

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
MAY 1, 2014**

ATTENDANCE: Douglas Hempstead, Chair; Richard Bonenfant, Bruce Kimmel,
John Kydes, Shannon O'Toole-Giandurco, Travis Simms (6:45 p.m.)

STAFF: Redevelopment Agency: Timothy Sheehan, Tami Strauss.

OTHERS: Representatives of CDBG Applications, as noted in Public Hearing.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Hempstead called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and introduced the members as listed above who were in attendance, and stated that there was a quorum present.

Public Hearing:
2014 Neighborhood Assistance Act Tax Credit Program

Mr. Hempstead stated that as publicly noticed, the first part of the meeting was a public hearing for comments on Neighborhood Assistance Act Tax Credit Program (NAA-TCP) to determine if any of the applications should be recommended for program inclusion. He listed the rules of public comments, and asked those who wished to speak to state their name and affiliation for the record.

1. Peter Saverine, Star, Inc. Lighting the Way. Mr. Saverine stated that he was new to this program, and he thanked all involved for the efforts with the process.

Mr. Hempstead asked if there were others who wanted to comment on Neighborhood Assistance Act Tax Credit Program, and hearing none, said he would now accept comments on the second part of the Public Hearing.

PY40 (CDBG) Draft Annual Action Plan.

1. Gary Curto, Courage to Speak Foundation. Mr. Curto stated that he appreciated the committee to reconsider the grant application for \$14,000 to cover a part time program coordinator. He gave an overview of the mission of the organization and the annual events of Family Night at West Rocks Middle School and Ian's Race at Calf Pasture Beach. He spoke about the federal funding that has now run out that will not provide funding for after school programs of Courageous Parenting 101, which is a free, bi-lingual program for parents, endorsed by over forty faculty members at Norwalk Public Schools. He explained that the organization is now at a crossroads and will not be able to sustain the programs that have gone on in Norwalk for over a decade.

Public Hearing – continued.

2. Carol Troy, Courage to Speak Foundation, added that in addition to the programs mentioned, they also partner with the Norwalk Housing Authority and reach nearly 1,000 students in the district providing programs at the learning centers and offering mentoring and group education on drug abuse. She spoke about the unique value that this program has by reaching parents and by offering after school programs to students at the middle school, which is a critical age. She added that the program has been a mainstay at the schools, and now that federal funding has run out, she strongly urges the Committee to reconsider supporting this impactful educational program and provide funding for the after school program of Courageous Parenting 101, which is free, and she explained that the organization is at a crossroads without the support of the CDBG grant.
3. Elizabeth Murdoch, Family & Children's Agency, spoke about the grant that helps women 18 and older and urged the Committee to support their grant application to support salary for a clinician to provide training and assistance to the children of women in recovery. She reviewed the mission of the organization and the programs that address mental health and substance abuse and spoke of the trauma related reasons for the issues and how they seek safety and protection programs along with psychological evaluation and education. She asked the Committee to reconsider funding and to support their long term efforts in Norwalk.
4. Diane Reese Tucker, Person to Person, asked for consideration of the \$16,000 grant to continue an assistance program, and read her letter written to the Redevelopment Agency. She reviewed the focus and highlights of the program that reaches out to low wage workers to provide assistance with housing stability for the chronic homeless. She gave the history of the mission to provide food and how they worked hand in hand with the CCA, and since their merger how PTP has provided stability in the organization. She spoke about the efforts of case workers and providing utility subsidies to help pay bills and all of the work that goes on to end homelessness in Norwalk.

Mr. Simms entered the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

5. Cynthia Barnett, Saturday Academy, spoke about her passion to educate girls in the field of science and environmental programs. She spoke about how this program has made a difference and she asked for the funding to continue so that she can make her passion into a reality.

Mr. Hempstead asked if there were others who wished to speak, and hearing none, closed the Public Hearing at 6:48 p.m.

Business

2014 Neighborhood Assistance Act Tax Credit Program

Ms. Strauss referred to the memo and supporting documents detailing the program funding considerations. She explained the requested action was to determine which, if not all, 2014 NAA-TCP applications should be recommended for program inclusion, and to advance those to the Common Council.

Mr. Bonenfant asked if this was part of the annual program and Mr. Sheehan replied yes, that the intention is to certify that applications are cleared through the City.

