

**CITY OF NORWALK  
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
JANUARY 10, 2013**

**ATTENDANCE:** Nicholas Kydes, Chair; David McCarthy, Michael Geake, Carvin Hilliard, Douglas Hempstead (6:40 p.m.), Matthew Miklave (6:40 p.m.), Warren Peña (6:43 p.m.)

**STAFF:** Timothy Sheehan, Redevelopment Agency Director; MaryGrace Weber, Redevelopment Agency Special Projects Manager

**OTHERS:** Council Member Bruce Kimmel; Council Member David Watts

**CALL TO ORDER.**

Mr. Kydes called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m. A quorum was present

**BUSINESS**

**A. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.**

**1) Review CDBG PY 39 NOFA**

**2) Review and Approve CDBG Application Review Process for PY 39**

**3) Authorize the required Public Hearing on the Draft PY39 Annual Action Plan to be scheduled for April 4, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.**

**\*\* MR. MCCARTHY MOVED THE ITEMS.**

Mr. Sheehan said that he was bringing these items before the committee to receive some consensus from the Committee.

*Mr. Miklave and Mr. Hempstead joined the meeting at 6:40 p.m.*

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES.**

**December 6, 2012.**

**\*\* MR. MCCARTHY MOVED THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 6, 2012.**

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 6, 2012 AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH FIVE IN FAVOR (KYDES, MCCARTHY, GEAKE, HILLIARD AND HEMPSTEAD) AND ONE ABSTENTION (MIKLAVE).**

## **A. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.**

Ms. Weber outlined the key points of the Notice of Funding Availability Notice. She noted that an estimated \$1.2 million was anticipated to be available for the upcoming program year, an estimated \$130,000 of which would be available for public service activities.

She said that this year, the applicants would be invited to present their proposals to the members of the Planning Committee, but that the public hearing which was typically scheduled for the same meeting would be scheduled later, after the Committee makes its allocation recommendations. Mr. Sheehan explained that this would allow the public to know what the Committee's recommended allocations are.

*Mr. Pena joined the meeting at 6:43 p.m.*

Mr. Sheehan said that the sub-recipients should be able to meet with the Committee. That meeting will be an applicant presentation session and is not a public hearing. Discussion followed about how this would be done. Mr. Geake suggested that the public hearing and the presentations be held in the auditorium, so that the public can be accommodated.

Mr. Kimmel asked for clarification of the process. Ms. Weber then reviewed the timeline of events. Mr. Sheehan explained that when the Committee approves the Consolidated Plan, they are locking in the priority goals and objectives. When the applications come in, they are ranked according to whether HUD's national objective and whether Norwalk has met the goals of the Consolidated Plan. HUD rates the management of the program based on how the funding is being assigned to the goals and objectives.

Mr. Hempstead asked if a spreadsheet showing the percentages of projects that have been completed was available. Ms. Weber directed the Committee members to the summary of Consolidated Plan progress included in the meeting packet. Ms. Weber noted that the City had already fully achieved all but a couple of its high priority targets and that the Phase I scoring criteria provides additional points to proposals which address as yet unmet Consolidated Plan targets. Discussion followed.

Mr. Hilliard said that he would like to see people from the community be invited to participate in the scoring process rather than the staff and employees. He added that he had done the review portion in the past. Mr. Kydes said that there was transparency and that the public would have the opportunity to state their case and give input.

Mr. Miklave commented that some of Mr. Hilliard's concerns about the scoring of the application had been addressed in last year's back up material, which was very thorough. He added that he agreed with Mr. Hilliard's comments about Council members having served in past years on the scoring committee. Mr. Sheehan said that this was actually the Joint Committee, but the Joint Committee did not score the applications. Before this joint committee met, there was a basic grading done and some projects did not make the cut. Mr. Sheehan said that he had

concerns from a Redevelopment Commission level where there were votes that would determine who would receive funding. This created the potential for a conflict of interest, which is the reason the Joint Committee is no longer part of the application review and allocation process. Discussion followed.

