

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
JANUARY 29, 2013**

ATTENDANCE: Douglas Hempstead, Chair; Carvin Hilliard, Michael Geake, Warren Peña

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

OTHERS: Council Member Bruce Kimmel

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL.

Mr. Hempstead called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. A quorum was present. Mr. Hempstead introduced the Council Members present. He then reviewed the rules and requested that people keep their remarks to 2 minutes.

I. BUSINESS

A. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM

1) Application Presentation of CDBG Proposals for Program Year 39.

Empower thru Education and Employment.- NEON

A representative from NEON came forward and spoke about the need for basic skills and educational enhancement program. The request is for \$30,000 for the program, which will run July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014. The program will provide an opportunity for at least 20 of the program's 40 participants to acquire their GEDs. Norwalk does not have a CTWorks Career One Stop office, so this program can provide a step forward for the low/moderate residents.

NEON Child Development Program (NCDP) – NEON

Ms. Stevenson came forward and spoke about the various programs that NEON provides for the preschool children of low income families. NEON is requesting \$25,000 for the programs that comprise NCDP include Head Start and School Readiness along with Day Care and Infant/Toddler Care for children aged 15 months to 5 years.

Ben Franklin Tile Replacement – NEON

A representative came forward and explained that the request for \$10,000 would fund the

replacement of the tile floors on the third floor of the Ben Franklin Community Center. The City owns the building and NEON has a lease with the City that still has 10 years remaining on it. The building houses a number of community services such as Norwalk Works and NEON's Family Services.

Roof Replacement for Building Main Room (Broad River Homes) – Norwalk Congregate Homes for the Elderly.

The representative came forward and gave an overview of the roof replacement. They are requesting \$65,000 for the project. She spoke about the fact that the building has gone through energy efficiency updating. Mr. Hempstead asked if there were other funds. She said that there were matching funds.

Carver Center Facilities Project. – Carver Center

A representative came forward to make a request for \$55,000 to replace the gym ceiling and rehabilitate two rooms off the gym. This will make it safer and a better space for the children. There will be matching funds available.

ElderHouse Transportation Program – ElderHouse

Ms. Paupini came forward and requested funding for a new handicapped accessible van. The request is for \$10,000. Transportation can be a major barrier for the elderly, particular those residents with dementia who need guidance and supervision during the trip.

Mr. Geake asked about the cost of the van. Ms. Paupini explained that DOT has provided most of the funds for the van.

Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy – Child Guidance Center of Mid-Fairfield County.

Mr. Greenbaun came forward and spoke about the Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy program (TF-CBT), which focuses on the children who have been traumatized. He said that the number of the beneficiaries was incorrect. It should service 50 patients.

Mr. Kimmel asked about the number of sessions. Mr. Greenbaum said that the patient will receive a minimum of 10 treatments, but the clinicians will provide the appropriate number of sessions the patient needs beyond that.

Norwalk Accessibility Project (Sub-project Main Branch, Norwalk Public Library)

Mr. Bovilsky said that after ADA accessible inspection, there are 222 City Capital projects that need to be addressed on City properties. He said that he would like to start with making the main branch of the library accessible for the handicapped. The request is for \$10,950 for accessibility

upgrades at the Main Library. He listed a number of items that need to be addressed, such as handrails, door knobs, and signage.

Mr. Kimmel asked if there had been a request in the Capital Budget. Mr. Bovilsky said that there had been previous requests but no funding had been provided.

SafeHouse Rehabilitation – Domestic Violence Crisis Center

Ms. Kucera Mehra came forward and thanked the Committee for their funding for the Domestic Violence Crisis Center from last year and gave a brief overview of the clients served. The request for this project is \$75,000. During Super Storm Sandy, the fence surrounding the safe house collapsed and needs replacement. The exterior exit to the safe house is deteriorating and requires reinforcement. The dumpster also requires a façade to limit their exposure.

Domestic Violence Prevention through Effective Community Policing: A Collaboration between the Domestic Violence Crisis Center and the Norwalk Police Department. – Domestic Violence Crisis Center

Ms. Kucera Mehra said that last year, the staff at the courthouse had served over 1,900 domestic violence clients. The request is for \$30,000 for a collaborative effort between the Domestic Violence Crisis Center and the Norwalk Police Department to prevent domestic violence. The DVCC is currently working with the Stamford Police Department and had seen impressive results.

