

**CITY OF NORWALK  
PLANNING COMMITTEE  
NOVEMBER 5, 2020  
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

**ATTENDANCE:** John Kydes Chair; Thomas Keegan (6:12 p.m.); Thomas Livingston; Lisa Shanahan; Barbara Smyth; George Tsiranides; Darlene Young

**STAFF:** Sabrina Church, Director of Business Development & Tourism

**OTHERS:** Suzanne Adam; Novelette Peterkin; Kim Kolloy; Rebakeh Kanefsky; Kristin Thomas; Kim Carter; Jason Patlis; Marissa Margone; Mary Oster; Nancy Coughlin; Rovitta Paul; Beatrix Lane; William Jeffries; Pam Ralson; Denise Cesaero; Edison Rivas; Brian Bidolli; David Huevelman, Norwalk Common Council

**ROLL CALL**

Mr. Kydes called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

Public Hearing for PY45 Annual Action Plan Amendment to accommodate Cares Act funds, 2020-2024 Consolidation Plan and PY46 Annual Plan Amendment

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr. Kydes called for the participants to address the committee. He said the first one to speak was Ms. Novelette Peterkin of the Carver Foundation. She said last year we served over 2,300 students at 17 Norwalk schools in one of 31 programs from K-8th grade. She said they are seeking funding to upgrade the entrance, replace two front door and reconfigure a storage closet. Ms. Peterkin said it would allow a receptionist to interact with people as they enter the building. She also said they are looking to build add glass to 8 solid doors to allow for safe face-to-face communication. Ms. Peterkin said the building was built in 1970 and the enhancements will improve community morale as well as safety.

Mr. Kydes said the next speaker was from the Domestic Violence Crisis Center.

Mr. Tom Keegan entered the meeting at 6:12.

Ms. Suzanne Adam was the next speaker for the Crisis Center. She said they provide two safe houses one in Stamford and one in Norwalk. She said at this time all cases are being heard in Norwalk. She said this year they served over 4,000 victims of domestic violence. Ms. Adam said they are applying for a full-time child counselor. She pointed out during the pandemic children are not safe at home. She said they are seeing an increase in parents and family members reaching out to the Crisis Center and are seeking a fulltime child and family advocate.

Mr. Livingston asked if they will be applying for any funds for Stamford. Ms. Adam said this is only for the Norwalk office. Ms. Young asked about the numbers. Ms. Adam said we are looking at not just the increase and said they are assessing who is in need. She said she will have to get back to her with raw numbers.

Mr. Kydes introduced Ms. Denise Cesareo on behalf of The Elder House. Ms. Cesareo said when COVID hit we closed and forced to keep our members home. She said most of these people need even more attention now that they are home. She said all of the responsibilities went to family care givers and the stress was enormous. She said there was so much pressure on the families to keep the people in safe so in August they opened up 3 days a week at limited capacity a couple of hours a day.

Ms. Kristin Thomas from Filling In The Blanks to fight childhood food program. She said the primary focus are meals provided from Friday to Monday. She said about 1 of 6 and since COVID number has risen to 1 in 4. She said the numbers are slightly lower but now the number is up to 888 at 8 different sites. Ms. Thomas said the meal bag provides 4 meals and 4 snacks.

Mr. Kydes asked how the children find them. She said the schools find the organization and refer the children to them. She said the food is delivered to the students at the school on Fridays.

Ms. Kim Killoy of Malta House was the next speaker. She said their mission is to end homelessness of pregnant women. Ms. Killoy said they are open 7 days a week and 24 hours a day. She said COVID has forced them to postpone all in person fundraising. She said they serve 21 residential families and provide formula and diapers and are requesting \$50,000.

Ms. Rebekah Kanefsy spoke on behalf of Jewish Family Services. She said they serve 17 towns and have been active in Norwalk since 1975. She said Kosher home food delivery program and the food pantry. She said they are doing monthly home deliveries because of the pandemic and 79 percent of those families identify as lower income and in need of assistance. Ms. Kanefsy said they are asking to provide more home delivered meals and supplement the kosher food pantry.

Ms. Kim Carter spoke for Keystone House. The organization has been operating in Norwalk since 1972 and serves over 150 people per year. Ms. Carter said all persons are low or no income and they are looking for money to purchase laptops to contain loneliness and depression. She said laptops will allow clients to engage with staff and receive telehealth and access other community support groups.

Mr. Livingston asked about WIFI accessibility with the laptops and she said they have taken that into consideration. Ms. Carter said they put costs to that and they have identified hotspots.

Mr. Jason Patlis, President and CEO of the Norwalk Aquarium, spoke next. He said they are requesting funding for staff retention of 13 employees all from Norwalk. He said these funds respond to the COVID pandemic and all employees are low income. He said they were among the first aquariums to close due to the pandemic and were closed for 3.5 months and lost \$3.3 million. He said they are still operating at a negative cash flow. Mr. Patlis said the Aquarium is the 2nd largest family attraction.

Mr. Kydes asked if they are still selling family memberships. Mr. Patlis said attendance has been above budget, but people are reluctant to buy memberships.

Ms. Marissa Mangone of Mid Fairfield Child Guidance Center was the next speaker. She said they worked with 150 family members for psychiatric treatment including anxiety, depression and PTSD. She said some families have been unable to take advantage of the telehealth platform. Ms. Mangone said they are requesting funding for allow families to come in and receive services. She said they are investing in COVID mitigation technologies.