Mr. McCarthy said that it was his understanding that the answers to the questions were factual information rather than subjective answers. Mr. Sheehan confirmed this was so. Mr. McCarthy then asked if the scores were available for review. Ms. Weber said that the Committee members and the sub-recipients would be provided with the results of the Redevelopment Agency's Phase I assessments and noted that these are included in the Planning Committee meeting packets and as such were a part of the public record. She gave a brief overview of the various steps used in the process which include an independent assessment of proposals by three Redevelopment Agency staff having CDBG experience followed by a review of any discrepancies between staff scores. If discrepancies exist, staff undertake a thorough review of the application and each of the assessment criteria and come to a consensus on the appropriate score.

*Mr. Watts joined the meeting at 7:10 p.m.*

Discussion followed about the details of last year's process.

Mr. Miklave said that having a member from a non-profit that did not apply involved in the scoring would insure that there was a different perspective and nothing is overlooked. He said that last year, the staff had done an excellent job. However, there were some perceived problems and this could address this issue. Mr. Kydes said that the staff was doing their job and that he would not open it to the full community. This could cause disagreements about who should be chosen. Mr. Geake said that while he thought it was a good idea, he reminded everyone that there were some very strong time constraints. Ms. Weber said that there was basically a three day turn around in scoring, that it takes about an hour's training for someone, and that it would take an estimated 4-5 hours for a person familiar with the program and scoring criteria to score all applications. Discussion followed about how last year's process could be improved.

Mr. Hempstead suggested that as the applications are reviewed, that the first step be that when the applicants come forward, no analysis be given in advance. He then suggested a few groups that had not submitted an application and could be invited to help with the review. Mr. Sheehan said that HUD will not be interesting in anyone's opinion other than the legislative body. He added that the staff was not necessarily wedded to the scoring.

*Mr. Hilliard left the meeting at 7:25 p.m.*

Mr. Kydes said that he did not wish to abdicate the responsibility of the Committee. He added that he did not want the process to become political or subjective.

Mr. Watts said that he felt the Redevelopment Agency should advertise in the Spanish language newspapers. There are a number of ideas out there but the groups are intimidated by the process.

He said that this should be done at the libraries, so the people could get there. He said that he objected to the process last year because he felt the low income areas did not receive the amount of funding they should have. Mr. Watts said that he had contacted his Congressman last year about this. Mr. Watts will be doing the same thing this year. He said that he felt that the community did not have an opportunity because the people did not know about this process. He said that all people were asking for was another pair of eyes to ensure that it was fair. Mr. Watts said that if there was any way that he could help the Redevelopment Agency, he would.

Mr. Sheehan said that Mr. Watts had requested a workshop to provide assistance to organizations interested in submitting an application. This has been done. Mr. Sheehan said that he had no problem with HUD coming down to review the process or an independent group doing the scoring. He said that he was looking for direction from the Committee on the type of process they wished to use. Mr. Geake said that he liked Mr. Hempstead's suggestions, which would allow the Committee to review the applications, score them and make comments before hearing from staff.

Mr. Miklave commented that the Committee did not want the process to be political or non-objective. He said that he believed that the Chairman's earlier comments might have been misinterpreted. He suggested that the application packet be sent to the Committee members for advance review. That way, Committee meeting time will not be spent reviewing the application information and then the staff can find the discrepancies. Mr. Kydes repeated that he felt the work should be kept within the Committee. Mr. Miklave said that the Council members ultimately make the final decision, so all the Council should receive the score sheet. This could give an opportunity for open discussion. Mr. McCarthy said that he agreed with Mr. Miklave. Mr. Hempstead suggested that the scoring sheets should be done before the first presentation. He said that he felt this would be a good to have a meeting on the 29th or the 30th.

Information Packages will be sent to the full Council. Any Council scoring must done and submitted to the Redevelopment Agency prior to the first presentation on February 7th. Mr. Kydes said that he wanted the score sheets to be anonymous. Mr. Miklave said that it would be better if the names were on the sheets. Further discussion about the details followed.

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE CDBG APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS FOR PY 39 AS DISCUSSED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**\*\* MR. KYDES MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE REQUIRED PUBLIC HEARING ON THE DRAFT PY39 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN TO BE SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 4, 2013 AT 6:30 P.M.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **ADJOURNMENT.**

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

**\*\* THE MOTION TO ADJOURN PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes  
Telesco Secretarial Service