ADA Compliance Downstairs Unisex Handicapped Restroom – Frank C. Godfrey American Legion Post 12.

A representative came forward to request \$30,000 for matching funds grant for construction of an ADA uni-sex restroom in the downstairs hall/lounge. The Post has been very community orientated since 1964 and there are many groups that use the hall for various activities. Many of the programs that are held at the Post 12 hall are for low/moderate income residents.

Install /wiring to connect external generators for the provision of electricity during power outages. – Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk.

Ms. McCready said that the Housing Authority was making requests for four different projects. All of these projects have to do with providing a more welcoming environment for the handicapped.

The wiring project would allow the Housing Authority to provide power in common areas during power outages. This request is for \$17,710. This would allow the residents access to lighting, heat and air conditioning during the outages without leaving their facilities. Many of the residents have mobility constrictions due to health conditions.

Mr. Hilliard asked about the number of Section 8 units. Ms. McCready said that there were over 900 Section 8 units.

Mr. Geake asked about the wiring project. Ms. McCready said that the Authority hoped to get a generator for each of the developments. These would be used in the common areas to allow residents to stay warm.

Modifications to improve the first floor lobby at Ludlow Commons in order to make them fully accessible to the frail and elderly senior residents at Ludlow Commons. – Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk.

Ms. McCready said the first floor restrooms at Ludlow Commons need to be remodeled for better access to towel racks and toilets for the frail and elderly since they are more susceptible to slips and falls. The request is for \$16,742.

Make physical improvements to dwelling units and common areas to enhance access to underserved and low income populations including handicapped and senior citizens residing at 20 West Avenue. The improvements will provide enhanced access and accommodations for these underserved populations. – Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk.

Ms. McCready said this project will enhance the access to the handicapped and senior citizens who reside at 20 West along with the parents and students who attend programs there. The request is for \$48,510. Currently 20 West is partially accessible to residents and visitors with disabilities.

Partner with NCC to provide comprehensive education and job skills training at NCC to low-income public housing residents in order to improve their employment options and to increase their financial self-sufficiency. – Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk.

This program, Ms. McCready explained, partners 16-20 low income public housing residents between the ages of 19 and 58 with training and education from NCC. The request is for \$5,000. Recently, 51 NHA residents enrolled in health career and other certificate programs. Two of that group went on to obtain Bachelor's Degrees, while 12 others have gone on to obtain employment in their chosen fields.

The First Time Homebuyers Counseling and Technical Assistance Program. – Housing Development Fund.

Ms. Debbie McKenzie came forward and gave an overview of project, which assists residents in preparing to apply for mortgages. The request is for \$26,000. She said that of the 161 residents who completed the program, 26 were able to purchase homes, 18 of which were homes in Norwalk. There are still 131 people who are clients.

Landlord Entrepreneurship and Affordability Program (LEAP) – Housing Development Fund.

Ms. McKenzie spoke about a second program that assists people in purchasing multifamily homes through HDF's LEAP program. This request is for \$100,000. The program provides residents with strong partnerships to enable them to become owner occupants of a multi-family property (2-4 units) in foreclosed impacted census tracts. This, in turn, provides the area with affordable housing in various neighborhoods, such as the area near the South Norwalk Train Station.

MFAP's Transitional Living Program – Mid-Fairfield County AIDS Project, Inc.

Mr. Stuart Lane came forward to speak about the Transitional Housing Program. The request is for \$65,000. While there currently is a shelter, the clients need to transition into permanent residences. The MFAP is purchasing a house to be used as a congregate setting for 18 months before the clients move into permanent housing. The request for funding is for renovating building.

Mr. Geake asked about the Solar City electric partnership proposal. Mr. Lane then spoke about how Solar City has fixed costs over 20 years, but the CL&P has been raising their prices about 4% a year.

Mr. Kimmel asked if this program was for individuals or families. Mr. Lane said that it was for individuals. He said that the residents would house 6 to 8 individuals. HUD has also provided for funding for the clients that may fall behind in rent payments due to job loss or other causes.

