request for was funding for the expansion of a food assistance program they'd started in. The program, Door to Door was a delivery service of food pantry services. She said that they'd been partnering with the City to get it started, and the goal was to be able to serve 200 Norwalk families a month.

Serving all Vessels Equally: Pamela George

Ms. George said that their Youth Council for Justice Program served 13-21 year-old students for academic enrichment, leadership development and understanding systemic issues.

She said that last summer 12 high school students had learned about systemic racism, and then focused on working with local politicians, and then were working on a civic education project.

She said that they were now thinking about Covid, and many of the youth weren't taking precautions necessary because they didn't think it would affect them. She said they wanted to do a media campaign with teens talking to teens.

Mr. Kydes thanked everyone for stepping up during this time of need. He said the money had been a blessing from HUD and he hoped to get them funded. He closed the public hearing at 7:01pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

There was no action on this item

ADMINISTRATION

A. Approval of the Minutes of May 7, 2020 Regular Meeting

**** MR. KYDES MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 7, 2020 REGULAR MEETING.
** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 7, 2020 REGULAR MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

NEW BUSINESS

a. Neighborhood Assistance Act Tax Credit Program

1. Advance the recommended applications to the Common Council for approval of their inclusion in the 2020 NAA tax credit program.

**** MR. KYDES MOVED TO ADVANCE THE RECOMMENDED APPLICATIONS TO THE COMMON COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL OF THEIR INCLUSION IN THE 2020 NAA TAX CREDIT PROGRAM.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

b. Community Development Block Grant – COVID-19 Funds

1. Approve scheduling a public hearing at the August 6, 2020 meeting on the amended PY45 AAP and Citizen Participation Plan to advance the documents to the Common Council.

Mr. Kydes proposed an amendment to this item. He said he'd been informed that they had the funding to fund all applicants on their ask, noting that this is the first time he had seen that. He said they could move the vote to the July second meeting.

He proposed an amendment to read Approve advancing the amended PY45 AAP and Citizen Participation Plan for a 5-day public comment period beginning June 25th and schedule a public hearing at the **July 2, 2020** meeting.

**** MR. KYDES MOVED TO ACCEPET THE AMENDMENT**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MR. KYDES MOVED TO APPROVE ADVANCING THE AMENDED PY45 AAP AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN FOR A 5-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD BEGINNING JUNE 25TH AND SCHEDULE A PUBLIC HEARING AT THE JULY 2, 2020 MEETING**

**** THE AMMENDED ITEM PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The community applicants left the meeting at 7:07pm.

c. Community Development Block Grant

1. Advance the final 5-year Consolidated Plan (ConPlan) and PY46 Annual Action Plan (AAP) to the Common Council for its approval and authorize the Mayor to execute

any and all documents associated with the submission of the ConPlan/PY46 AAP to HUD and all documents consistent with the approved ConPlan/PY46 AAP.

Ms. Guttman said that every five years the City of Norwalk and the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency put together a consolidated five year plan. She said that PY46 was the first year and stated that the draft was on the website for 30 days, and there had been no public comment. She said that the plan had to advance to the Common Council for approval and authorization.

**** MR. TSIRINIDES MOVED TO ADVANCE THE FINAL 5-YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN (CONPLAN) AND PY46 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN (AAP) TO THE COMMON COUNCIL FOR ITS APPROVAL AND AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SUBMISSION OF THE CONPLAN/PY46 AAP TO HUD AND ALL DOCUMENTS CONSISTENT WITH THE APPROVED CONPLAN/PY46 AAP.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

d. Industrial Zones Study

1. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute an Agreement with Utile, Inc. to conduct an Industrial Zones Study, in an amount not to exceed \$100,000.

Mr. Kydes said that he'd served on the search committee and that it had been very extensive, and at the end everyone on the committee agreed that Utile was the best choice. Ms. Young said that she too had served on the search committee and that the company hadn't worked with the city before, and that they came in with a fresh set of eyes, which she believed would be good for the city.

Mr. Kleppin said that the purpose of the study was to look at industrial zones, development and how they were impacting the neighborhoods. He said they were looking for the best use of land, to determine boundaries and to find better ways to handle conflict. He stated that the goal was not to drive business out of Norwalk, rather to accommodate everyone including new businesses.

He said they'd issued an RFP and Utile had differentiated themselves with different outreach methods and different thoughts on outcomes. He said he expected the work to start on July 1, and last for a year.

Mr. Keegan asked what the goal of the study was. Mr. Kleppin said that there were several, from financial, to revival of land for job growth, he said that they also wanted to look at the proliferation of contractor yards, and what the boundaries of the zones were.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH UTILE, INC. TO CONDUCT AN INDUSTRIAL ZONES STUDY, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$100,000.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OLD BUSINESS

There was no action on this item.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lora Grassilli
Telesco Secretarial Services