

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 2, 2009**

ATTENDANCE: Rev. Phyllis Bolden, Chair; Douglas Hempstead, Andrew Conroy, William Krummel

STAFF: Sally Johnson, CDBG Administrator, Michael Moore, Redevelopment Senior Project Manger

CALL TO ORDER

Rev. Bolden called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. and introduced

**PUBLIC HEARING – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT
PROGRAM (CDBG)**

Mr. Moore said that this was the second public hearing for the CDBG funding and that the Redevelopment Agency had received 26 applications. The first public hearing occurred on February 27th. Following that meeting, the staff made some recommendations regarding the applications. This second hearing is required by the Connecticut General Statutes. He then reviewed the major priorities in ranking the applications. He stated that because of the stimulus plan and other events in Washington, the Redevelopment Agency has not yet heard how much money the CDBG funding will receive this year. Mr. Moore then reviewed the process with the Committee.

Ms. Jennifer Barahona, the Director for the Center for Youth Development at the Family and Children's Agency came forward. This after school program serves 25 middle school students from the Norwalk Schools. These students are struggling to keep up and their reading and math scores are improving. Last year, 40% of the students had mental health issues. The program also works with the parents and deals with the full spectrum of needs.

Mr. Krummel asked about the program at NCC. Ms. Barahona said that the students are transported by bus to NCC, receive a snack and then have an hour of life skills. The second hour is devoted to academics. The program collaborates with the NCC instructors and UBS provides some of the funding. Mr. Krummel had several questions about the details of the program.

Rev. Bolden asked if the program carries the students for all three years of middle school. Ms. Barahona said that they like to have the entering 6th grade students and then after 9th grade, they often go into another program.

Mr. Krummel asked about the economic backgrounds. Ms. Barahona said that all 25 students fall into the low-income category and most of them come from single parent homes.

Mr. Moore said that the CDBG funding application requires matching funds when possible.

Ms. Eva Thorne and Rev. Roosevelt Ewell came forward to speak about Caregiver's Choice. Ms. Thorne reviewed the percentage of children who were under age 18 with mothers incarcerated and the increasing figures in this class. Ms. Thorne explained that children of prisoners need mentors to assist with homework and getting to programs. There are many risk factors that are part of their every day lives, along with stigma of having an incarcerated parent.

Caregiver's Choice is designed to provide mentors to children under the age of 18. Ms. Thorne said that the mentors are key in these students' lives. She then gave the requirements for the mentors and time commitments.

Rev. Ewell then reviewed the pilot program called "Pen and Pencil", which is where the students take on the responsibility of staying in the classrooms. In the African American community, many students are affected by having an incarcerated parent.

Mr. Hempstead asked how the students are chosen for the program. Rev. Ewell said that the students are recommended from the program central office.

Ms. Marissa Mangone and Ms. Lisa Cooper came forward and said that they had applied for an after school program "The Shades of Poetry", which is geared towards literacy at Briggs high School. Ms. Mangone said that a national recognized poet, Brendan Graham, came to Briggs to present a program and the entire student body remained after school for two hours to hear him. Another large group remained after the program to speak with Mr. Graham. This is the type of response that the program wishes to happen.

Ms. Mangone explained that Briggs does not currently have an after school program. Several of the students have asked for an after school program in order to avoid high risk behavior.

The program is a once a week class for a six week session and the students are to write at least 100 words a day. The funding will cover the facilitator, books, some of the administrative costs and other expenses. Briggs would be the pilot program with Mr. Graham.

Rev. Bolden then said that she was impressed with the program and the fact that it was geared towards Briggs.

Mr. Stuart Greenbaum of the Mid Child Guidance Center of Fairfield County came forward and said that his organization is the only out patient, psychiatric facility for children in Norwalk. This Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Program 24/7 program is geared toward the more intensely troubled youth, who are a danger to themselves or others. This is collaboration between Norwalk and Stamford and the students are referred to by the School District. A portion of the funding is through Family and Children's Services, but the State will not fund more than 66% of the costs.

During the last few months, there has been a spike in episodes and this is related to the economic environment. A new contract is in negotiation and this program requires the Child Guidance Center to do more than ever before. This is a public/private partnership and the staff is incredibly qualified to deal with these situations. No one is turned away and the fee is on a sliding scale. However, more and more of the students have no ability to pay at all.

Mr. Krummel asked what "mobile" encompassed. Mr. Greenbaum said that when there are emergent situations, the clinicians who are trained to do risk assessments go to the site. The Center has five people on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There are no services for adolescents at Norwalk Hospital, so often the meetings take place in Norwalk ER.

Ms. Rachelle Kuchen Mehan from the Domestic Violence Crisis Center came forward and said that currently in Norwalk, the Center is working with more than 1,000 clients directly. These people have been referred via social workers, hospitals, and other sources. Ms. Mehan said that no one that wants to be in the shelter, but the biggest cost for women between 18 and 49 is domestic violence.

Ms. Mehan said that regarding the Shelter Rehabilitation, the conditions at the shelter were deplorable and that there was mold. The City had been helping with security. At the minimum, it would be helpful to have a safe, clean and secure shelter. She then related a situation where a mother arrived in her ninth month of pregnancy and how the environment speaks to their dignity.

Ms. Mehan then said that the Housing Advocacy positions helps these women locate housing and transportation to move forward safely. 87% of the women that come to the shelter work full-time.

Ms. Mehan said that she was impressed with "Peace Works". She then displayed a book called "Peace Works" and said that this past year, the program reached over 4,000 students in Norwalk. She then said that two years ago, CDBG funded \$10,000 for Peace

Works, and it just blossomed. Since then, the children's parents have started to come to the program and stated that they did not know that there were alternative ways to handle anger.

