

CDBG Advisory Board
March 23, 2011
MINUTES

Board Members Present: Barbara Bielawski, Sam Fuller, Carole LaVigne, Stephanie Seguino, Jason L'Ecuyer, Fran Cohen, Monica Weeber, Jane Helmstetter, Max Tracy, Don Dickson, Abby Russell, Gretchen Bailey

Others Present: Gary De Carolis (facilitator), Larry Kupferman (CEDO Director), Margaret Bozik and Denise Girard (CEDO staff)

The meeting opened at 6:00 p.m. with a welcome and introductions. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved without change. Gary De Carolis reviewed the groundrules. There were no public comments. There is still no information available on what amount of funding will be available to city for the program year beginning July 1, 2011, although it seems likely that there will be a reduction from last year.

In response to the following question - Is the 1/12/11 letter from Mayor Kiss asking that we "maintain effort" in 5 CEDO activities going to be discussed? - Larry Kupferman reviewed the Mayor's memo to the Board regarding allocations for CEDO applications. Larry told the Board that CEDO has been able to keep programs going in the past by being flexible with available funds (i.e., Recovery Act money, carrying over money from year-to-year), but that is no longer possible. CEDO is not funded from the General Fund except for the Legacy and Neighborhood Services positions. Further discussion was deferred to the end of the meeting.

The Board also discussed the following general questions:

- What is the difference between the amount of money that is being requested and the money allotted? If funding remained at last year's level, there would be a difference of around \$230,000. If funding is cut by 10%, there would be a difference of close to \$300,000.
- Do projects involving jobs take more precedence? The city's Consolidated Plan identifies affordable housing as the overall highest priority, with economic opportunity being the next highest and a suitable living environment being the third highest. However, the Board has the flexibility to take into consideration factors such as the current recession, and to decide that jobs might become a higher priority.
- Should attention be paid to where the projects are happening? Should we focus on the lowest income neighborhoods or should project be spread out through the city? The issue for CDBG is the income level of the residents being served. Sometimes the location of the project matters, as with a park project or other physical improvement that specifically serves a low-income neighborhood. Sometimes location is less important, as where low-income residents can get to that location to get services.
- Do projects that involve organizations that use volunteers on regular basis get more or less funding? Is this a correlate for sustainability? Some projects lend themselves more to use of volunteers than others – but the Board can and should consider volunteer involvement as a positive factor.

- Should an organization's ability to leverage funds from other sources deter us from funding in full? One of the rating criteria for CDBG funding is whether there's other funding available for the project/program, so that's certainly a consideration for Board members. However, sometimes CDBG funding can serve as "seed funding" for other funders and plays an important role that way.
- Are there any guidelines re: profit-making organizations applying for CDBG funds? For housing, CDBG can go to for-profit entities provided that the housing is affordable to the residents. There are some restrictions on economic development facility funding for for-profits, but it's common to make business loans with CDBG funding.

The Board turned to identifying conflicts of interest and questions for applicants:

For D1-14 and N1-10 (if applicable):

- What is the actual EO status of your staff and Board for this program? That is, provide details on the race and gender composition of your staff and Board. How does that compare with the EO status of the beneficiaries of this program (i.e., the one you're requesting funding for).
- Describe the diversity / cultural competency trainings that your staff and Board have participated in during the last year.

D1 Burlington Dismas House

Conflicts: None

- The proposal includes specific information about driveway and parking renovations. It is less specific about kitchen renovations, i.e., # of kitchen cabinets, type of cabinet material, amount of countertop needed, what kind of "hard surface" counters. Do they have any estimates from providers that they are using to come up with renovation costs?
- Any idea the size of the kitchen counters and # of cabinets?
- Clarification. In Budget Summary - Current CDBG is what they received last year (\$14,500). Are there status updates on last year's funds? I have the DEV monitoring letters which were informative, but I did not get a sense if all the funds had been utilized. (Margaret: A request to draw down \$13,180 was sent in today – not sure yet whether that completes last year's project.)
- Have you approached Lowe's or Home Depot or some other entity to see if they would redo the kitchen in exchange for good PR?

