

CDBG Advisory Board
January 13, 2011
MINUTES - DRAFT

Board Members Present: Don Dickson, Judy Dickson, Shellie Spaulding, Abigail Russell, Barbara Bielawski, Emily Neilsen, Terry Jeroloman, Carole LaVigne, Lisa Lillibridge, Stephanie Seguino, Jason L'Ecuyer, Martha Maksym

Others Present: Gary De Carolis (facilitator), Margaret Bozik and Denise Girard (CEDO staff), Mayor Bob Kiss, Michael McNamara (HUD), Larry Kupferman (CEDO Director)

The meeting opened at 6:00 with a welcome from the Mayor, who requested that when the Board gets to the Development applications, the five CEDO applications receive minimum aggregate funding of \$426,200 in order to maintain current levels of service. The Mayor handed out the attached memo. Larry Kupferman offered to provide more information on the requested funding and the CEDO budget to any interested Board member.

Michael McNamara, the Director of the Vermont Field Office of the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD), explained that the Community Development Block Grant program is HUD's flagship program, providing flexible funding to communities and states with a formula-based allocation of money. HUD also has competitive grant programs, such as the Sustainable Communities program where Burlington and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission recently successfully competed for funds. HUD has also had an Economic Development Initiative program that provided funding principally as directed by Congressional members; that program may be halted with the current discussions about discontinuing Congressional earmarks. Finally, Burlington received one-time funding from HUD under the Recovery Act in the last two years.

Mike explained the origins and purpose of the CDBG program. Right now, with the federal budget under a continuing resolution, Burlington would receive the same amount (\$964,858) for Program Year 2011 as in Program Year 2010. However, the budget will be the subject of intense debate in the upcoming months, so it's impossible to know right now how much the city's CDBG allocation will be.

Mike also explained that citizen participation is a requirement of the CDBG program. The city's Advisory Board helps the city meet that requirement, but is unique in the extent of its citizen involvement. Mike is happy to answer questions that Board members may have.

Board members introduced themselves. Where members are sharing seats, there is still only one vote per seat – in most seat-sharing arrangements, one person will review the Public Service applications and the other will review the Development applications. The applications are divided between Public Service and Development because HUD permits the city to spend up to, but no more than, 15% of its total allocation on Public Service activities. The city doesn't have to, but historically has, spent the entire 15% cap amount on Public Service.

Margaret Bozik explained that CEDO is charged under the city charter with administering the CDBG program and ensuring that the city complies with the federal requirements. CEDO also applies for funds to carry out its charter obligations in the areas of housing and economic development, which do not receive General Fund support. The Board reviews all applications and makes recommendations to the Mayor and City Council. This is part of the budget process. There will be a Public Hearing on the Board's recommendations in April.

Applications are sifted through three screens. CEDO reviews them to make sure they comply with HUD's requirements. CEDO also reviews them to make sure they are consistent with the city's Consolidated Plan, which is the HUD-mandated five-year spending plan for CDBG. Finally, the Board uses the city's Resource Allocation Policy (part of the Consolidated Plan) to rate the applications. Applicants are told what the rating criteria are, and the criteria are reflected, for the most part, in the application questions.

The Board then reviewed and discussed the rating criteria. Board member observations included:

- o Board members may disagree about whether certain applications meet the poverty criteria (priority 1), which are the most important of all the criteria – it's important to voice your opinion. It's possible but not necessary to spend time specifically deciding which of the three poverty criteria an application meets.
- o There seems to be conflict between having a priority for programs that are sustainable, on the one hand, and the need for continuing funding on the part of many local organizations, on the other.
- o Priority 4, which speaks to capturing local dollars, should be better explained.
- o In priority 6, which speaks to disadvantaged populations, the language about applicant hiring practices and policies should include all of those populations.
- o Priority 7 should also include age (both young and old).
- o Priority 11, which references local organizations, should be better explained. Also, it's not reflected in any of the application questions.
- o Some of the priorities seem to be operational criteria rather than decision-making priorities – perhaps those could be separated.
- o There are too many priorities, and most are general statements of values rather than specific guides to decision-making.

The Board then “prioritized the priorities” with each member posting three dots to indicate how important they viewed the individual priorities to be. The results were:

10 dots:

- o Priority to programs that provide services addressing the basic needs of Burlington's most at-risk populations

6 dots:

- o Priority to programs that support economic development and other programs that capture local dollars and prevent them from “leaking out” of the community

5 dots:

- o Priority to programs that promote access to quality jobs – positions that pay well enough to support an adequate standard of living, allow the purchase of housing and other basic necessities, offer stability and decent working conditions, and provide opportunities for advancement
- o CDBG funded services must, to the fullest extent possible, be appropriate and accessible to people with disabilities, people of color, people with limited or no proficiency in English, and other eligible individuals and families who may face special barriers in accessing services

3 dots:

- o Priority to programs provided through organizations or agencies that demonstrate a commitment to making their services accessible to individuals (especially people of color and people with disabilities) who are denied, by poverty and historical institutional practices, the opportunity to develop their full potential and to enjoy the benefits of community participation, through diversity training of staff and Boards, through recruitment and hiring of minority staff and Board members, and through efforts to provide services in an accessible and culturally sensitive manner
- o Priority population for CDBG-funded services are female-headed households with children, who are currently, and have been historically, disproportionately impacted by poverty

1 dot:

- o Priority to programs that support, complement or are consistent with other current city plans
- o Priority to programs that do not have a more appropriate source of funds
- o Seek to leverage resources to promote comprehensive, long-term responses that promote resident and neighborhood self-sufficiency
- o Priority to programs that build and support the capacity of local organizations to address the needs of residents

No dots:

- o Priority to programs that are sustainable over time
- o Priority to programs that have demonstrated cooperation and collaboration among government, private nonprofit agencies and the private sector to maximize impacts and reduce administrative costs
- o Priority to programs that promote community initiatives to identify priority needs and to address those needs

The Board will decide at future meetings how to use the results of this prioritization.

Margaret Bozik gave an overview of the contents of the Board notebooks, the conflict of interest policy, and the allocation process. She explained the Board's assignment for the next meeting, which is to read the Public Service applications and to identify questions for applicants and conflicts of interest. It will speed things at the next meeting if Board members can, as much as possible, submit their questions in writing to Denise Girard in advance of the meeting.

Communications between the Board and applicants occur through CEDO in the form of these questions; outside contacts or investigation are not permitted. Because all Board meetings are public meetings, applicants may attend, but have been told there is not time to lobby for their applications during the public comment period.

The Board requested and will receive copies of the most recent monitoring letters for current applicants.

Evaluating the meeting, Board members said that reviewing the priorities and having returning Board members share their experience were valuable. It was suggested that snow dates could be eliminated, but that has led to problems in the past with a number of members not able to attend meetings in bad weather.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8 p.m.