

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Advisory Board Meeting 2/21/17

The meeting began at 6:05 PM

Members Present: Gwen Ljung-Baruth, Cassie Lindsay, Erica Spiegel, Jane Helmsetter, Austin Robert Davis, Peter Ireland, Anne Brena, Andrew Champagne, Michelle Mraz, Dana Kamencik, Chris Trombly

Staff Present: Val Russell, Marcella Gange

Guests Present: Mayor Miro Weinberger

Public Present: Margaret Murray (6pm to 6.35pm)

Welcome and intro:

Val welcomed the Board and announced changes in the agenda.

Introductions followed for members who were not at the first meeting.

Val announced revision to Agenda – Mayor will be attending at 7pm.

Board Members Rita and Paco send apologies and cannot make it to the meeting. They submitted their scores and budgets and they are included in the group totals.

Draft Minutes: The Advisory Board reviewed the draft minutes from the last meeting. Motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting made and seconded.

Public Comments – Margaret Murray, citizen, requested acronyms to be spelled out in the minutes, for clarity and requested information on the source of the grant. Val explained that CDBG is a Federal and not State fund source that comes directly from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The board provided information about the nature of a Block grant.

Public Service Allocation Process review –

Val initiated review of group allocation process and basic rules. Board members discussed the process that each of them used to read and score applications.

Val asked if the Board members would like more guidance for the scoring and funding process. Board members discussed the merits of various levels of guidance. Val reviewed the budget balancing rules. Val asked how the group felt during review and for general comments.

Board Member Comments on the review process:

- There is a lack of baseline data or control groups within each application – acknowledged the cost and difficulty of this but thought it would be useful.
- Would like more evaluations of participants.

The group discussed whether we should talk only about what is presented in the applications or include outside information. Notes in the CDBG binder for scoring and funding process say – “Do not use personal knowledge it’s what in the application that counts”. Discussion of pros and cons of bringing in incidental outside info or relying solely on the proposal. Agreed to move forward with the idea that the group moves forward with reviewing solely the content of the application.

Public Service Allocations -

The Board had a display of the average ratings of all Public Service applications and the average funding amount proposed from individual Board member's allocations, and colored dots representing each Board member's allocation for each application as follows:

Blue Dot: 76-100% of the amount requested

Green Dot: 51-75% of the amount requested

Orange Dot: 26-50% of the amount requested

Red Dot: 0-25% of the amount requested

Four applications were rated by advisory board members in order of the highest average point value to lowest average point value.

They ranked as follows:

PS3 - Sara Holbrook Community Center – SHCC Preschool

PS2 – Lund – Early Childhood Ed (tie)

PS1 – The DREAM Program DREAM Summer Day Camp and Sleepaway Camp (tie)

PS 4 Burlington Children's Space – BCS Nutrition Program

PS1 – the DREAM Program DREAM Summer Day Camp and Sleepaway Camp –

No conflicts of interest.

Consensus on the average funding amount of \$8,768 failed, no consensus.

Board Member Comments:

- Trying to understand proposal, want more info on demonstrating need, sustainability, and measuring success
- Lack of local data
- 3 other board members agreed that proposal, sustainability and demonstrating need could be clearer
- Few applications because it is a lot of work for little money – relatively small amount of funding but these programs are good programs and important for the City.
- Offers youth an opportunity to see other options – leverage of volunteers – good bang for buck
- Twofold on beneficiaries – youth and mentors

A Board Member proposed to fund the program at \$9, 650

Vote on \$9,650, passed with 11 Yes – consensus

A Board Member requested that DREAM be given feedback – Val will talk to Marcy about feedback and bring it back to next meeting to discuss.

Move to vote on idea of revisiting these proposals for funding after development discussion. The Board discussed the merit of this idea and voted. Proposal failed with a vote of 1 Yes and 10 No.

PS2 – Lund – Early Childhood Education Program

Vote for consensus on average funding amount of \$19,818 failed, no consensus.

Board Member Comments:

- Question – this is mortgage repayment, isn't that development? Val – it is an eligible expense, we encourage applicants to request payments such as rents or mortgage as the payment justifications are reasonable and the administrative burden is low.
- Mortgage repayment is a step towards sustainability, leverage further funding
- SHCC and LUND both use TS Gold and SHCC reports it back 3x per year and Lund did not report on it. Some Board members feel that the application would be stronger if they gave information on that reporting.

A Board Member proposed to fund the program at \$20,000, passed with 11 yes, consensus.

