

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Advisory Board Meeting

3/20/2018

The meeting began at 6:05 PM

Members Present: Andrew Champagne, Lizzie Haskell, Alex Farrell, Jonathan Chapple-Sokol, Chol Dhoor, Erica Spiegel, Sam Beall, Chris Trombly, Alexander Friend, Jane Helmstetter, Brian MacDonald, Gabrielle Sealy

Staff Present: Marcy Esbjerg, Val Russell

Guest Present: Jesse Bridges – United Way of Northern New England

Marcy introduced Jesse Bridges, welcomed the group and started introductions.

A motion to approve the draft minutes from the last meeting is made and seconded, it is passed with 11 ayes and 1 abstention from a Member who was not present at the last meeting.

Public Comment – The floor was opened for public comment, there was none, and it was closed.

Marcy asked the group if they would like to use the process that they used at the last meeting and start by discussing all of the applications and then moving on to funding decisions. The Board agreed.

All Public Service Funding Requests:

Proj. #	Project/Program	Organization	Requested
PS1	HomeSharing for Burlington Residents	HomeShare	\$20,000
PS2	Safe Tonight	Steps to End Domestic Violence	\$30,000
PS3	Pathways Vermont Housing First Program	Pathways Vermont Inc.	\$97,000
PS4	Housing Support & Case Worker for People Experiencing Homelessness	Community Health Centers of Burlington	\$73,580
PS5	Expanding Opportunities for Meaningful Summer & Afterschool Employment	Burlington Bicycle Project d/b/a Old Spoke Home	\$7,177
PS6	Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program	CVOEO -Chittenden Community Action	\$10,000
PS7	BCS Nutrition Program	Burlington Children's Space	\$35,400

Next the group discussed the projects one by one and then voted to allocate funds.

PS1- HomeShare – HomeSharing for Burlington Residents – Rank #2

Board Member comments on application:

- Liked the use of many volunteers to leverage the program. Didn't mention how many more people they would serve, how is it new or expanded? Likes that they are housing people without building housing which is very expensive.
- One member likes that they were very inclusive in their language describing who may need home sharing services.
- Likes how they describe the value of the screening process and how important that is to the success of the program.
- Likes how it helps both Seniors and other people who need housing, and appreciates the additional benefit of socialization for both parties.
- Does the transitional housing raise any questions – some no some yes. Life is transitional in nature, and it is valuable every day that you have assistance.
- Niche option that doesn't work for everybody like a young family, does not help with wealth creation or working towards home ownership, although participants can save money. Not a universal program.
- Burlington has a lot of Seniors so this could be very helpful.
- HomeShare has been funded by United Way for a long time, they are currently applying for United Way funds. They have been successful and add an aspect to the housing continuum that doesn't get addressed in a lot of other programs. One in three Vermonters will be over 60 by 2030. It is less expensive for people to stay in their homes as they age.
- Serves an interesting niche, for people who it serves it offers an option, even for people who move here and need to have time to plant themselves. It's cheap, and the ecological piece makes it very appealing.

PS2 – Steps to End Domestic Violence – Safe Tonight - Rank # 1

One board member has a conflict and will not participate in the discussion of this application.

Board Member comments on application:

- Excellent application, loved that they have a ton of data that answers so many of her questions, was very thorough.
- One of the best/well written applications, helps on many fronts, both women and children.
- Likes that they provide a physical refuge in addition to other supports, and the application explained the link between domestic violence and homelessness well.
- Well written, really made members understand that this is life and death for people.
- There is a critical need, this is really helping people in crisis.
- Didn't think they adequately addressed whether this is helping Burlington residents or people in the wider area. Are they really serving Burlington residents or just housing residents from other places in Burlington? Would like more honesty and transparency around where the people they serve are coming from in the application.
- To be fair, the Burlington residents versus surrounding areas is an issue across the applications.
- Clarification - this is Women Helping Battered Women that rebranded to Steps to End Domestic Violence.
- People get a certain number of chances to work with them to get housing, if they don't want to sometimes they end up losing their housing after 84 days in temporary housing.