D2 Ethan Allen Residence Water Conservation

Conflicts: None

- Provide more details on anticipated savings from low flow toilets. What is your current monthly water bill, and what do you anticipate it will be with the low flow toilets, and explain how you arrived at the estimate of cost savings.
- Vb -- no answer
- Please provide the agency budget in Section 14.
- Needs more specificity re: decreased water usage. Do they have estimates from plumbers or other providers on costs for installing each new toilet?
- What are the potential annual financial savings from cutting their water costs?
- Are you going to reduce staff if you can't replace the toilets?

- What other places have you approached? There's a lot of efficiency money out there right now – have you looked at those programs?
- How old are the toilets you want to replace?

D3 Housing Initiatives Program (CEDO)

Conflicts: None

- IV(b) lists six staff members whose salary will be partially reimbursed with CDBG funds. Budget form c. Proposed Budget Uses doesn't list funds for those same staff members. It lists various line items instead. Could you tie the budget numbers back to the staff listed in section IV(b)?
- What are the fringe benefits identified in the budget?
- The project addresses 6 needs. Is there a rough estimate on what percentage of funds go to each of these areas, either projected or historical? Also, is there more detail on how HIP staff work to preserve subsidized rental housing (#4)?

D4 Preservation & Creation of Permanently Affordable Housing (CHT)

Conflicts: None

Interests: Don was founding member, was on the Board, continues to volunteer, am presently on the Board of an organization partially owned by CHT; Gretchen was also a founding member and previously on Board, continues to volunteer

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- Out of the other Housing Development projects, they have the highest percentage of Moderate Income households/persons served (56%). They clearly serve a range of income levels, but how do they see this as crucial and valuable target population compared to the other lower income populations?
- If you do a development in the GAIN neighborhood, will you not be further concentrating poverty in a low-income neighborhood? Have you thought about how you would mitigate that?
- How will you serve low-income families (i.e., those at 50% of median or less) at Salmon Run when they need a voucher to live in your properties and there are no vouchers available?
- Please tell us what the rents charged will be and how you determine that those rents are affordable?

D5 ReTRAIN YouthBuild Energy Efficiency Construction Project (ReSOURCE)

Conflicts: None

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- Would also like more specificity on \$10,000 for "supplies and materials."
- Could you explain why your project budget is so much bigger this year? If you're getting new resources, why do you need CDBG? What has changed between last year and this?

D6 Building a Community Food System (Intervale Center)

Conflicts: None

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D7 Business Financing & Technical Assistance (CEDO)

Conflicts: None

- Indicates that program depends on pending legislation. Is there any information on status of this legislation?
- What is an example of a business in the North St. development area that has received a small business loan in the past?
- Under line items what do they mean by Benefits?
- In IVa Project Description - Is there more detail on how 2 loans made create the outcomes of 10 new businesses, 6 new jobs, and 4,000 sq ft of leased space?
- Please provide the results of the customer surveys.

D8 ReBUILD Waste-Not-Products Project (ReSOURCE)

Conflicts: None

- Is this a one-time funding request to start the program up? Will the program then be sustained from other sources?
- How did you arrive at the projected sales revenue number? Is there marketing associated with that? Can you give us an example of a past Waste-Not product and an example of what a new one might look like?
- What will you do if you don't get an AmeriCorps member because of the federal budget?

D9 Sustainable Economic Development Strategies (CEDO)

Conflicts: None

- The project accomplishments in the most recent year are great - 735 new or retained jobs, increased commercial space and business creation, etc. These numbers are substantially higher than the projected outcomes? Is there a particular reason for this? Are there specific programs that increased the projected impact?

D10 Women's Small Business Program (Mercy Connections)

Conflicts: None

- What is an example of a business owned by an alum of this program?
- Do you have plans to include more men in the program?