Mr. Kimmel commended the Agency and those that put the packet together that it was very comprehensive and detailed. Mr. Hempstead read the list of organizations and program titles and amounts as follows:

Organization	Program Title	Amount
Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk	Samuel Roodner Court Window Replacement	\$150,000
Mid-Fairfield AIDS Project	Moore Place	\$75,000
Norwalk Housing Foundation	College Scholarship Program	\$150,000
South Norwalk Community Center	SoNoCC Early Childhood Center	\$150,000
STAR, Inc., Lighting the Way...	Job Developer for Competitive Employment of People with Developmental Disabilities	\$40,000
STAR, Inc., Lighting the Way...	Energy Saving Improvements	\$46,000
The Carver Foundation	Summer Programs	\$150,000
The Human Services Council	Energy Efficiency Project and One Park St. Bldg	\$70,950
The Maritime Aquarium	Hybrid Diesel Electric System	\$150,000

**** MR. KIMMEL MOVED TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDED 2014 NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE ACT TAX CREDIT PROGRAM APPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM INCLUSION AND TO FORWARD ON TO THE COMMON COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL.**

**** MOTION PASSED WITH FIVE VOTES IN FAVOR, NONE OPPOSED AND ONE ABSTENTION (SIMMS).**

CDBG

Ms. Strauss reviewed the summary spreadsheet with the updated amounts of funding for the program applications that outlines the ConPlan objective, strategy, organization, project title/description, recommended award and where there were contingencies. (Attached as supplemental document – page 8)

Mr. Sheehan clarified that the requested action was to consider public comment on the draft Annual Action Plan for CDBG Program Year 40 with the modifications as made last month listed as contingencies. Mr. Hempstead reviewed the spreadsheet summary and stated that since the MOU was received for the SoNo CC from the Superintendent of Schools, this satisfies the program conditions on the determination and that this would replace the Mid-Fairfield Aids Project and Women's Business Development Council on the draft.

Mr. Sheehan explained that the draft had been approved and that theoretically the total on the detailed summary document is actually over the allocation budget cap.

Mr. Kimmel stated that last month he may have spoken too soon regarding the municipality struggles with the cap guidelines.

He added that there are priority programs such as the Mayor's Summer Youth Program and the Neighborhood Coordinator and there needs to be a better way to manage the process. He stated that next year he would like to see those funds funded elsewhere in the City budget to free up funds for those programs worthy of grants for programs such as the Travis Simms Foundation. He added that pending the BET meeting on Monday, there could be a move to reallocate funding, and if that happens he would want to have them as a contingent program if the funding is determined.

Mr. Simms stated that he respects the Committee's decision but he finds it hard to accept that money continues to go to organizations year after year and not in the direction of providing more worthwhile programs for the youth in the City. He added that frankly he does not see justification for such large grant amounts for the South Norwalk Community Center.

Mr. Hempstead stated that NEON received a great percentage of funding for South Norwalk along with others such as Saturday Academy and other annual programs.

Ms. Stewart asked if we move that money from somewhere else, and she referred to the larger grant allocation plan, and if there's still even a question as far as the South Norwalk Community Center, with all this money that they're asking for, can it be taking money from them?

Mr. Hempstead explained that the South Norwalk Community Center stands to receive \$100,000 in block grants under the draft and that money is within a separate area of the plan and could not be transferred under allocation guidelines.

Mr. Simms said he was very disappointed with the committee for not funding this boxing program and said he is sick of programs from South Norwalk getting stonewalled. Mr. Simms said that to deny a program like this that's good for the kids and good for the community is just wrong. Overall, local social services agencies get what they ask for every year and this program should be funded.

Mr. Simms added that he has been working with the Police Athletic League and he provided a letter to Ms. Strauss who read it into the record as follows:

Re: Letter of Support — Simms Foundation Boxing Program

To whom it may concern:

The Norwalk Police Athletic League (PAL) is committed to assist the youth of Norwalk in ways that enhance character, intellectual and physical development. PAL seeks to support programs which correspond with those goals.

On behalf of the PAL Board, this letter represents willingness for discussion and exploration of the Simms Foundation Boxing Program with Mr. Simms. This dialogue will allow the PAL Board to determine if the program corresponds with our goals and is appropriate for our organization.

We look forward to a review of this program with Mr. Simms.

Sincerely,

Susan Zecca, President

Mr. Kimmel said those two city programs eventually must stand on their own rather than rely on block grants, and he described them as extremely important and extremely effective and priorities for recommended block grant funding. Mr. Kimmel reminded them that the Board of Estimate and Taxation is scheduled to adopt the City's 2014-15 operating budget Monday evening, and in theory, could find additional dollars and may change the situation totally.

