

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND  
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC HEARING  
MARCH 28, 2012**

**ATTENDANCE:** M. Evette Brantley, Chair; Lydia Martinez, Co-chair; Leticia Colon, Robert Curwen; Martin McCarthy; Warren Blunt, President Thomas McCarthy, Council Member Michelle Lyons (6:50 p.m.)

**STAFF:** Kelly McDermott, Sabine Kuczo

**OTHERS:** Council Member Susan Brannelly, Council Member Denese Taylor-Moye.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Council Member Martinez called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. She requested that the members introduce themselves to those present.

The City of Bridgeport, through the City Council Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee, in accordance with its Citizen Participation Plan, will hold a Public Hearing to solicit citizen input on projects being proposed for funding under the Program Year 38 Community Development Block Grant Program on Wednesday, March 28, 2012 at 6:00 pm (Nonprofit and other applications number 1-45).

Ms. McDermott came forward and said The Bridgeport Continuum of Care was not able to be present. HUD has changed the regulations regarding eligible programs and activities for food pantries and Ms. McDermott's office will be working with the various applicants to insure they all are in compliance.

**Child and Family Guidance Center – SHIRY** – A representative came forward and said that the program provides integrated services that prevents delinquency and truancy. The Center looks at the problems as whole family issues and often meets with the school principals, the guidance counselors and other professionals when necessary. Interns from two local universities also participate in the counseling.

**Cardinal Shehan Center – Building Renovation** –Mr. Terry O'Connor came forward and spoke about the program. He stressed that the building needed renovations and listed the various projects.

**Greater Bridgeport Area Pregnancy Prevention Program (GBAPP) – Housing for Success** – A representative came forward and explained that the request was to repair the driveway and sidewalk. This program is about three years old and the building is owned by the GBAPP.

**Greater Bridgeport Area Pregnancy Prevention Program (GBAPP) – Mi Casa/My Home** – These are two licensed maternity homes in the City and the teen mothers can stay for up to two years. The funding will cover the salary for the social worker to help with the psycho-social needs of the mothers and their babies.

**IDEA for Autism, Inc. – Heating Replacement** –The President of IDEA came forward and explained that this organization offers comprehensive services for autistic adults that work on independent living. The building heating is antiquated and stopped working on Monday. Many of the clients have health conditions, so providing a warm, safe location is a priority. The clients are all low income Bridgeport residents. An energy efficient system would reduce the costs of heating.

**Catholic Charities – HOPWA** – Mr. Al Barber, the president of Fairfield county Catholic came forward and introduced one of the staff members named Lilly, who spoke about the need to provide housing for HIV/AIDS patients.

Mr. Barber then introduced Michael S., a client of Catholic Charities, who came forward and gave his testimony about how the staff provided support for personal and other needs. He said that the Catholic Charities staff was very non-judgmental. Michael said that he was very hopeful and thanked everyone for the opportunity to speak to them.

**Hall Neighborhood House – Ella Jackson Senior Center-** Ms. Lewis spoke about the Senior Center that serves the East Side. It is open three days a week and the funding would help open the center five days a week.

**Hall Neighborhood House – Heating Replacement** – Mr. Reggie Walker, the director of Hall Neighborhood House, came forward and said that the replacement of 40 year old oil fired system would help reduce the energy costs and provide better heat. The East Side NRZ supports this project. Mr. Walker spoke about the clients and children who come to the Neighborhood House

**Caroline House – Mother and Child Literacy** – Peg Regan, the Executive Director of Caroline House on the East Side came forward and spoke about how they help parents and young children with literacy. The funding will help provide books and materials for the students and also for the salaries of the various staff.

**The Kennedy Center, Inc. - Green Facility Upgrade** – A representative came forward and said that the Center has been part of the City for over 60 years for clients with special needs. The funding will be used to upgrade and improve two of the homes and will provide a safe environment for the clients. The funding will only be used for the upgrades of the venues.