D11 Burlington Brownfields Program (CEDO)

Conflicts: None

- Are you considering the effect of brownfield redevelopment projects on existing neighborhoods? If so, how do you take that into effect?
- If you don't get the EPA money that's in the budget, can you still accomplish some work? What would you accomplish without EPA dollars but with CDBG?

D12 Heineberg Senior & Community Ctr. (Chittenden Senior Citizens Alliance, Inc.)

Conflicts: None

- One of the advantages of window air conditioners is that you can turn them on and off. With a central system, will you increase your overhead costs by using more air conditioning?
- Have you explored other funding sources? Have you approached efficiency agencies for help (technical or monetary)?
- What is your long-term capital needs plan and how do you plan to meet those capital needs?
- Please provide a more detailed budget – i.e., labor, materials, heating v. air conditioning?
- Will there be cost savings by installing a more efficient heating system? How much? What's the payback period?

D13 Increased Services for Burlington College Students & Community (Burlington College)

Conflicts: None

- I am not clear on what metrics they used to determine their impact on low income residents. How will use patterns change with the shift in location?
- Of the 516 Households/Persons served by the project, what percentage are students and what percent are community members?
- You have a lot of real estate, including some residential property – have you thought about selling some of it to raise money for renovations?
- Do you plan to include any housing on the Diocese property?

D14 Neighborhood Revitalization (CEDO)

Conflicts: None

N1 Edmunds Stage Curtain Replacement (Ward 1 & 6)

Conflicts: None

- Given the changing demographics of our community, please provide data on how funds will meet the needs of students from all ethnic groups and nationalities, and students with disabilities. Include EO data on the makeup of theatre and other performance participants over the last 4 years.
- The Integrated Arts Academy, Edmunds Middle School, and Burlington High School all request funding for performance spaces. Should these be viewed individually? Collectively? Both?
- Why isn't the school paying for these projects?
- What other fundraising efforts have/will/could you do?
- How does this stage curtain meet an anti-poverty goal? How does it move people out of poverty, keep people from entering poverty or meet the basic needs of people living in poverty?

N2 WHNA Dumpster/Recycle/Reuse Mingler (Ward 2)

Conflicts: None

- How does this project meet an anti-poverty goal? How does it move people out of poverty, keep people from entering poverty or meet the basic needs of people living in poverty?
- Can you join in the Loomis Street clean-up? If you combined resources, could it be more effective? Why could this clean-up not be accomplished through the Spring Move Out Project?

N3 Burlington Skateboarding Park (Wards 2 & 3)

Conflicts: None

- How does this project meet an anti-poverty goal? How does it move people out of poverty, keep people from entering poverty or meet the basic needs of people living in poverty?
- Have you thought about fee for use or membership or charges for out-of-towners?
- What other sources of funding have you tried to access? For example, have you asked for donated materials and labor?

N4 Integrated Arts Academy Performance Space Renovations (Wards 2 & 3)

Conflicts: None

- Given the changing demographics of our community, please provide data on how funds will meet the needs of students from all ethnic groups and nationalities, and students with disabilities. Include EO data on the makeup of theatre and other performance participants over the last 4 years.
- How does this project meet an anti-poverty goal? How does it move people out of poverty, keep people from entering poverty or meet the basic needs of people living in poverty?
- What other efforts have you made to raise funds for this project?
- Why isn't the school funding this project?

N5 Learn, Share, Grow, Show (Sustainability Academy at Barnes) (Ward 3)

Conflicts: None

- How would food for families be distributed? Is it related to an educational purpose?
- How will you do outreach to community members? Will there be signage for community members who don't have a child in the school?

N6 Rose Street Clean-Up (Ward 3)

Conflicts: None

- How does this project meet an anti-poverty goal? How does it move people out of poverty, keep people from entering poverty or meet the basic needs of people living in poverty?

