

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
MARCH 29, 2012**

ATTENDANCE: M. Evette Brantley, Chair; Lydia Martinez, Co-chair; Robert Curwen, Leticia Colon, Warren Blunt (6:54 p.m.)

STAFF: Kelly McDermott, Jill Kuzmich

OTHERS: Council Member Susan Brannelly

CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Brantley called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m.

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 including Nonprofit and other applications number 46-83 on Thursday, March 29, 2012 at 6:00 pm in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, CT.

Taste and See Outreach Ministry – Transitional Shelter – No one present.

Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprise – Urban Green Business HUB-s.

Ms. Adrienne Farrar Houel came forward and thanked the Committee for last year's support. This year, the request will be for funding for incubating green businesses. Currently, there is a small, comprehensive program that works with business owners in finding affordable rental spaces for businesses. There is also an aspect that works with business training.

Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprise – This has to do with support services for employers and employees. There are already five businesses that are interested. There is also a portion that assists businesses in getting capital funding. This will be a matching fund grant.

United Way of Central Fairfield County – Bridgeport HESG Collaborative - Ms. Carmine Gallo came forward and spoke about the HESG Collaborative to prevent homelessness. There were 250 households that benefited from the United Way program last year.

Children in Placement – Probate Court Special Advocates – Ms. Denise Millianese came forward and said that she is an advocate for abused and neglected children in the court system. Many of the children who are in the program have been sexually abused and the program works to put these children in a safe and permanent home.

Bridgeport Community Land Trust – Urban Gardens – Barbara, the president of the Land Trust came forward and said that her organization is responsible for 10 community gardens and two privately owned community gardens throughout the City. The requested funding would be for administrative and office costs in order to maximize the participation in the Community Gardens.

Ralphola Taylor Center – Facility Renovations – A member of the Board of Directors came forward and greeted the Committee. She related how one of the residents came running into the building for safety when there was a shooting on Hollister Avenue. The Board member said that the building needed renovation and that the fire alarms need to be updated.

Ralphola Taylor Center – Night Recreation Program – There are 150 residents participating in the programs five days a week from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. There are paid staff that work with the youth. There was some discussion about getting volunteers for mentoring the youth.

Upper East Side Block Watch – Sidewalks/Curbs – A Block Watch member came forward and said that there were many areas in the City where the sidewalks and curbs were in poor condition. Some of this is due to storm erosion and poses a safety hazard for the elderly, the handicapped and others. It also gives a poor impression to visitors to the City. The Block Watch program has been in existence for over 20 years in Bridgeport and is affiliated with the Bridgeport Police Community Policing programs. The program is registered with the Police Department, but the participants do not carry weapons.

Bridgeport Housing Authority – Unique and Unified – Ms. Kate Delliums, Director of Services for the Housing Authority came forward and greeted the Committee members. This program is almost 10 years old and serves children 6-19 in Marina Village year round. The program also involved adults mentoring the youth. Last year's funding was used for staffing and was gratefully received. The program also needs assistance with transportation for those participants who don't have cars. If the staffing can be expanded, there would be room for up to 30 children. There are some programs involving a partnership with the local universities and the students.

Bridgeport Housing Authority – Res. Operator Maintenance Training – The funding would be to provide a resident with maintenance training. It is hope to create two classes of 10 trainees over the next few months.

Council Member Blunt joined the meeting at 6:54 p.m.

The funding will be used as seed money. Although the Housing Authority has a maintenance staff, this program would allow the trainees to apply for contracts. Council Member Blunt asked for details about the program, which the representative provided. The goal is to become self-sufficient.

Lower East Side Development Corporation (LESDCO) – East Side Housing Services – LESDCO has been around for about 15 years and copies of the various completed projects were distributed. The funding will be used to hire a part time housing specialist.

Ms. Angie Saltero, the Neighborhood Coordinator, came forward and said that LESDCO was the engine that assisted with the revitalization of the East Side. Having a housing specialist would assist in evaluating the various homes for repairs.

Recovery Network – HOPWA – Ms. Sheryl Bell came forward and said the program has been providing health care for the last 40 years. The shelter provides housing for 42 individuals on a daily basis. Ms. Bell then briefly reviewed the various services offered by the Recovery Network. All the clients are offered extensive medical and psychological services on site. Last year, Prospect House received 100% compliance on the DSS audit.

Downtown Cabaret Theater – Children’s Theater Program – Mr. Hugh Allen came forward and said that he was present to request funding for ticket subsidies for lower grade students. He listed the various schools that participated and said that these tickets were offered at half price. This is strong cultural enrichment for the students. The tickets are distributed to the schools on a first come basis.

Pivot Ministries – GED Program – No one present.

African American Historical Society – Museum Cultural Center – Mr. Wilcox came forward and introduced the members of Board. The goal is to raise funds in order to open the Museum and the Cultural Center. The funding would be used to assist with the lease of a building for the Museum. The ultimate goal is to build a fully green building. There were some questions about the Freeman Houses that were being restored by ABCD.

St. John’s Family Center – Early Childhood & Emergency Resource Program – The Center provides family services, citizenship classes and tutoring classes.