- This is a complicated population, service coordination is an individual centered model, is trauma informed and based on personal choice.
- United Way funds multiple programs at Steps (Four programs), they are one of the top recipients of their funding. They are providing a critical resource. This type of model, reduces early childhood trauma, which significantly effects generational poverty and moves into prevention.

PS3- Pathways Vermont – Housing First Program – Rank #4

Board Member comments on application:

- Favorite part of this application was the housing retention rate, which really made one board member understand the effectiveness of the outcomes.
- Likes that the data is transparent.
- Likes that they are expanding the number of people from 78 to 90 and that is explicitly stated in their application.
- Thought the application was vague, how are they serving this hard to house population in a way that other organizations can't? One member wishes they had explained that in more detail.
- Concerned with the cost per person, it is significantly higher than the other programs that are requesting funds.
- The numbers are a little confusing, is it this much money to serve 12 more people? That seems very expensive.
- Is it more expensive if they aren't served and they are in and out of the hospital?
- It is important to build a Housing First option with these clients. It's a lot of work to build relationships with people who are resistant over time. Pathways has done amazing work with people experiencing significant mental health issues. The model requires intensive work using a team approach that has low barriers.
- Pathways is not a current United Way grantee; they have applied for United Way funding in the most current round

Next Marcy explained that this year we specifically requested applications that will provide services to people experiencing homelessness that will leverage Chittenden County Homeless Alliance, Continuum of Care (COC) funds. She explained how CDBG funds through the Pathways and CHCB grant applications could leverage COC housing voucher funds.

Jesse points out that that investments in this type of work are important to get people into permanent supportive housing. He is concerned about the intent to create a position. There are not a lot of people in job market right now to do intensive casework.

A board member mentions that it seems like we are funding a lot of people to do the same type of work around homelessness. How is that not duplicative? Marcy answers that the COC is looking at what is being done to address homelessness across organizations, and recognizes that different organizations have different strengths. Homelessness is complicated and requires many different types of support, for example there are a lot of people working to keep people safe in shelter, but fewer resources for finding housing or housing navigation.

Pathways and CHCB have similar applications and are coming at the issue from different angles.

Historically there were more barriers and a graduated system to work through before you could be placed in permanent supportive housing. These two agencies both recognize that many people experiencing homelessness cannot navigate that system and are developing low barrier strategies to get people housed.

PS4 – Community Health Centers of Burlington – Housing Support & Case Worker for People Experiencing Homelessness – Rank #7

One board member has a conflict and will not participate in the discussion of this application.

Board Member comments on application:

- Community Health Centers has worked with United Way to help people with a supportive structure around housing.
- One board member really likes the idea, worries about duplicative nature, are they the right organization to deliver these services? The budget was a huge concern, the math didn't add up so they were scored really low.
- The application was weak based on the criteria, some members were wondering if they have applied before? Yes they have.
- Liked that they were explicit about leveraging BHA unused funds.
- One board member wonders how this not duplicating other agencies work. How are they going to do this better than other housing specific organizations?
- One member doesn't understand how this (a health center) connects to housing. The position would provide support to get people housed and supportive services to stay housed. The medical center is the channel to reach the people experiencing homelessness.
- Homelessness is complicated, people really need wrap around services to get and stay housed.

PS5- Burlington Bicycle Project (d/b/a Old Spokes Home) – Expanding Opportunities for Meaningful Summer & After School Employment – Rank #6

Board Member comments on application:

- Likes that it's a great opportunity for both the youth learning job skills and the low income people that need bicycle repair but the program doesn't really fit the funding.
- Thinks it a good idea, not a good fit for CDBG. There are other jobs for young people in the community.
- Great idea, doesn't fit with the CDBG criteria or focus areas for the year.
- One member remembers in 2009 when this project started and only had one mechanic, thinks that it helps young kids learn how to solve problems, wants to keep it around by giving them the funds they asked for.
- Another member thinks it represents a direct investment in the community for more cyclists and more affordable bike repair. Good place to learn work skills.
- How many people will those 4 trainees serve? No data.
- They say 200 bicycles for low income people will be repaired.
- One member likes that it is a small grant, a lot of people who can't afford cars rely on their bikes from transportation for getting to work and this provides a great service for those people.

