

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC HEARING  
MARCH 23, 2010**

**ATTENDANCE:** Angel dePara, Chair; Robert Curwen, Co-chair; Lydia Martinez, Council President Thomas McCarthy, M. Evette Brantley (7:35 p.m.)

**CALL TO ORDER**

Council Member dePara called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. There was a quorum present.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

#35 – Children in Place – Ms. Nevas came forward and introduced herself. She gave a brief overview of the program and explained that the program is geared towards overall skills improvement. She said that the organization was depending on the CDBG funding to hire an additional part time staff member.

#1 – Catholic Charities – Merton House – A representative came forward and explained that the request was for Merton House funding to serve meals. Last year, 88,000 meals were served. There have been cuts from two other major financial supporters this year and the organization has been told that one of the major financial supporters will also be cutting their donation next year.

#2 – Hall Neighborhood House – Ella Jackson Senior Center. Ms. Lewis came forward and introduced herself. She said that the Center has been serving seniors 60 years and older for many years. This includes activities and other programs. She said that currently the Center is only open three days a week and the funding request was to help the Center pay for the other two days of the week. There are about 45 seniors that attend regularly.

#3 & #4 – Hall Neighborhood House – Roof Replacement. Mr. Reggie Jackson came forward and introduced himself to the Committee. He explained that the roof on the oldest section of the building is leaking and causing problems. The HVA system needs to be overhauled also. Hall House has received funding from the CDBG in the past and they are very grateful. The request for \$20,000 is for emergency repairs. Mr. Jackson stated that they had contacted the State Representatives for possible

#5- Child Guidance Center, Hispanic Family Outreach - Ms. Jackson came forward and introduce herself to the Committee. The program is targeted to working with the poor Hispanic population who do not have adequate English skills to overcome the language barrier and providing access to the appropriate community services

#6 GBAPP - Mi Casa. This is an emergency home for pregnant and parenting teens. The Staff member explained that there are only 14 beds, but they have around 20 families.

#7 – Child Guidance Center – SIHRY – The Coordinator of the Strategic Intervention Program came forward. He explained the program works with at-risk youth that are characterized by high rates of crime and other factors.

#8 – GBAPP – ESG – No response.

#9 - Frank Habansky Food Pantry, Inc. - This program serves the population who are at or below the poverty line. There are no paid staff. The doors opened in November of 2008 and has been open every week-end since then. Food is also delivered to the Bridgeport Towers.

#10 – Literacy Enrichment Program. – The Executive Director came forward and spoke briefly about the program.

#11 – Friends of the Bridgeport Public Library. – Mr. Joe Allenoff, Friends of the Bridgeport Public Library came forward. He said that the group raises funds from book sales and other venues. He then explained that the request was for the creation of a reading garden at the newly renovated Black Rock Library. He explained that the library falls into a census tract that may disqualify it. With the formation of the Black Rock NRZ, the area of Black Rock was expanded to encompass census tracts 701, 702, and 703, which will bring the percentage of Low to Moderate Income households to below 49%.

#12 – St. Luke’s Community – The Director came forward and distributed a folder with information on the Life Work program to the Committee members. The program is part of the Eligible Metropolitan Statistical Area (EMSA) for HIV/AIDS. She explained that the HOPWA funding was a critical part of the funding for their program. She then listed the percentages of the various sections of the HIV/AIDS population that were served. She then reviewed the financial breakout for the funding request.

#13- – ABCD – Emergency Rental Assistance – A staff member came forward and distributed copies of the 2009 Annual Report. She explained that last year, with the funding from ESG, 39 families were served.

#14 - Emergency Energy Assistance - The funding from last year, the program was able to serve 89 families. These families did not meet the criteria for the regular assistance program and would not have heat without the assistance from the fund.

#15 – Freeman Homes – Ms. Tisdale came forward and explained that because the program attracted attention was because the Freeman houses were some of the only surviving buildings owned and built by African Americans.