Mr. Conroy asked what specific repairs were being requested. Mr. Moore said that the doors and windows need repairs, including outside lighting. A short discussion then followed about the needs of the Shelter. For every dollar that Norwalk gives, there are five dollars from private sources.

Ms. Novelette Peterkin came forward and outlined the SAT prep program for George Washington Carver Community Center along with the enrichment services. She said that currently, there are 45 students enrolled in the program and the facility has no more room. Because of this, there are now associated program at Nathan Hale and West Rocks.

Ms. Peterkin said that the Center was also asking for assistance with the Teen Center at Carver. Often many of the teens that attend often end up enrolling in the educational enrichment programs. One part of the program is when the staff takes the middle school students on college tours in Connecticut and surrounding states. Currently, there are nineteen students from Carver enrolled in colleges. Every student who has gone on the college tour has eventually enrolled in college. Last year, four students graduated from college and two of them went on to law school.

Mr. Krummel then asked about the academic aspect in regards to the college tour. Mr. Moore explained that the college tour was part of the macro view and that the CDBG focus was on SAT preparation. Ms. Peterkin said that Xerox and GE fund the college tour. Ms. Peterkin said that the middle and high school students receive this program without a fee.

Rev. Bolden said that the Carver Center had a wonderful board and that she wanted to encourage Ms. Peterkin to keep on because the students are moving forward. The encouragement helps the students realize that they can go to college and gives them a chance to see what college life is like.

Mr. Hempstead asked how the student become involved with the program. Ms. Peterkin said that the guidance counselors often refer the students. Mr. Krummel asked about the economic background. Ms. Peterkin said that it was 70% low to moderate income. Mr. Moore said that HUD requires 70% of the clients being from low to moderate income.

Rev. Bolden closed the public hearing at 7:55 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no one present from the public at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 19, 2009 Special Meeting

**** MR. KRUMMEL MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 19, 2009 SPECIAL MEETING.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 19, 2009 SPECIAL MEETING AS SUBMITTED.**

March 5, 2009 Regular Meeting

The following change was noted:

Page 1, under ATTENDANCE: please add "Douglas Hempstead"

**** MR. KRUMMEL MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 5, 2009 REGULAR MEETING.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 19, 2009 SPECIAL MEETING AS CORRECTED.**

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

- 1. Approve PY35 CDBG Program Allocations and Annual Action Plan.**
- 2. Approve the use of optional income eligibility limits for 2009-2010 program year.**
- 3. Authorize Mayor Richard Moccia to execute any and all documents required to apply for, accept, and implement the PY35 CDBG Program.**

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING:**

- 1. APPROVE PY35 CDBG PROGRAM ALLOCATIONS AND ANNUAL ACTION PLAN.**
- 2. APPROVE THE USE OF OPTIONAL INCOME ELIGIBILITY LIMITS FOR 2009-2010 PROGRAM YEAR.**
- 3. AUTHORIZE MAYOR RICHARD MOCCIA TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS REQUIRED TO APPLY FOR, ACCEPT, AND IMPLEMENT THE PY35 CDBG PROGRAM**

Mr. Krummel expressed concerns about some of the programs and possible duplication. Mr. Conroy said that he also had concerns about this also. Discussion followed about this.

Regarding the Caregiver's Choice, Rev. Bolden said that she had participated in Angel Tree in the past and that these programs made a major impact on the lives of the children in the program.

Mr. Hempstead said that the Housing Authority had received a grant from the stimulus package and that he was wondering if the CDBG funds might not be needed at this time. Mr. Moore said that he would investigate this.

Mr. Hempstead said that he was concerned about the fact that the Board of Education only has two middle schools applying for after school programs.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING:**

- 1. APPROVE PY35 CDBG PROGRAM ALLOCATIONS AND ANNUAL ACTION PLAN.**
- 2. APPROVE THE USE OF OPTIONAL INCOME ELIGIBILITY LIMITS FOR 2009-2010 PROGRAM YEAR.**
- 3. AUTHORIZE MAYOR RICHARD MOCCIA TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS REQUIRED TO APPLY FOR, ACCEPT, AND IMPLEMENT THE PY35 CDBG PROGRAM**

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

BROWN FIELD INITIATIVE

- 1. Approval of Access Agreement between US Environmental Protection Agency and City of Norwalk to conduct Environmental Assessments at 30 Monroe Street**

**** MR. KRUMMEL MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR RICHARD A. MOCCIA TO EXECUTE AN ACCESS AGREEMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION THAT WILL PERMIT A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CONTRACTOR TO COMPLETE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES AT THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 30 MONROE STREET IN NORWALK. SUCH AUTHORIZATION IS CONTINGENT UPON THE REVIEW OF THE ACCESS AGREEMENT BY THE CITY'S CORPORATION COUNSEL.**

Mr. Moore explained that the City had been awarded \$300,000 in grant funding from the State of Connecticut's Municipal Brownfield Pilot Program for the remediation of the surface parking lot at the eastbound side of the South Norwalk Train Station. The motion allows the Mayor to execute an agreement granting permission to a contractor retained by the USEPA to complete all outstanding assessment activities at 30 Monroe Street.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to discuss at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Hempstead said that Smith Street had been closed off when demolition was done and the restaurants and businesses that could be used for parking. There was some issue with the retaining wall, but Capital funding for the retaining wall had been allocated a few years ago, yet still had not been used. Mr. Hempstead said that this was a public street and should be open. He then asked Mr. Moore to investigate this situation as to why the street remained closed.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services