- One member would like to fully fund it because it is a small amount of money and increases the visibility and availability of biking. Youth unemployment is important, it's not easy to get a job as a young person without experience when you come from a background where you haven't learned job skills.
- United Way has not funded them in the past, they have applied to the current grant. Likes that it is a business, a multi sector partnership. There is value to providing young people training for non-college career paths.
- Burlington is trying to recreate a more connected transportation and recreation network so there is a lot of opportunity in the City for mobile bike repair and that type of work.

PS6- Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity – Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program – Rank #3

Board Member comments on application:

- What is 211 how does that tie in? It is an information and referral network, run by United Way of Vermont, used to connect people to all services.
- Likes the collaboration of programs, likes the times they are offering tax assistance, it is thoughtful to offer it after work and on weekends when people who work full time can use the services.
- It's a great program.
- United Way also runs a VITA program and are talking with them about how to not duplicate services.
- They help people get more money, earned income tax credit and renters rebate return.
- A lot of people really need help with this, and they can help people that haven't done their returns in many years or ever.
- Need for this work has increased in the past 5 years. It saves people a lot of money. The number of people who don't speak English in Burlington is growing and a lot of them need help preparing their taxes.
- Saving people money on their preparation and helping them get bigger returns could give people the opportunity to pay down debt, and spend more in the local economy.

PS7- Burlington Children's Space – Burlington Children's Space Nutrition Program – Rank #5

Board Member comments on application:

- Didn't like the application, doesn't want to fund paying a chef.
- Feels duplicative when the Food Shelf and their community kitchen is right across the street.
- There is a potential for a resource model with the community kitchen.
- Feels bad not to fund food for kids, doesn't really fit into the themes this year for homelessness and health particularly opioid issues.
- United Way funds Burlington Children's Space programs, it is a well run and innovative child care facility. The kids going through that program are getting a jump moving forward and it is really needed in the Old North End. It is an economically diverse childcare center.
- The in-house food programs make a big difference, often kids in school/ Early Childhood Education only have access to food through these programs.
- Is it the right match for this funding source specifically the priorities of homelessness and health? Is it going to move the needle on these issues?

A break was taken at 7:40 PM, and the group reconvened at 7:47 PM.

Before moving into funding, Marcy made sure to explain all applications fit CDBG funding for the year. Every application was screened for eligibility. Some may not reflect the specific priorities called out in the NOFA, but all applications fit under the categories of Housing, Homelessness, Health, and Economic Opportunity.

Next, the Board moved onto making decisions about funding. Each application has a poster on the board, each poster has been assigned 12 stickers in a variety of colors. Each sticker represents one advisory board member and the color of the sticker indicates that members funding recommendation for that application. A blue dot means that the board member recommended funding that application at 76% - 100% of the original requested amount, a green dot is funded at 51%-75%, an orange dot is funded at 26% - 50%, and a red dot is funded at 0% - 25% of the requested amount. The first step in the budgeting process is to look at the applications that have many red dots and vote on whether to remove them from funding consideration. The Burlington Bicycle Project had 8 red dots, the CHCB Caseworker had 7 red dots, the Burlington Children's Space Nutrition program had 4 red dots, and the VITA program had 4 red dots.

One board member makes a motion to go back to the NOFA, look at the priority areas, and take BCS Nutrition program, VITA, and the Bicycle project off the table for funding consideration. There is a second and the group voted.

VOTE: 4 yes, 8 no – not passed.

There is a motion to vote on eliminating each of these three applications from funding consideration individually, it is seconded and the group voted.

VOTE:

Elimination of Bicycle Project from funding consideration – 7 yes, 5 no – passed.

Elimination of VITA from funding consideration – 4 yes, 8 no – not passed.

Elimination of BCS Nutrition program from funding consideration – 9 yes, 3 no – passed.