Mr. Kydes commented saying they are asking for a specific modest amount of money for a specific reason.

Ms. Mary Oster spoke for Norwalk Community Services Early Childhood for increased PPE and cleaning services. She said there are 11 early care and education providers that serve kids 3 months to 4 years for early childcare so parents can go to work and kids are well-cared for. She said some facilities remained opened but others closed. She said they are really struggling to pay for cleaning costs and PPE than they ever budget for. Ms. Oster introduced Ms. Rovitta Paul, an owner of Director of Children's Playhouse. Ms. Paul said they have to budget for these supplies and the price of all supplies have increased tremendously. Ms. Paul said they are needed to purchase great amounts of disinfectants, wipes, gloves and hand sanitizer. She said they provided the families with additional supplies including diapers and warm attire in addition to education.

Ms. Beatrix Lane Executive Director of Norwalk Senior Center was next. She said this application is for funding for Meals on Wheels. She said the global pandemic forced them to close the doors. Ms. Lane said they are still exercise by ZOOM, rides to stores and interaction with staff. She said Meals on Wheels has 40 additional volunteers and provide its member with She wants funding for increased costs and to pay for people that cannot pay for the meals.

Ms. Nancy Coughlin of Person to Person was the next speaker. She said their organization has been servicing the area since 1968. Ms. Coughlin said the request is for home delivery of food. She said food insecurity has increased from 11 percent to 23 percent and 46 percent of Americans are saying they are facing serious financial problems. She said the organization never closed during the pandemic. Ms. Coughlin said the organization typically serves 13,000 persons and this year is already at 25,000.

Mr. William Jeffries spoke for Stepping Stones. Mr. Jeffries said they are working with the schools K-8 on remote learning programs. He said the request is for salary for 6 staff members who live in Norwalk and does not include fringe benefits. He said the positions are vital to their e-commerce platform.

Mr. Kydes asked if the 6 staff members are receiving unemployment. Mr. Jeffries said all of them have been employed during the pandemic, but might not be able to be kept on staff.

Ms. Pam Ralston spoke on behalf of Opening Doors of Fairfield County. She said they are seeking a rent relief program for people with dependency issues. Ms.

Ralston said many this is really the first time they have experienced this and cannot qualify for assistance.

Ms. Young asked if they are coordinating with any other Norwalk organization. She said they are applying because this was put together through an executive order. Ms. Ralston said they will be prioritizing families based upon need.

Mr. Edson Rivas spoke for the Triangle Community Center. He said we are the only one of its kind in Fairfield County. He said they transferred everything to a virtual space and he said they were hoping these were short-term solutions. Mr. Rivas said they are seeking a cloud-based management system. He pointed out the pandemic has caused a mental health crisis thru loneliness and isolation.

Mr. Brian Bidolli spoke for the Norwalk Development Agency CBGD Program. He said they are putting forth a request for administer from all of the grants and putting in for half of the typical allocation.

Mr. Kydes closed the public hearing at 1:20

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

### **I. ADMINISTRATION**

- a. Approval of the Minutes of the September 17, 2020 Meeting.

**\*\*MR. TSIRANIDES MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.**

**\*\*MINUTES WERE APPROVED UNAMIOUSLY.**

### **II. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Advance to the Common Council the amendment to the PY45 Annual Action Plan and authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute any and all documents associated with its submission to HUD.

**\*\* MR. KYDES MADE A MOTION TO TABLE THIS ITEM TO THE NEXT PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING.**

**\*\* MOTION WAS APPROVED UNAMIOUSLY.**

- b. Advance to the Common Council the amendments to the 2020-2024 Consolidation Plan and PY Annual Action Plan and authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute any and all documents associated with its submission to HUD.

Mr. Bidolli said a consultant was brought and did an entire review of the process. He said a few modifications were identified.

Mr. Livingston asked about the Walk Bridge finding. Mr. Bidolli said we are reallocating money to our economic development program.

Mr. Young asked about the \$300,000 and he said it is not going to make up for anything else.

**\*\* MR. KYDES MADE A MOTION TO MOVE THIS ITEM TO THE COMMON COUNCIL.**

**\*\* MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY**

Advance to the Common Council for its consideration, the authorization of the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute a contract with Dorenburg Kallenbach Advertising to provide Tourism Branding and Marketing Services in a sum not to exceed \$100,00 Account #09 21 3780 0780.

Ms. Smyth moved the item.

Ms. Sabrina Church talked in her first season of having funding and is her first capital project. She pointed out we did not have a specific tourism person before she was appointed. Ms. Church said it is not just a marketing contract. She said they will be working on a marketing plan and advertising and draw visitors and businesses.

Mr. Todd Kallenbach was on the call and said feels Norwalk is a great opportunity for his company and the city. He credited Ms. Church with doing a great job teaching him about the city and choosing his company.

**\*\* MS. SHANAHAN MADE A MOTION APPROVE THE PROJECT AND TO MOVE THIS ITEM TO THE COMMON COUNCIL.**

**\*\* MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

G. Venuto

Telesco Secretarial Services

Planning Committee  
City of Norwalk  
November 5, 2020