Next the Mayor addressed the Advisory Board at 7:15 pm.

Mayor Weinberger thanked Board members for their service and commented on and commended the commitment of Board members and CEDO Staff. This week CEDO staff accepted a national award in Washington DC for creative and exciting use of CDBG funds in the Bright Street Coop. The Mayor thanked the Advisory Board and CEDO staff for their hard work and service on the CDBG Block Grant. He then spoke about the City's priorities including Early Childhood Learning, and Housing. He is supportive of the CDBG process and of the move to provide larger grants to fewer organizations. He mentioned the YMCA proposal, and that it is a large request but an important mission.

The Mayor opened the floor for questions. An Advisory Board member praised the excellent work of Marcy Esbjerg who was not present but administers the CDBG funds. The Mayor agreed.

Next the group took a short break and reconvened at 7:35PM

PS 3 Sara Holbrook – Sara Holbrook Community Center (SHCC) Preschool

A vote for consensus on the average funding amount of \$11,818 failed, no consensus.

Board Member Comments:

- \$200 reduction suggested because the application was very weak – no mention of CDBG, listed pre K eligible but not how many lacked placement, data weak, no anti-poverty, no progress tracked.
- Board should offer feedback in the form of comments but at the same time members wish to fund and support the programming. Funding salaries can be an administrative burden could they seek funds for something less difficult to support?
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A Board Member proposed to fund the program at \$12,000, passed with 11 yes, consensus.

PS 4 Burlington Children's Space (BCS) – BCS Nutrition Program

A vote for consensus on the average funding amount of \$ 16,209 failed, no consensus.

Board Member Comments:

- Highly disappointed with quality of application – in future years suggest they submit early and have review prior to final submission. E.g. many typos, the application showed a lack of knowledge of information sources, incorrect/inconsistent numbers of children served etc.
- Theme this evening – grant writing weak – but better their expertise is in child care (providing their service) than in grant writing, as these are small organizations.
- If funding is cut they will cut take home bags – affecting low income disproportionately and not targeting higher income children. Is it not better to cut resources to higher income families?

- Discussion of how food is provided to children in the program – If enough students qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch then all receive free lunch.
- More quantifiable statistics are required and inclusion of control groups, if possible.
- Board members were informed that control group type evaluation can be positively expensive for organizations of this size.

A Board Member proposed to fund the program at \$16,700, passed 11 yes, consensus.

The Board voted to approve the budget as is for a total of \$58,350 for Public Service projects. The vote passed unanimously.

Approved Funding Value: \$58,350

2017 CDBG Applicants - Public Service				
Proj #	Project/Program	Organization	Amount Requested	Recommended Award
Early Childhood/Childcare/PreSchool				
PS1	DREAM Summer Day and Sleepaway Camp Scholarships	The DREAM Program, Inc.	\$9,650	\$9,650
PS2	LUND Early Childhood Education Program	Lund	\$20,000	\$20,000
PS3	Sara Holbrook Community Center Pre-School	Sara Holbrook Community Center Inc	\$12,000	\$12,000
Hunger/Food Security				
PS4	Burlington's Childrens Space Nutrition Program	Burlington Childrens Space	\$16,700	\$16,700
Health				
			TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED	\$58,350
	ESTIMATE	AMOUNT AVAILABLE ENT 17	\$108,732	
		AVAILABLE PREVIOUS ENT YEARS	\$58,510	
			TOTAL AMOUNT AVAILABLE for PS	\$167,242
			DIFFERENCE	\$108,892

After the budget was approved the Board continued the discussion on the quality of the applications and possible training from the United Way or other resources for grant writers.

Next, a Board Member asked about the low numbers of Public Service applications received this year. Val described the process for deciding on the priority areas within funding allocation. The 5 Year Consolidated Plan was reviewed and categories where the City was not meeting its goals were targeted for this round of funding. These are traditionally the areas where we have had fewer applications over the past 5 years.

The group reviewed the homework process and made sure the due date works for everybody. The next Advisory Board meeting is March 16th, homework is due March 9th.

Feedback Meeting:

Plus – Candy, Val, starting with more money than we need, high quality of discussion and level of analysis and courtesy, the group still reviewed each project even when we could have passed it on the nod.

Delta - Let it stand or say I agree rather than repeating, we did a lot of repeating. Wish we had more applications and higher quality of applications.

Adjourned at 8:10pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Valerie Russell

Community Development Specialist

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