N7 Picnic Park on the Avenue (Leddy Park) (Wards 4 & 7)

Conflicts: None

- How does this project meet an anti-poverty goal? How does it move people out of poverty, keep people from entering poverty or meet the basic needs of people living in poverty?
- Have you approached the Parks Dept. about this project? Shouldn't Parks pay for this?
- Is this part of the Parks capital/master plan?

N8 Bobbin Mill Apartments (Ward 5)

Conflicts: None

- Will the owners be contributing money towards this project?

N9 Lakeside Gateway Project (Ward 5)

Conflicts: None

- How does beautification relate to poverty reduction? How does this project meet an anti-poverty goal? How does it move people out of poverty, keep people from entering poverty

- Why is the city or the railroad not paying for this work?
- Have you approached Lowe's or Home Depot or Champlain College or some other entity to support this project?

N10 Replace Stage Lighting Power Supplies (BHS) (Ward 7)

Conflicts: None

Interest: Carol works there

- Given the changing demographics of our community, please provide data on how funds will meet the needs of students from all ethnic groups and nationalities, and students with disabilities. Include EO data on the makeup of theatre and other performance participants over the last 4 years.
- How does this project meet an anti-poverty goal? How does it move people out of poverty, keep people from entering poverty or meet the basic needs of people living in poverty?
- What other fundraising efforts have you made?
- Why isn't the school funding this project?
- How many community activities occur that benefit all wards / the entire city?

Answers to the questions are due no later than April 1. The answers will be forwarded to Board members as they are received.

The Board then had a discussion about the Mayor's memo, with members raising questions such as:

- Should they regard the request as binding or simply as guidance? If binding, is that a precedent we want to set? How does the request impact the Board's role?
- How are allocations for city departments handled in other cities? (Margaret Bozik: Most cities set aside departmental allocations and make the balance available for applications from outside entities.) Should that be the process used by Burlington in the future?
- Was it fair to other applicants to introduce a request for a set amount to go to CEDO without letting those other applicants know before they applied?
- If funding for the CDBG program as a whole takes a hit with the FY11 and future federal budgets, should CEDO bear part of that cut? Other departments are being asked to cut.

The Board decided by consensus to review all of the applications on their merits, without assuming a specific funding amount for CEDO, and to see where the funding stands at their next meeting. There is a need to reconsider how the Mayor makes a request, which the Board can revisit at its last meeting. The Board decided to assume a 10% cut in overall funding and to balance their individual budgets on that basis (i.e., that \$564,442 will be available for Development projects).

The Board also had a discussion about neighborhood grants. In the past, there was an amount set aside for neighborhood grants. That was changed in 2008 because applications were being generated by VISTAs essentially just to come up with requests for the amount available and because nonprofits were applying to that pool instead of coming to the Advisory Board. Board members noted that it's hard to compare neighborhood grants against other Development grants.

How do neighborhood grants fit program goals? Should they be part of process? Many of the neighborhood grants don't seem to meet the poverty criteria – is it fair to allow applicants to spend the time writing applications if they won't succeed? But – there can be an anti-poverty purpose to infrastructure and facility improvements – the “broken window” theory shows that physical improvements can spark less graffiti, other improvements and greater resident self-esteem. Should NPA's screen more for poverty goals? Should money be set aside for neighborhood grants? Out of CDBG? Or should these grants continue to be directly compared against other CDBG funding requests? Or be discouraged? The Board will revisit these questions at its last meeting.

The Board reviewed its assignment for the next meeting on April 6, which is to complete the rating sheets and submit them to Denise by April 4. Things which the Board thought worked well about this meeting were that the questions led to discussion, there was a lot of participation and good conversation. Things which Board members would / might want to change were:

- There's not enough money available for the CDBG program
- Perhaps more time should be allotted to the questions meeting?
- Perhaps discussion should be saved for the allocation meeting?
- If more people submitted their questions in advance, it would save time at this meeting.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:55 p.m.