#16- ABCD Food Pantry – The group received \$40,000 last year and served over 1,000 recipients per month. There is an increasing need from the residents for food assistance.

#17 ESG – East End Community Council – No response

#18-1 – Bethel Recovery Center – A representative came forward and thanked the Committee for the funding for this year. The ESG funds are for the food pantry. The number of people that are served has gone from 10 people a month to 200 a month. The recommended amount was \$5,000 but the requested amount \$28,000 to feed all these people.

#20 – Bethel Recover Center – HOPWA funding – The representative explained that recently they became the only state Grant facility for ATR that will house women from Bridgeport from treatment centers. There are only 10 beds at the Recovery Center and there has been an increase in the number of clients. There must always be staff in the house 24/7 because the clients have multiple problems.

#18-2 Bethel Recover Center - Ms. Foley came forward and explained that this request was for repairs to beds and bathrooms. The facility can house 15 women and they can stay for two months. The staff works on finding additional housing for the clients along with employment. It is difficulty to find employment for those clients with histories of imprisonment or mental health problems. The staff works with DCF when necessary and is handicapped accessible.

#21 – MidFairfield AIDS Project. – Stuart Lane came forward and said that while the program is located in Norwalk, they provide services to the entire area. They are requesting funds from HOPWA for 20 clients and 11 apartments. Mr. Lane gave a brief overview of the program and goals. The goal is to subsidize the housing for the clients. He said that HIV/AIDS is one of the chronic illnesses. The program has about a 98% success rate in keeping the apartments occupied.

#22 – Food Bank North End. – Mr. Barnes came forward ad said that his organization provides food for approximately 35 families a week. The clients do not come every week

#23 – North End Community Council Public Service - Mr. Jeffrey Kohut came forward and read a lengthy statement about the history for the Trumbull Gardens/Beardsley Terrace Neighborhood. He said that the food pantry assists people from all over the North End.

*Council Member Brantley joined the meeting at 7:35 p.m.*

Mr. Kohut then listed a number of assistance organizations that the NECC has participated in.

#24 - Intellectual Disabilities Education Association - Pat Paniccia, the president of the IDEA group. She explained that autism disorder is a wide spectrum disability and that the program is focused on supporting the families with older autistic children because there are no programs for the young adults to have supervised activities that provide for their special needs. She then said that the focus was on Low Income families and

Ms. Melinda Estes came forward and explained that she was a single parent with an autistic child and two other children. She said that there have been many challenges raising her children and providing for her son in terms of assistance. There are very few resources for parents with autistic children. When asked about “respite”, Ms. Estes explained that she had experience with autistic children because she works in the Westport School System. Ms. Paniccia explained that there would be licensed staff members. She added that the respite for the younger children would be from the end of the regular school day until about 5:30 and the older children would have an evening program.

#25 – Blessed Sacrament Nutritional Feeding program - The rector of Blessed Sacrament Church came forward and reviewed the key aspects of the weekly food pantry and the other services that the program offers with the Committee members.

#26 - Blessed Sacrament – Summer Camp – The rector of the Blessed Sacrament Church explained that the Church provides a summer camp that takes the children on field trips. For many of the children, this is the only vacation that they have. A number of teachers are the staff and the funding goes towards salaries. There is usually 1 counselor for every 8-10 campers. There is a limit of 50 children because of the bussing issues. A student can be accepted into the camp at age 5. The program does not accept students over the age of 12. There is some funding from other churches and other organizations.

#27 - First T – Mr. Ed Robins came forward and introduced himself. He said that program has been operating for the last five years. The organization hopes to add more students through the Cardinal Sheen Center and the Lighthouse Program. There is a

focus on increasing the number of minorities and the number of females to learn golf. There is also a mentoring program for the students and educational opportunities.