Mr. Hempstead stated that we will have another bite at the apple at the full council meeting. Mr. Sheehan clarified that the Common Council will adopt the block grant allocation plan at the next meeting and there could be discussion on the floor.

Ms. Strauss stated that this may necessitate a special meeting to review the applications and meet guidelines of the public comment period.

Ms. Stewart stated that there needs to be a way to find the money and make it happen and that she feels they need to look again at the programs.

Mr. Hempstead stated that he wishes there were more money, and with a limited pot of funding, they have had to do their fiduciary responsibility and look at applications that can deliver the guidelines.

**** MR. KIMMEL MOVED TO ADVANCE TO THE COMMON COUNCIL THE ANNUAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE CDBG PROGRAM YEAR 40 AT A TOTAL AMOUNT OF \$1,028,033 WITH THE TOTAL CDBG ALLOCATION AMOUNT TO BE CONSISTENT WITH CAP AND REQUEST AUTHORIZATION FOR THE MAYOR TO EXECUTE ALL RELATED DOCUMENTS CONSISTENT WITH THE APPROVED ACTION PLAN.**

**** MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR VOTES IN FAVOR, (KIMMEL, BONENFANT, O'TOOLE-GIANDURCO, HEMPSTEAD) NONE OPPOSED AND THREE ABSTENTIONS (SIMMS, KYDES, STEWART)**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES –March 31, 2014

Mr. Kimmel requested corrections to the votes on the motion on page 3 as follows:

**** THE MOTION FAILED WITH THREE VOTES IN FAVOR (KIMMEL, KYDES, SIMMS) THREE OPPOSED (HEMPSTEAD, O'TOOLE-GIANDURCO, BONENFANT) AND NO ABSTENTIONS.**

Mr. Simms stated that he had abstained from the vote on this motion and that he has always recused himself from voting on items involving the Travis Simms Foundation.

Mr. Bonenfant stated that it was his recollection that there was a previous motion made and this was an amendment that did result in a tie as indicated by Mr. Hempstead. Ms. O'Toole-Giandurco stated this was also her recollection.

Mr. Hempstead stated that it was important that the record accurately reflect the votes on the motions made regarding approval of the CDBG funding allocations.

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO TABLE APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 31, 2014 MEETING PENDING REVISIONS AS NOTED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR VOTES IN FAVOR, (KIMMEL, BONENFANT, O'TOOLE-GIANDURCO, HEMPSTEAD) ONE OPPOSED (SIMMS) AND TWO ABSTENTIONS (KYDES, STEWART)**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 3, 2014

**** MS. O'TOOLE-GIANDURCO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 3, 2014 MEETING AS SUBMITTED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

A member of the public asked for a point of order and stated that there was no public comment portion as noted on the agenda for the regular meeting. Mr. Hempstead acknowledged that this was correct, and asked if there were members of the public that wished to speak.

Public Comments

1. Ms. Diane Cece, Olmstead Place, asked for clarification on the public comment period for the CDBG applications and that technically it goes through May 4. She asked how this additional comment period actually then gets handled.

Mr. Sheehan stated that it is forwarded on to the Council and comments at the council level are discerned based on the comment period. Ms. Cece stated that it does not seem as if they are taken into account.

Ms. Cece then spoke about Oak Hills Master Plan and asked about the process of going from Planning Commission to the Committee and how comments from the public can be taken into account. She stated that it is most disturbing that improvements have gone beyond a driving range and now a program asking for millions of taxpayer funding. She said this lacks transparency and has no built in time for a public hearing or for really any input from the public.

Mr. Simms asked if other members of the public could comment, and Mr. Hempstead noted that those comments would be added to the public hearing comments for the CDBG Program Year 40.