Ms. Laura M. Raymond Homes Boiler Replacement – Miss Laura M. Raymond Homes

A representative came forward and explained that the Housing group was looking to replace the existing boilers with energy efficient boilers. The request is for \$60,000. This boiler replacement will result in an improved quality of living and reduced energy consumption. A similar project at another facility resulted in energy savings at or near 40%.

Neighborhood Improvement Coordinator. – City of Norwalk.

Mr. Shockley came forward and reviewed the request for the Neighborhood Improvement Coordinator position. The request is for \$42,446. The City is seeking to cover a portion of the Neighborhood Improvement Coordinator salary. The NIC works with the low income residents and neighborhood support groups to improve the quality of living for all the residents. Some of the issues such as litter and trash removal, along with the removal of graffiti have been handled by the NIC. The NIC coordinates with various groups such as NEON, Hope Works, and the Open Door Shelter, along with DPW and the Norwalk Housing Authority to accomplish the various tasks.

Improvement to Fire Station – Norwalk Fire Department.

Chief McCarthy came forward and greeted the Committee. The first project would update and remodel the lobby to the Meadow Street Fire House. The request is for \$90,000. He said that this would allow safety resources to be available to the local residents.

Mr. Kimmel asked whether there was a the community room in the Meadow Street substation. Chief McCarthy said that there is no meeting room available in any of the substations.

Fire Department Cadet/Explorer Program. – Norwalk Fire Department.

Chief McCarthy said that this was an educational outreach to youth through a cadet program. The request is for \$15,000. A similar type of police program has been very successful.

Mr. Hilliard asked if it would help cadets gain entrance into the Fire Academy. Chief McCarthy said that waiting until the Fire Department entrance testing cycle was waiting too long. By reaching out to the youth, it will better prepare the residents to qualify. Mr. Kimmel asked how many of the last testing class were Norwalk residents. Chief McCarthy said that he believe 20% of the applicants were Norwalk residents.

ODS Roofing Project – Open Door Shelter, Inc.

A representative from the Open Door Shelter (ODS) came forward to present the request for \$43,250 for a much needed roof replacement at the 4 Merritt Street homeless shelter. The City purchased the building in 1984 and during the past 29 years, only patch work repairs were done on the roof. The building houses Mann House Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry, Case Management Services, and Hope Works Employment Preparedness Program among other services.

South Norwalk Community Center Facility Improvements – South Norwalk Community Center.

A representative came forward and said that the Center wants to become more energy efficient, and has been providing services to the community since 1962. The request is for \$100,000. This project will upgrade the facility by improving the entrance way, lobby areas, hallways, bathrooms, computer rooms and multipurpose rooms.

Service Navigator, Creation of Coordinated Care Team – Norwalk Hospital

Ms. Mary Franco came forward and gave an overview for the creation of the Coordinator Care Team focused on improving the efficiency of the homeless population. The request is for \$29,000. The program hopes to address the gaps in the delivery of the mental health and substance abuse services. This program will be leveraged with other programs such as DSS's Rapid Rehousing program and with assistance of the Norwalk Housing Authority.

Mr. Hilliard asked if this would address the Norwalk homeless population. Ms. Franco said that the position would be a Norwalk based position, but the clients would be from the area.

Check & Connect Dropout Prevention Program. – Serving All Vessels Equally.

Rev. Dancy came forward and spoke about the Check & Connect program, which is a drop out prevention strategy. The request is for \$20,000. The program pairs mentors with students who monitor the student's school work. The original target area was Washington Village, and Rev. Dancy would like to expand the program to allow for citywide enrollment.

Person-to-Person Emergency Financial Assistance - Person-to-Person

Ms. Diane Tucker came forward and explained that Person to Person had merged with Christian Community Action. The request is for \$16,000. The Emergency Assistance Program offers a safety net for more than 23,00 low-income people living in poverty in Lower Fairfield County by providing food, clothing, furniture, household goods and emergency financial assistance.

Child First - Family and Children's Agency

Ms. Mary Kay Locke came forward to speak about the Child First project. Currently, the program has funding to serve 100 Norwalk families. The request is for \$15,000. The program connects children who in the past might not have been identified or connected with services until they entered public school. This is to strengthen the capacity of families to meet the development and health-related needs of infants and toddlers from Birth to 3.

Courage to Speak Drug Prevention Education for After School Programs. – Courage to Speak Foundation.

