

City of Worcester, Massachusetts

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City Manager



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Neighborhood Development Division

**City of Worcester
Community Development Advisory Committee
Workforce Central Conference Room
44 Front Street, 3rd Floor
Tuesday, December 2, 2014
6:30 PM**

MEETING MINUTES

CDAC present: Edward Moynihan (Chair), Mark Borenstein, Etel Capacchione, Tracey Pakstis-Claiborne, Cherlyann Strom, Dana Strong

CDAC absent: Mike Larkin

City Staff: Greg Baker, Tony Miloski, Jeanette Roach

1) Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Ed Moynihan at 6:36 P.M.

2) Background & Updates

- Community Development Advisory (CDAC) membership status.

CDAC members were brought up to date by city staff with regard to efforts to fill CDAC vacancies. It was noted that during the last summer, two active CDAC members were lost.

A newly recommended CDAC member, Martha Assefa, would appear before the Worcester City Council on December 2nd for appointment, and two additional applicants were in the process of approval and appointment.

There was discussion regarding the status of member Mike Larkin, as recent attempts by the CDAC Chair and city staff to reach him by phone or email had been unsuccessful. City staff had sent him a letter in November to ascertain his intentions with regard to staying on CDAC.

It was reported that former CDAC member Matt Yoularis was interested in returning to CDAC. He had been officially removed prior because of inability to continue attending meetings, so his return to active CDAC membership would require that he resubmit an application for recommendation and approval through the regular administrative review process required of all new applicants.

- CDAC Protocols.

There was discussion among CDAC members and city staff regarding CDAC protocols and operating procedures to be used during the course of the upcoming Year 41 CDBG recommendations, including the proposed schedule of meetings, review of applications, scoring of RFP's, and forwarding of proposed recommendations to the City Manager.

The following recommendations were made with regard CDAC protocols:

CDAC members were asked to be respectful of each other and to give advanced notice if they cannot make a scheduled meeting.

CDAC members were asked to be polite and listen, and not engage in lengthy discussions or debates with persons attempting to lobby CDAC members on behalf of applicants for CDBG funding.

CDAC members would have to decide if they wanted to elect a Vice-Chair person for this year's process. This topic would be handled at the next regularly scheduled meeting in 2015, when a full roster of members, including newly appointed members, would be present.

The review, scoring, and recommendation processes, would be similar to that used last year, in that CDAC members would judge the merits of each RFP using a scoring template, and not establish actual final funding amounts/allocations. The latter would be done by staff and the administration based on the annual federal CDBG entitlement announcement expected in the spring of 2015.

CDAC was reminded that is advisory in nature, and part of an overall evaluation process that also includes evaluations by program staff, and input from the City Manager, prior to determining final grant funding.

As had been done last year, the use of a time limit for each meeting was recommended in order to keep meetings focused and on track.

CDAC meetings were to be governed in accordance with the requirements of the Massachusetts Open Meeting Laws. Notice of a proposed meeting should be posted by city staff at least 48 hours prior to the start of said meetings. CDAC meetings were open to public attendance. While members of the public were not allowed to disrupt CDAC meetings, there was some discussion of allowing guest attendants an opportunity to make comments, at

the discretion of the Chair, and at the end of the meeting or at some other designated point.

The CDAC members were reminded that the CDAC was considered a public body, and their deliberations and discussions were part of the public record.

3) Update on 5 Year Con Plan process & public input process.

- Discussion of Community Input received thus far.

City staff described steps taken thus far with regard to preparation of a new Five (5) Year Consolidated Plan (2010-2015) and the 1st Year Action Plan (2015 – 2016), which are due to HUD by May 15, 2015. An eight (8) page Community Needs Assessment Input Meeting Results document was distributed to CDAC members and used by city staff to review the results of the numerous community input sessions organized by the Neighborhood Development Division during October and November, 2014. A total of 111 persons had attended the public input meetings. It was explained that public input gleaned from these sessions would be used in combination with needs identified through other planning processes including through a community needs capstone public hearing (proposed for Dec. 11, 2014), and through consultations with officials representing various segments of the community, as well as through a thorough analysis of community-wide demographic data and trends.

- Preparation for Dec. 11th Public Hearing.