Council Member Curwen asked for the location of the homes, which the representative provided.

**Frank Habansky Food Pantry – Black Rock Food Pantry** - A representative came forward and said that in 2011 many meals were provided for those in need. The funding will be used for the purchase of food.

**AIDS Project Greater Danbury – HOPWA** – A representative came forward and spoke about the AIDS project mission, which is to support AIDS patients in order to keep them healthy and independent. There is also a program that works with those who have higher needs and support services.

Council Member Curwen asked about the previous year's funding. Ms. McDermott provided the figures for him.

**Townhouse Commons – 47-55 Wessels Avenue** – A representative came forward to speak about the need for new windows and roofs at the location. There are 10 roofs that are in serious need of replacement. There are 18 units and they are all owner occupied.

Council Member Brantley asked where the condominium units were located. Council Member Martinez asked about the association charges.

**Career Resources – Fatherhood Works** – Mr. Ezekiel Santiago, a former City Council Member and former State Representative, came forward to speak about this program, which is one of the six State recognized program. Mr. Santiago, one of the case managers gave an overview of the three components of the program, that help fathers work on their children's emotional needs and their responsibilities as a parent.

One of the fathers who graduated from the program spoke about how he had grown closer to his son and he still attends the classes at the Center.

**Mid-Fairfield AIDS Project – HOPWA** – No one present.

**Chemical Abuse Services Agency, Inc. – HOPWA** – The Executive Director came forward to address the Committee and explained that the program was also known as

CASA. This program has been in Bridgeport for the last 25 years and provides services to the low income Bridgeport residents who are involved in homelessness, drug abuse and other mental health issues. There are a number of programs that are offered in conjunction with other organizations.

Council Member Martinez asked if there were programs for women. She was told that currently the program was only for men, but he would like to expand the programs to include women. This would require a separate facility.

**McGivney Community Center – Building Renovations** – Ms. Alexis Bivens, the Interim Director at McGivney Center came forward and said that the Center provides services to the East Side residents. The funding would be used to renovate the bathrooms. When the program started, there were about 200 people who used the building and now it is over 1,000.

Council Member Martinez asked if there was a lease. She was told that there was a yearly lease with the agreement that the Center keeps up the maintenance. The

**McGivney Community Center – Youth Programming** – The Center offers comprehensive lessons for the students after school. The goal is to keep students off the street and the funding would be used to cover a portion of the staff salaries.

**Refocus Outreach Ministry, Inc. – HOPWA** – No on present

**Groundworks Bridgeport – Our Folks Program** – Mr. Richard Tiani, the Executive Director of Groundworks came forward and spoke about the program. The program provides low income seniors with help with their yard work. A grant was cut last year and the reserves were used to fund the program, but this is not something that a non-profit can do twice. Last week a flyer was sent to the clients informing them that there may be a reduction in services and that has resulted in a large outpouring of concern from the clients.

**Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness – HMIS Implementation** – Ms. Carol Walter for CCEH, which is a state wide organization. They collect and report the mandated information. All the clients must be recorded in the HMIS database. She explained how the system works. HMIS must be implemented in all the programs and the organization helps with this mandated task. Next year, the Committee will have data to use to evaluate the requests.

Council Member Martinez asked for clarification on the data, which she was given.

**ABCD – Emergency Rental Assistance** – The representative came forward and said that the request for funding was for people who were homeless or in danger of being homeless.

**ABCD – Emergency Energy Assistance** – This program helps residents with the utility bills. There are residents who are not eligible for Federal assistance. When people are moving from a shelter to a permanent location, they are often required to give a deposit on the utilities.

Council Member Brantley asked where the fund came from and what the percentage of State funding was. Ms. McDermott said she would

**ABCD – St. Stephen’s Food Pantry** – The pantry served 144,000 meals last year, and the clients can only have one meal a month. By the second week in the month, the shelves are bare.