Mr. Larry Katz of Courage to Speak came forward and stated that 12 years old is now the median age for first time drug use. The request is for \$15,200. The program will train staff at five of the NHA Learning Centers to address grades 4-8 graders about Drug Prevention and provide Courage to Speak Parenting in English and Spanish to NHA parents.

Microenterprise Assistance Program – Women's Business Development Council, Inc.

Ms. Pastore came forward and gave an overview of the program and the variety of services that the group offers for the low income population. The request is for \$40,000. The Women's Business Development Council (WBDC) provides entrepreneurial training, financial coaching and professional development programs to Norwalk residents. The overall goal of the program are to nurture the development of an entrepreneurial mindset and train the participants to take control of their future through education.

Fair Housing Law Seminars – Norwalk Fair Housing Advisory Commission.

Atty. Suib came forward and in one of the HUD applications it was stated that the fair Housing Commission will be seminars in various locations. The request is for \$19,670. This will provide a program for 125 live attendees along with taping the seminar for later viewing by other residents on the Fair Housing Office webpage. The funding will also be used to pay for translating the Fair Housing brochures into Creole.

Summer Youth Employment Program with Expanded Briggs Academy Component. – City of Norwalk

Ms. Young came forward and said that the Summer Youth program has been running for a number of years. The request is for \$20,000. Last year, there were 181 positions supplied by the program. The interns have an intensive week of training before they start at their assignments. This coming year, there will be a strong initiative to include all of the Briggs students. Last year's attendance and appropriate participation in the pre-employment program was 90%. There was an 85% successful completion of employment.

Travis Simms Foundation Youth Boxing – Travis Simms Foundation.

A representative came forward and read a letter from Mr. Sims, who was not able to attend the meeting. The request is for \$20,000. The funding will be used to hire a Part Time Director and to obtain materials and supplies such as boxing gloves, boxing bags, etc. The program will operate after school and teach both boxing along with self-discipline, commitment and responsibility.

TeMPEST – The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, Inc.

Mr. Alonzo came forward to speak about the Teen Maritime Programs Emphasizing Science and Technology (TeMPEST). The request is for \$15,000. This program is focused on working with high school students for all four years in order to promote development among students traditionally underserved in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) careers. A program called Dead Reckoners will be for Grades 9-10; Grades 10-12 will have a SEA*CORPS program and the Maritime Internship Program will be fore Grades 11-12.

Mr. Kimmel asked how many students have been through the program. Right now there are 10 student, next year, the Center would like 20 student and would like to maintain 120 in the program. Mr. Kimmel asked about the relationship with the high schools. Mr. Alonzo said that they work with Mr. Creller, who is the Math and Science Director for the District. The students receive credit for their work.

Mr. Hilliard asked if the program could prove that there were 80% from low and moderate income families. Mr. Alonzo said that there was a 10 page application that the students filled out that included that type of information.

The Food Bank of Lower Fairfield County, Inc. - The Food Bank of Lower Fairfield

County, Inc.

A representative came forward. She said that the food bank can now deliver the food to the various outreaches such as the Open Door Shelter, the Christian Community Action/Person-to-Person and the Salvation Army. The request is for \$25,000. The funding will be used to help defray the costs of the five employee salaries. This program has been underway for more than 12 years and provided more than 2,543,319 pounds of food to Norwalk based agencies.

Expanded DARE Program – Norwalk Police Department.

Lt. Zecca came forward and spoke about expanding the DARE Program to the eighth grade. The request is for \$4,500. The program would also like to introduce the School Resource Officers. The program would be presented in the 6 elementary schools to fifth graders and some of the regular eighth graders during the school day. The goal is to expand the program into the eighth grade. The total cost of the program is \$14,700, but the remaining costs will be covered by the NPD and outside donations.

Norwalk Police Activities Crime Prevention Series – Norwalk Police Department.

The Norwalk Police Activity League (PAL) and the SONO Alliance is looking to start a crime prevention education program by providing a fun setting for the youth and families of South Norwalk. The request is for \$3,400. There will be four events during the year, starting with “SONO Night Out”. Although PAL and SONO Alliance have been hosting the “SONO Night Out” for a number of years, the NPD is looking to expand the program to address domestic violence and other issues.

Mr. Hilliard said that he had attended the program at night and felt it was wonderful. He said that it was a very positive, family type of environment.