Community needs thus far identified through the outreach meetings would help inform the community needs capstone public hearing to be held at City Hall on Dec. 11th. The hearing would be designed as a working meeting in which participants are divided into randomly assigned teams/tables so that community needs can be further solicited and refined.

4) Review of proposed schedules for Year 41 CDBG Process & CDAC meetings.

CDAC members and city staff reviewed the City of Worcester Consolidated Plan / Annual Action Plan and CDBG Year 41 / FY 16 Request for Proposals (RFP) process and timeline outline that had been distributed to CDAC members. In response to a request made by CDAC members that the mandatory presentations by CDBG applicants be conducted over more than one night, it was stated by staff that the number of applicants to be reviewed this year would be less than last year, given that proposed housing projects would be reviewed through a separate process. Staff thus anticipated that one evening meeting alone would suffice again.

As had been announced during last year's process, the Housing Development Division planned to issue a new, "rolling" (open) housing projects application process for those seeking CDBG housing project assistance throughout this year, and going forward. This system would replace the once a year RFP, and

would seek to fund only those housing projects that were determined to be CDBG compliant, viable, financially sound, and ready to commence.

There was considerable discussion among CDAC members and city staff with regard to the process whereby housing proposals would be reviewed and recommended for funding. Several members expressed concern that the city administration should ensure the transparency of the CDBG funded housing recommendation process. It was agreed that the Director of the Housing Development Division would be invited to the CDAC meeting on January 20, 2015 in order to explain the process that would be used to review housing proposals for funding through CDBG.

There was a concern on the part of a CDAC member that although many participants in the above reported community input sessions were in favor of public infrastructure improvements (such as the reconstruction of streets and sidewalks), it was stated that many residents may not be fully aware of the value of public services' programs. Other members noted that CDBG funding for public services was capped by HUD at 15% of the annual CDBG allocation, and thus public service recommendations would not necessarily be in competition for public facility improvement dollars.

Neighborhood Development Division Director, Greg Baker, explained that the City of Worcester was under a HUD mandated Timeliness Expenditure Management Plan (TEMP) to quickly spend down large unexpended balances of CDBG funds that had accumulated over the past decades. The most recent accumulated balances resulted, in part, from the ceasing of funds to past projects that were determined as a result of a HUD audit in the summer and fall of 2012 to be either ineligible or unsupported. Through an amendment to its Year 40 Action Plan, in October 2015, the city had authorized the funding of an additional \$2.97 million in past CDBG balances toward eligible and needed projects, including the purchase of a fire ladder truck for the Worcester Fire Department, public works infrastructure improvements, rehabilitation projects for affordable housing, and public facility energy efficiency upgrades.

Other CDAC members mentioned that the need to address crime and fear in inner city neighborhoods was important. It was asked if CDBG funds could be allocated to pay for body cameras to be worn by police officers. City staff noted that typically tax-supported, city maintenance functions or equipment could not be supported through CDBG funding. There were, however, some exceptions that were CDBG fundable, such as the purchase of firefighting apparatus or equipment.

5) RFP content discussion - discussion of edits/updates/changes.

City staff reviewed the contents of the updated RFP document with CDAC. CDAC members expressed satisfaction with the RFP scoring rubric that was employed during last year's process. The method provided members with an orderly, consistent template in which to judge the relative merits of each RFP.

There was discussion among CDAC members and city staff on whether the scoring rubric should be either included as an attachment to the RFP or

integrated within the RFP document itself. Given that the RFP was due to be issued by December 10, 2014, staff agreed it would take the major criteria used in evaluating applications and apply it a guide/exhibit that would be published as along with the RFP documents.

As a follow up to last year's suggestions, the Chair also suggested that the RFP should include a section that would have applicants provide a self-evaluation on how they will make improvements to their programs and service delivery models. Staff agreed that this could be addressed, but at the contract signing event at the beginning of the program year, rather than in the context of an RFP document.

Other CDAC members stated they would like to have information on the performance of those programs that were recommended for CDBG funding last year, to help their evaluation process this year. Staff agreed to provide a list at the next meeting of programs funded and their status, including expended balances to date.

6) Adjournment

As there were no more comments, the meeting adjourned at 8:28 P.M.