There is a motion to vote on eliminating the CHCB Homelessness Caseworker application from funding consideration, it is seconded and the group voted.

VOTE: 7 yes, 4 no, 1 abstain – passed.

There is a motion to fully fund PS1 (HomeShare), PS2 (Steps), & PS6 (VITA) and then to award the remainder of \$64,363 to PS3 (Pathways), it is seconded and the group voted.

The board voted on fully funding PS1 (HomeShare) at \$20,000 and PS6 (VITA) at \$10,000, and funding PS3 (Pathways) at \$64,363.

Passed on consensus - 12 yes.

A second vote is taken to fully fund PS2 (Steps) at \$30,000

VOTE: 11 yes, 1 abstention – passed.

Marcy talked to the group about whether we want to have a 4th meeting, it is suggested that we do not convene the next board meeting until we have confirmation of the CDBG grant amount from HUD. The board will reconvene if the confirmed CDBG grant amount is 10% higher or lower than the estimates.

Next Marcy read the development funding decisions made at the last meeting, the group voted to approve with consensus. Next the group voted for consensus on the final Public Service budget. The budget was approved with consensus.

Total Funding approved: \$541,288

2018 CDBG Applicants - Public Service				
Proj #	Project/Program	Organization	Amount Requested	Recommended Award
	Housing			
PS1	HomeSharing for Burlington Residents**	HomeShare	\$20,000	\$20,000
	Homelessness			
PS2	Safe Tonight**	Steps to End Domestic Violence	\$30,000	\$30,000
PS3	Pathways Vermont Housing First Program**	Pathways Vermont Inc.	\$97,000	\$64,364
PS4	Housing Support & Case Worker for People Experiencing Homelessness**	Community Health Centers of Burlington	\$73,580	\$0
	Economic Opportunity			
PS5	Expanding Opportunities for Meaningful Summer & Afterschool Employment	Burlington Bicycle Project d/b/a Old Spoke Home	\$7,177	\$0
PS6	Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program	CVOEO -Chittenden Community Action	\$10,000	\$10,000
	Health			
PS7	BCS Nutrition Program**	Burlington Children's Space	\$35,400	\$0
		TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED	\$273,157	\$124,364
	ESTIMATE	AMOUNT AVAILABLE ENT 18	\$107,950	
		AVAILABLE PREVIOUS ENT YEARS	\$16,414	
	** Two Year Grants	TOTAL AMOUNT AVAILABLE	\$124,364	\$124,364
		DIFFERENCE	(\$148,793)	\$0

2018 CDBG Applicants - Development				
Proj #	Project/Program	Organization	Amount Requested	Recommended Amount
	Housing			
D1	Laurentide Apartments aka Cambrian Rise	Champlain Housing Trust	\$130,000	\$130,000
D2	YouthBuild	Resource	\$54,631	\$47,087
	Neighborhood Development			
D3	St. Joseph's Community Center aka Old North End CC	Champlain Housing Trust	\$100,000	\$100,000
D4	A Place to Call Home	Turning Point Center	\$75,000	\$72,000
	Economic Development			
D5	Women's Small Business Program	Mercy Connections	\$25,000	\$21,485
D6	Financial Futures Micro Business Dev. Program	CVOEO	\$46,352	\$46,352
		TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED	\$430,983	\$416,924
	*ESTIMATE	DEV FUNDS AVAILABLE - ENT 18	\$362,785	
		UNSPENT AVAILABLE FROM ENT 16	\$54,139	
		TOTAL AVAILABLE	\$416,924	\$416,924
		DIFFERENCE	-\$14,059	\$0

Meeting Evaluation

What worked well: having conversation first before budgeting was very positive for the process, loves the process, really valuable to have Jesse here from the United Way

What could have been improved: Needs the handout of the power point to be bigger to use for criteria and scoring, what can we do to help organizations that were not funded? We would like to give them feedback

Next, the Boards funding recommendations will go to the Mayor and City Council for approval.

If you have additional comments to give to the not funded projects please email them to Marcy.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Val Russell
Community Development Specialist