Mr. Geake asked about accessibility for the students. Lt. Zecca said that the target was for the residents of South Norwalk. She said it was important to have the events in accessible areas for the families.

Improving the Mental Health of Isolated Seniors through Regular Telephone Contact – Senior Services Coordinating Council, Inc.

A representative came forward and said that the clients were all low income seniors. The request is for \$13,000. The program will be working with RSVP and the volunteers will be contacting elderly residents who enroll in the program with regular phone calls. As residents age, they frequently become home bound and isolated. The volunteers will notify Senior Services about any obvious changes, such as illness or confusion in their regular contacts.

Woodward Cliffs Mutual Housing – Mutual Housing Association of Southwestern Connecticut.

City of Norwalk
Planning Committee of the Common Council
Special Meeting
January 29, 2013

Mr. Cryan came forward and explained that there is a water problem with Woodward Cliffs, which is a 6 family affordable rental project developed by Norwalk Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS). The request is for \$20,000. This funding will be used to create a curtain drain along the rear of the building to divert water away from the rear basement to correct a flooding and dampness issue.

Substance Abuse – Education, Prevention and Wellness – Liberation Programs, Inc.

Ms. Malloy came forward and requested support for their efforts in the Norwalk schools. The request is for \$7,500. The program is targeted towards preventing substance abuse in the three high schools. Often substance abuse is linked to some type of mental health issue, such as depression. Illicit drug use, alcohol use and misuse of pain relievers are addressed. The program is invited into the schools from Greenwich to Bridgeport.

City Neighborhood Programs – Norwalk Redevelopment Agency

Ms. Weber then gave an overview of the planning developed by the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency in response to the Council's Transit Orientated Development Strategy, the Connectivity Master Plan, Choice Neighborhoods and affordable housing. The request is for \$499,542. Goal One encompasses safe affordable housing; employment opportunities; neighborhood cohesion and access to public spaces and open space for low and moderate income residents. Goal two addresses brownfield remediation and public infrastructure improvements.

CDBG Program Administration – Norwalk Redevelopment Agency

The Norwalk Redevelopment Agency and the City of Norwalk have entered into a formal contract that designates the Agency as the sole administrator of the City's annual CDBG funds. This request is for \$220,121 for administrative purposes. The Agency is responsible for the financial oversight and sub recipient management of the funds, which involves maintaining project files, processing check requests and conducting mid-year monitoring for each CDBG funded activity.

Mr. Hempstead said that he would like to see more cooperation between the groups providing the same type of services. Mr. Peña said that he would not have time to complete the forms by Thursday. Mr. Hempstead reminded everyone that there had been concerns about how the money was allocated. Mr. Hilliard said that in the past that this was done differently. He said that he would do the best that he could with the time that he had. Mr. Kimmel agreed with Mr. Peña. He added that he had spoken with Ms. Weber during the week about this. Ms. Weber said that the Agency was aware that there were concerns about bias in terms of allocating the money. This is why these attempts are being made to be as transparent as possible. The applications and criteria are all posted on line. Discussion followed.

Ms. Weber pointed out that Stamford has a dedicated department that handles the CDBG

funding. She listed the funding percentage of the various cities that went to City projects, not including the 20% of the administration. The average percentage that other municipalities allocated towards their municipality projects was 50%.

Mr. Kimmel asked if the Redevelopment Agency factored in hard data about the various programs. Ms. Weber said that they don't deal with that type of information with the annual application. Mr. Kimmel asked about the effectiveness of different programs. He expressed concerns about the issue that a group would continue to get the funding although it was evident that the program was not necessarily effective.

Mr. Sheehan commented that the Consolidated Plan was redone every five years. HUD reviews the outcomes of the funds granted. He pointed out that the is really the Federal Government that give the City a grant to administer as the City deems that means the CDBG criteria. He said that the City does not have a department that administers the CDBG funding. The Redevelopment Agency acts in that role. He added that often other communities, the municipalities decide what they feel the City wants to do and once they decide which City projects to fund, then the private organizations can submit applications for the remaining amount. Discussion followed about the various applications.

II. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to discuss at this time.

III. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to discuss at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Norwalk
Planning Committee of the Common Council
Special Meeting
January 29, 2013