Council Member Brantley asked how the word is communicated to the community about the food pantry. She was told that there is a food pantry set up in the senior housing. Council Member Brantley asked for a list of those senior housing

**ABCD – Freeman Homes** – These are two historic houses of Bridgeport and the oldest African American homes in the City. The representative explained that Phase 1 was completed and that Phase 2 would encompass the repairs including rodent removal, wall repairs, and

Council Member Brantley asked what was done with last year’s funding. She was told that there were numerous studies that had to be done to stabilize the building. There is a matching fund, which is dependent on the amount of grant funding. There are also other fund raising events.

Council Member McCarthy asked if local residents would be receiving training in this highly structured field. He was told that there would be local residents hired.

Council Member Martinez asked how the current buildings were being protected. The speaker reviewed the details of this with the Committee.

Council Member Curwen asked about Phase One. He was told that only part of Phase One was completed and this was Stage 2 of the first Phase.

Council Member Colon asked how much was raised outside of grant funding. She was told that the information would be provided to the committee members.

**Prayer Tabernacle – Family Life Center** – Ms. Pamela Swift came forward and spoke about the Family Life Center and the skill classes, job training, job placement and other services the program offers. The funding would be used for operating costs.

**Prayer Tabernacle – Agape Soup Kitchen** – Ms. Williams ,the director of the soup kitchen came forward to speak about the program on the East side, which has been there for 22 years. Last year, they served 2,000 meals and the program also offers blood pressure screening. The funding will be used for the B-Green initiative by remodeling the kitchen to lower the energy costs and feed more people. One closet was remodeled last year.

Council Member Brantley asked for details about the project, which Ms. Williams reviewed with her.

Council Member Martinez asked about the lease agreement. She was told that it was a yearly lease. Ms. McDermott clarified that the “rent” payments would not be eligible for use.

**Health Tree Economic Development – Kings Pantry** – This is a feeding program that has been in existence for 27 years. It is open 5 days a week and there is a weekly outreach feeding program. The funding would be used for food items. The program also provides food bags and programs for the youth of the area. The representative spoke about the need for assistance with the HMIS data and that this would require a program administration. This Saturday, there will be a free Easter program for the local children.

**Bridgeport P.A.L. – Youth Programming** – The Executive Director of PAL came forward and said that the program has been in existing for 61 years working with the youth of Bridgeport. He said that he was proud of the program and several of the graduates of the program became police officers. The PAL program would like to start a tennis program in August. The kids need people in the community to care about them and there will be a program to honor 100 volunteers in the near future.

**Liberations Program – Mill Hill Program** – Ms. Boyd came forward and said that the funding would be for a licensed staff member for the clients. The program is located next to Bridgeport Hospital, where 700-800 people a year are served. Substance abuse drains the community and the individuals have many different health challenges from HIV/AIDS to high blood pressure and diabetes. The project is seeking to have both the primary care and mental health care in one location.

**Community Capital Fund – Small Business Loan Fund** – No one present.

**Alpha Community Services – Families in Transition** – This is only emergency shelter in Bridgeport for families. Last year, the center helped numerous families and over 300 children. Last year, the group spent over \$150,000 on gas, electricity and other utilities.

Council Member Colon asked about the transition work done by the social workers by moving the families into permanent housing. The representative said that the other problems have to be addressed first, such as lack of income. The families need to be working so they can come up with the deposit and pay the rent for the residence. She gave additional information about the houses on Clinton Avenue;

**Alpha Community Services – HOPWA** – Mr. Brown, the case manager, came forward and gave a brief overview of the various services offered by this program.

David P. one of the residents, came forward and explained that the program provides services for all people and how he benefited from living in the apartment complex.

Another resident came forward and said that it was a productive program. He said that without the program, he didn't know where he would be.

Council Member Blunt asked how many clients there were. He was told there were 102 and approximately 15 were HIV positive.