St. John's Family Center – Emergency Assistance Program – This program includes a food pantry, clothing and case management.

United Cerebral Palsy – Project Independence Genesis – Ms. Marlene Duvall, the Housing Director for UCP came forward and said that the requested fund were for Project Genesis, which supports homes all over the city. These funds will also be used to leverage additional funding for the program.

Council member Curwen asked if there were any other additional sources of revenue. Ms. Duvall said that there were additional income streams. Council Member Curwen then had several more questions about the project status.

Village Initiative Project – College Prep Program – Ms. Wilson came forward and introduced herself and one of the graduates of the program. This program takes Bridgeport students to various colleges. Many of these students have not been on a college campus before. The students are now receiving their college acceptance letters from many of the colleges that the groups visited. She thanked the Committee for their past support. This program has been active since 1993, but the program was not incorporated until 2003.

Mutual Housing Association – Maplewood Court – No one present.

Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust – South End Project – No one present.

Marrakech, Inc. – 1053-1057 East Main Street – Mr. Jay Harmon came forward and said that Marrakech has been in existence for over 40 years. The program provides services such as affordable housing, employment support and owns a 13 unit apartment complex in Bridgeport and the Senior Center is located in the back of the building. There are renovations underway at the building. The group applied for a CHAFFA grant, but did not receive the funding. The group has a Human Services Academy that provides job training in the building also.

United Congregational Church – Feel the Warmth – Ms. McCormick came forward and said that she was the Executive Director of the partnership organization. The group was present 300 plus years when Bridgeport was in the early years and will continue to work with Bridgeport. There are very low personnel costs for the amount of work that the Church does. Following the hurricane, meals were served in the parking lot. The church serves the community food on Thursday nights 52 weeks a year. The church is located on State Street and Park Street. The clients are not charged for the meal, but when the costs are averaged out, it works out to \$1.50 per meal. The harvest in the community gardens is often used for the meals.

One request is for personnel for the Food Director; the meals are nutritionally balanced. There are renovations underway to bring the kitchen up to commercial standards.

Bridgeport Wilmont Apartment – Rehab and Historical Preservation – Barbara, president of the Board for Wilmont Apartments came forward and said that the facility was built in 1918. The facility is for low to moderate income families and in need of renovations. 21% of the households are single parents; and 70% are elderly. Common charges are collected and used for heating costs and one maintenance staff. There are 108 units and 210 residents.

Urban League of Southern CT - Financial Education Program – No one present.

Sickle Cell Association – Education Program – Ms. Delores Williams-Edwards , the Executive Director of the Sickle Cell Association came forward and thanked the Committee for their assistance last year. They are working on one community at a time. While this is not a pandemic, it is a long term issue. The community needs to know about the disease and the resources available. The Bridgeport office is in the Health Department. The SCA does not do the testing they raise awareness and work with the Health Department. When asked what the number of Sickle Cell was in Bridgeport was, Ms. Williams-Edwards said that she believe it to be between 150-200.

Black Rock NRZ – Business Outreach – Mr. Joe Ianniello and ms. Angie Saltero came forward to request funding for rehabilitation of a portion of Fairfield Avenue adjacent to I-95. The rehabilitation will be both internal and external. The external will include removing security gates and eliminating blight to increase the quality of life and attract new businesses. The funding will be used as seed money.

Neighborhood Studios of Fairfield County – Elevator Project – The Executive Director came forward and said that his group was formed in 1979. He spoke about the classes that are offered to the community. The group worked out of rooms at UB, but now have room at Holy Rosary School, which will allow them to build state of the art dance studio and art studios. While there has been funds raised, there was not enough to cover the elevator. The shaft has been repaired, but the finances are not available to install the

Neighborhood Studios of Fairfield County – Conservatory Program – This is a program to work with teens in preparing them for college and provides extra support for the students and those entering the job market. The enrollment in this program has increased. The classes include dance, digital photograph, fine arts and jazz.

Cedar Park - Housing Renovation - Mr. Freddie Jackson and Mr. Roy Rogers came forward and requested funding for the complex to assist with windows, fencing and other repairs. Most of the residents are seniors.

Mission of Peace – Foreclosure Prevention Program – A representative came forward to request funding to expand their program to assist the residents who are financially stressed and struggling to avoid foreclosure. There are currently over 500 open files in the City.

Mission of Peace – Homeowners Closing Cost Assistance – This funding would assist people in covering the closing costs for homes purchased in Bridgeport. There are other funding sources. A brief discussion followed about the staffing and how many people receive services.

Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust – South End Project – Ms. Liz Torres came forward and said that BNT was the only housing trust in the City. She listed a number of properties that the group has been working on and said that the funding would be use to acquire a property in the South End that was part of a larger strategy for low income families. There will be four two bedroom units in the building. The BNT works on buildings that have been vacant and abandoned for years.

Mutual Housing – Maplewood Court – Mr. Keith Cryn, the Housing Developer Director came forward and said that the group owns about 450 units of housing and does different types of in Connecticut. He said that the funding would be used for capital improvement at Maplewood Court. There is a need to replace the boilers and to work on the entrances to the buildings. Ms. Nancy Hadley is the Executive Director.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER BLUNT MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services