

CDBG Advisory Board Orientation
January 27, 2015
6:00 pm

Board Members Present: Jen Powell, Jim Langan, Ben Hatch, Tina Hubbard, Maleka Clarke, Ben ChasonSokol, Molly O'Brien, Matt Cropp, Russ Elek

Ex-Officio Board Members Present: City Councilor Bianka Legrand

Guests: Mayor Miro Weinberger, Michael McNamara

Staff: Marcy Esbjerg, Denise Girard

The meeting opened at 6:05 p.m. with introductions, followed by a welcome from Mayor Miro Weinberger.

The Mayor indicated that this year's allocation would again focus on anti-poverty efforts in the City. He explained that CDBG resources have seen a dramatic cut (40%) over the last several years, and that the City of Burlington has modified this process to allow for fewer, larger grants with an increased impact. Mayor Weinberger stated that the City Council trusts this process and has always accepted the recommendations of this Board. He added that this is a tribute to the work of this group.

The Mayor explained that one of the areas of focus this year is early education/learning for ages 0-5. He feels this is an area where we can have a major impact on people lives and added that this is an opportunity to target resources to make a real difference. He then thanked the Board members for their commitment and service, noting that resources are more precious than ever making their job even more important.

Michael McNamara, Field Office Director for HUD in Vermont, also welcomed the Board. Michael explained that CDBG funds must be used to benefit low and moderate income people in Burlington and must conform to the City's 5-year Consolidated Plan (<http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CEDO/2013-Consolidated-Plan-for-Housing-Community-Development#overlay-context=CEDO/CDBG-Program-Overview>). He explained the uniqueness of Burlington's community involvement in this process which has been considered a best practice nationally, adding that this Board is the most important part of the process. Michael noted that Board members will learn a great deal about Burlington's neighborhoods and non-profit safety net. He indicated that this Board will make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council.

Marcy indicated that larger grants and 2-year funding cycles have greatly improved the process and effectiveness of the program. She has been sharing Burlington's story nationally as a best practice and receiving positive feedback.

Next, Marcy reviewed the ground rules:

1. Be on time - start and end on time
2. Everyone participates – and encourage everyone to speak - but pass if you wish
3. Share the air; be brief and don't speak twice until all have had a chance to speak
4. Move on when opinions are established

5. Tell or ask about assumptions and conclusions
6. Respect opinions - disagree respectfully
7. Facilitator will acknowledge speakers. One speaker at a time - don't interrupt - let each speaker finish
8. Pose, accept and explore difficult questions
9. Operate by consensus; vote when needed
10. For Board members...what is said here stays here (except for the content of minutes) – don't have outside discussions about Board work (i.e., no lobbying by applicant agencies).

Maleka noted that she sits on several boards which could provide input. Marcy asked Board members to go by the information provided in the applications and not to solicit advice.

Ben H asked what is included in the minutes. Marcy explained that we include actions taken/votes, suggestions for process improvement, and constructive feedback for the applicants.

Marcy gave an overview of the CDBG process and general funding policies (see Background Data and Info in the CDBG binder).

The board took a 10-minute break at 7:10 pm.

Next, Marcy presented a PowerPoint to review the Evaluation Criteria.

Marcy noted that CEDO has partnered with the United Way on certain questions in the application to make it easier for the applicants. Those questions are indicated with [UWCC].

Referring to the Application Scoring Form behind each application, Marcy indicated that Section 10 allows Board members to score based on their personal opinion. She asked members to use the same lens (i.e., be consistent) for each application. Discussion followed regarding whether to use 0 points as well as 1, 2 & 3. The Board agreed to allow 0's.

Discussion followed regarding individual member biases and the review process. The Board indicated that it is valuable to hear from other Board members who have knowledge about certain agencies/applicants. Marcy noted that Jane Helmstetter, our representative from the Agency of Human Services, will attend the next meeting and has considerable knowledge about many of the applicants. We also have an ex-officio member from the United Way.

Marcy will prepare and send Board members the monitoring results for the agencies who have received CDBG allocations in the past.

Next, Marcy reviewed the homework for the next meeting.

Homework:

- Read and Rate all Public Service Applications
- Send any Pass/Fail Questions to mkrumbine@burlingtonvt.gov ASAP
- Return completed Public Service Rating/Budget Spreadsheet to mkrumbine@burlingtonvt.gov by *Wednesday, February 11, 2015 at 4:00 pm*

Marcy then explained the notebook contents. She asked members to check their contact information on the Advisory Board listing and send any updates via email. She noted that we don't currently have a Ward 8 representative and asked the Board to let her know of anyone who might be interested.

Marcy outlined the Rating & Budget Sheet process, indicating that we would send an electronic version via email tomorrow. She noted that she would send any pass/fail question responses to all Board members.

In prior years, Marcy noted that CEDO submitted CDBG applications for several projects. This year, CEDO only submitted one application as they have access to other funding sources. Therefore, there is more money available for other development projects. Marcy added, however, that the Board shouldn't feel compelled to fund every application just because there is more money. If there is money left following allocations, we will put the word out. She reminded the Board that the Public Service allocation is limited to 15% of this year's total CDBG grant.

Marcy reminded the Board that the next meeting will be on Wednesday, February 18, beginning with a light meal at 5:30 pm in Conference Room 12 on the first floor.

Board members next reviewed this meeting to see what worked well and what could be improved.

Plus

Coffee was key!
Honesty/ethics of the group
Straightforward presentation
Improved PowerPoint; easier to read

Delta

Would prefer local food
Downstairs room is warmer