**Bridgeport YMCA – South End Community Center** – Esperina Baptiste, the Executive Director came forward and said the request was to improve the South End Community Program. The South End has very limited resources and the Y provides child care and school readiness programs.

**RYASAP – MYO Program** – Ms. Page Knowlan came forward and said that currently there are 17 members who work with 1,000 students in the high schools. This is focused on youth employment at schools libraries and other locations. MYO stands for Mine, Yours, Ours. One of the Harding freshman came forward and said that she works with the students in all of the high schools. Another high school grad came forward said that he's been teaching various classes, such as a drama club.

Several of the Committee members thanked the RYASAP members and said that the group was doing good work.

Council Member Martinez asked who trains the students. Ms. Knowlan explained the tutoring system.

**Bridgeport Tabernacle Comm. Development – Comm. Development Initiative** – A representative came forward and said that over 5,000 people have been served in the West Side and the Soup Kitchen serves everyone. Other soup kitchens have restrictions on who they can serve. The group also partners with Sacred Heart in terms of volunteers. The funding would be for the program. There will be a fund raiser on Memorial Day week-end. The group received a citation from the City for their work.

Council Member Brantley commended the group for their wonderful job that they do with the community. She challenged all the Committee members to volunteer one Thanksgiving to serve dinner. Council Member Brantley said that it was always a pleasure to work with the church.

**Family Services Woodfield – Work Skills Program** – No one present.

**North End Community Council – Education Program** – A representative came forward and briefly spoke about the food bank.

**North End Community Council – Recreational Program** – Ms. Barnes came forward to speak about the programs for the youth and seniors. The seniors in the Beardsley Terrace area receive services. The students will receive book-bags, pencils and other school supplies. There is also a Christmas party and Easter Egg hunt, along with a trip to the Basketball Hall of Fame. All this is done by volunteers. Last year, it was a struggle to raise the funds.

Ms. Angie Saltero of the City of Bridgeport, came forward and said that the group was reaching out to the other groups, such as the residents of Stone Ridge and other nearby condominium. The group has been meeting at the Multi-Purpose Center and working hard to raise funding to renovate the Center.

**St. Luke's Lifeworks – HOPWA** – Ms. Fiona Austin, the Chief Development Officer, came forward and said that St. Luke's Lifeworks provides shelter, housing and supportive housing for the clients. It is important to have stability in the lives of the clients. The program serves both men and women and currently has 37 clients. There is a transitional program and a support permanent housing program. Clients often graduate from one program to the other. The goal is to provide safe, affordable housing to provide the families impacted by AIDS. This includes employment training and free medical services to the clients.

**East End NRZ (East End Comm. Council) Scholarship Program** – Ms. Ella H. Marsh came forward to speak about the Scholarship Program. An information packet was distributed and she said that there was no down side to having students in college. Often

it is not the academics but the finances that prevents students from going to college. While Bridgeport has often been mentioned as a school district in need but there have been numerous Bridgeport students who have gone to college. She then related her own story and how she managed as a single mother, to acquire an education against the odds.

In 2008, 2009 and 2010, the group had a banquet to raise funds for the students. In 2011, there were no funds available.

**Recovery Network – Vocational Training – Prospect House** – The request is for Prospect House to launch a food service training program, which would provide soft skills program. Then the clients will transition into actual food preparation. There is also a partnership with a local grocery store for providing job training.

**Recovery Network – Roof Replacement** - Horizons on Fairfield Avenue needs to have a roof replaced on the building. This facility has a capacity for 15 clients. The length of stay is usually around 30 days for treatment. This is for inpatient care.

Council Member McCarthy has several questions about the program. The information that he requested will be provided.

**Recovery Network –Prospect House – Shelter Heat Timer** – The staff representative explained how this heat timer would help with reducing fuel costs and also be more efficient.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER COLON SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes  
Telesco Secretarial Services