

City of Worcester, Massachusetts

Edward M. Augustus, Jr.
City Manager



Peter Dunn
Chief Development Officer
Executive Office of Economic Development

Gregory J. Baker
Director
Neighborhood Development Division

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

06/07/2021

Virtual Meeting*

Worcester, MA

6:00pm

*Due to on-going state and local policies, protocols, and pre-cautionary measures related to the COVID-19, this meeting was conducted virtually/remotely, using the Webex on-line computer meeting platform to allow participation by computer or by phone.

DRAFT - MEETING MINUTES

CDAC present: Doug Arbetter (Chair), Michael Murphy (Vice Chair), Suzanne Graham, Taylor Neil, Arline Rosario, Pamela Stolz, Lizbeth Perez Rodriguez (6:08pm)

CDAC absent: Carl Gomes, Bryan Milward

City Staff: Greg Baker, Steve Hill, Anthony Miloski

Meeting was video recorded and is available at the following link:

<https://play.champds.com/worcesterma/event/845>

1) Call to Order

Chairperson Doug Arbetter called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm. The following items had been e-mailed to each CDAC member prior to the start of the meeting:

- Agenda
- Minutes from 05/24/2021
- CDBG YEAR 47 (July 2021-June 2022) APPLICANT REVIEW CDAC SCORING (single sheet, one-side)

2) Meeting overview and participant role call to ensure quorum

Greg Baker took a roll call of CDAC members.

3) Review and Approval of 5/24/21 meeting minutes (vote needed)

A motion was seconded and passed to vote approval of the 05/24/2021 minutes. CDAC voted 6-0 for their approval.

4) Discussion of Year 47 RFP CDAC scores

Doug Arbetter displayed the CDBG YEAR 47 (July 2021 – June 2022) APPLICANT REVIEW CDAC SCORING sheet on his monitor so that it was visible for all viewers. The sheet provided a summary of CDAC members' scoring of CDBG applications.

In response to a question, Greg Baker noted that a summary of the CDAC scores was historically included with the letter from the CDAC Chairperson to the City Manager. The scores helped to inform funding recommendations based on the availability of funds.

He reiterated that has had been discussed in earlier meetings, the Living in Freedom Together and the Habitat for Humanity proposals were likely to be considered for funding through the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and Affordable Housing Development categories. In later discussion, it was stated that the Bridge of Central MA proposal was also likely to be a better fit under the ESG category.

In response a question, it was noted, that proposals from Girls, Inc. and the Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center were public facilities projects and thus scored using criteria related to the Public Facilities RFP. The other non-profit applicants had applied using the Public Services RFP, and were thus scored according to the criteria relating to that RFP.

The City staff and CDAC Recorder agreed to review and ensure that prior to finalization, the latest iteration of CDAC scores were included. Any updates were expected to be minimal, and should not noticeably affect overall average scores.

5) Discussion of Year 47 RFP Advisory Letter to the City Manager

CDAC members discussed the parameters to be included in the Year 47 Advisory Letter to the City Manager.

Doug Arbetter noted that in general, case management programs were scored lower by CDAC than other public services proposals. Most CDAC members agreed with him that such programs would benefit from the adoption of enhanced outcome measures to better assess program performance. It was suggested, that the City hold a workshop to better educate applicants on the use of enhanced outcome measures.

Greg Baker noted that owing to the pandemic, 2020 was the first year that an in-person, technical assistance workshop could not be held. Never the less, informational materials used in these workshops, designed to help applicants prepare a better application including use of enhanced outcomes, had been posted on the city's website and incorporated into the application guidelines. He noted that while

some programs had adopted enhanced outcome measures, they had not yet been incorporated in some of the other case management programs.

Several CDAC members expressed concern that the city administration should be mindful of the increased cost of living resulting from the redevelopment of the Green Island neighborhood. They said that redevelopment efforts needed to “sustainably support” low- and moderate-income persons who reside in the area. They also supported assistance for owners and renters who were struggling financially to meet high rents, and increased costs imposed by code enforcement requirements.

Greg reported that officials from the city’s various departments work in tandem and hand and hand with the housing development division and code enforcement to foster communication, promote referrals, and provide potential assistance. The city had also conducted a recent comprehensive analysis on parcels, the condition of housing stock, and identification of properties with significant code infractions in the Green Island neighborhood. In accordance with regulations, CDBG funds must first address code compliance issues and ensure public safety, prior to addressing other rehabilitation issues. The city is able to impose affordability restrictions for five or more years on properties rehabilitated with public funds.

There was some frustration expressed by CDAC members with rating “salaried” programs compared to capital projects. While members acknowledged, “that good work was being done” by agencies, they have difficulty in assessing the efficiency or effectiveness of some of the public service programs. They were not sure to the extent of which reduced or non-funding of CDBG requests would threaten the viability of agency programs.

Greg Baker explained that the CDBG reimbursements of agency staffing costs are tied to the attainment of contracted, measurable outcomes that are reimbursed upon successful attainment of client outcomes on a cost per unit (CPU) basis.

There was an acknowledgement by a CDAC member that not all outcomes can be measured and that “sometimes magic can occur” such as when a long-term, trusting relationship develops between a case worker and a client in a crises that helps the client build confidence and make long-term progress over time.

6) Discussion of next steps

Over the next several weeks, the Office of Economic Development will work to develop Year 47 funding recommendations. These recommendations are to be transmitted to the City Manager, who will in turn transmit them to the City Council for their review and vote. The City Council Committee that reviews the recommendations will hold a public hearing. Historically the CDAC Chair and/or Vice Chair have attended this hearing and might be asked to say a few words on the process.

Greg Baker asks that the CDAC Chairperson would provide the finalized Year 47 RFP Advisory Letter for the City Manager to him by June 21.

There was some discussion relative to holding a CDAC meeting(s) later during the year (prior to the start of the new application review cycle in the fall), in order to assess and review the results of the current year's process. There was also talk with regard to use of a sub-committee to research some of the issues raised during this year's process. City staff reported that any further meetings or subcommittee meetings would still need to be posted and conform to regular open meeting regulations including ensuring a quorum.

7) Adjournment

As there were no more items, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.