Public Comments -- continued

2. Phae Bowman, Common Council Member, spoke in support of the Travis Simms Foundation. She said a program for the youth is much needed in Norwalk and they have a partnership with PAL and this should be considered for the CDBG funding.
3. Sandra Stokes spoke in support of the Travis Simms Foundation. She said the program goes way beyond boxing, it keeps the youth off the streets, gives them something to focus on for acceptance other than gangs. She stated that she is very passionate for the youth and a program like this is much needed in Norwalk and now they have a partnership with PAL and this helps those kids who lack parent support. She added that there are learned competencies through the experience and lives are saved. She explained that youth need alternatives and she asked the Committee to reconsider the funding from the CDBG grants.
4. Fred Kitt stated he was a product of a boxing program and it is much more than boxing. Kids need alternatives and years ago Mr. Harris had a program that kept kids off the streets and the older guys were mentors for the younger ones. He said it is not expensive to box, it is a gym workout, it keeps kids focused. He said he grew up at Meadow Gardens and boxed in the program run by John Harris, urged the panel to reconsider and fund the Travis Simms Foundation. He added that the program by Mr. Harris saved hundreds of lives, and he can honestly say he'd probably be dead, or in jail, if it were not for the boxing program.
5. Shawn Montegrano said he did not fit into sports but boxing provided him with a sport alternative and one that helped him to work out at the gym and it was a life changing experience for him. He added that the youth need alternatives and years ago Mr. Harris had a program that kept kids off the streets and the older guys were mentors for the younger ones. He said it is not expensive to box, it is a gym workout keeping kids focused.
6. Terrence Williams stated that he is a semi-professional boxer who has to travel to Stamford every day to train and there should be a facility in Norwalk. He said it keeps gangs away from the neighborhood and since they took away the YMCA the kids need a place more than ever.

Mr. Hempstead asked if there were others who wished to comment, and hearing none, thanked those for their comments.

Other Business

Mr. Hempstead stated that he wanted to give the Committee a heads up on a pending request for an extension on the POKO agreement. Mr. Sheehan described the request as an amendment to the timeframe within, rather than change of, the LDA between the City, Redevelopment Agency and POKO Partners. Mr. Hempstead stated that at this stage of the game, there needs to be a lot more details and conditions for an extension. Mr. Sheehan mentioned there could be a special meeting with all parties involved to formally outline the request.

Mr. Hempstead stated that nothing officially has come from the Oak Hills Authority but he would suggest that there should be a joint public hearing. He added that there is a redundant effort and things can be streamlined so that items are vetted through the Planning Commission and the Planning Committee to make sure both groups are in sync.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. KYDES MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Knox; Telesco Secretarial Services

Attachment: CDBG Allocation Funding Considerations:

ConPlan Objective	ConPlan Strategy	Organization	Project Title/Description	Recommended Award
Stabilize or Reduce Housing Costs	Energy Efficient Renovations	Mid-Fairfield AIDS Project*	Energy efficient renovations to a supportive housing facility (1 facility serving 9 people)	\$82,286
		Star, Inc., Lighting the Way...	Safety and Energy-Saving Improvements (1 facility serving 600 people)	\$46,000
	Housing Rehabilitation	Keystone House	Bathroom remodel at Elmcrest Terrace Group Home (1 facility serving 12 people)	\$11,000
		Norwalk Housing Authority	John Shostak Apartments accommodation Improvements (serving 40 units)	\$46,000
		Open Door Shelter*	Supportive Housing Flooring Needs (1 facility serving 26 people)	\$23,000
Create Income Stability	Literacy / GED / Customized Job Training	Women's Business Development Council*	Microenterprise Assistance Program (serving 25 people)	\$40,000
	Public Infrastructure Improvements	South Norwalk Community Center* X	Renaissance Project (providing an Area Benefit)	\$100,000
		Carver Foundation of Norwalk, Inc.	Facility Improvements - Replace Outdated HVAC System (providing an Area Benefit)	\$92,500
	Summer Youth Employment	City of Norwalk	Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program (serving 165 people)	\$21,746
Ameliorate the Impacts of this Economic Depression on Families	After-School Programming	Saturday Academy Inc	Computer Science Entrepreneurship Program (serving 50 people)	\$15,820
		Travis Simms Foundation*	Youth Boxing Program (serving 200 people)	\$43,493
	Basic Services	City of Norwalk	Neighborhood Improvement Coordinator (providing an Area Benefit)	\$21,747
	Domestic Violence Prevention	Domestic Violence Crisis Center	Domestic Violence Prevention through Effective Community Policing (serving 75 people)	\$30,000
		Norwalk Senior Center	Elder Abuse Prevention Initiative (serving 350 people)	\$12,500
	Drug Prevention / Education	Family & Children's Agency	Project REWARD (serving 70 people)	\$15,000
	Health / Mental Health Services	Child Guidance Center of Mid-Fairfield	Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (serving 50 people)	\$30,000
Multiple Objectives	Multiple Strategies	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency obo City of Norwalk	City Neighborhoods Program (providing an Area Benefit)	\$325,657
CDBG Program Administration	General Program Administration	Norwalk Redevelopment Agency obo City of Norwalk	General CDBG Program Administration	\$260,033

*Organization's project recommended with contingencies.

/=Programs removed per Committee to bring within budget allocation cap guidelines.