Over the past five years, there have been between 4 to 5 thousand students in the program. There is also a bridge between the schools and the program. Council Member Curwen said that this provides a valuable chance for the students who might not otherwise experience golf to have their first experience at the sport. When asked how many of the students are female, Mr. Robins said that it was about 35-40%. Mr. Robins said that it has been a real joy to see the student grow up and go off to college. Council Member Brantley asked whether this was just lessons or a day camp program. Group lessons are taught at Lighthouse and the schools, and then additional lessons are given at the course. The funding also is used to purchase equipment for the students. There are opportunities for the students to go to college on a golf scholarship also.

#28 Catholic Charities – HOPWA – No response

#29 Groundworks – Bridgeport – No response

#30 – Third Stone Ridge Cooperative – The Assistant Secretary came forward and thanked the Committee for the previous grant funding. She said that the roofs on seven buildings had been repaired, but now 9 more roofs need replacing. This complex has single parent families and other Low and Moderate income families, who would not be able to afford the additional common charges for the roof repairs. When asked what the common charges for the units was, the secretary replied that it was over \$600 a month.

#31 - Barnum Museum – Free Thursday for Bridgeport – A Barnum Board Representative came forward and said that the Board would like to have a free Thursday for Bridgeport residents during the summer. This would allow many of the residents who do not have the opportunity to experience the P.T. Barnum Museum. There are currently 3 full time employees, 2 part-time employees and over 30 volunteers at the Museum. The current admission is \$6.00 and the children have a reduced fee.

#32 - Prospect House Shelter - Ms. Lascombe came forward and greeted the Committee. She explained that the organization was half way through Phase II of the bathroom renovation. Currently the facility is not ADA compliant. There are 45 people who are housed at the shelter.

#33 – Prospect House – Sheltering Furnishing – Ms. Lascombe then reviewed the application request and explained that the bedrooms have not been updated with furnishing since the 1980s. She explained that the program does serve the HOPWA population.

#36 – Connecticut Legal Services, Inc. – Mr. Tannenbaum came forward and said that approximately half of those who were unemployment would need assistance and his organization provides legal advice to the low and moderate income Bridgeport families. There has been a major cut in State funding and other revenue sources. Some of the staff have received a 10% payout. He then gave the address of the local office for the group.

Council Member Taylor Moya said that she was aware of their work and that she hoped that the organization would continue to serve Bridgeport residents

#37 – Ms. Hunter came forward and explained that Fairfield 08 was hoping to create 25-30 additional supportive housing units and that there was a three pronged approach, including the Social Services, and Health Department along with other agencies in partnership. The funding is being leveraged. She added that with the cuts in the State level, this type of supportive housing is needed even more. Ms. Hunter said that the organization tries to have transparent housing within the community, so it is not a dedicated building, but units throughout the City. There is other funding sources. The organization creates partnerships with ongoing developments.

#38 – East End Youth Art Works – Original Works. The executive director of Original Works, Inc. came forward and distributed a handout that listed all the points of his presentation. The program has a class structure. From 3:00 to 5:00 there are free music lessons and later there are the ensemble practices. The funding will help reduce the student/teacher ratio and allow the group to have three school events. It will also allow the group to provide stipend incentives to youth leader

#39 – Alpha Community Services - The representative came forward and informed the Committee that currently there are over 60 children in the homeless shelter. She then introduced the Director for the Emergency Shelter. There are 24 units, one set in the East End, the other on the West End. The Director started in 1996 with Families in Transition. With the economic change, there has been a change in the population and now there are more complete families in the program.

The President of the Alpha Community Tenants Association, Mr. Dennis Cahill, came forward and said that he was very grateful and thankful client of the supportive services. In 1999, Mr. Cahill became disabled due to a work related accident. He was in a work shelter for 10 months and was able to gain his funding. At his location, the residents founded a tenant's association and are moving forward. The program works with the clients until they are securely positioned in their new lives before ending the support. He then gave a brief overview of the program and said that about 90% of the residents use the services of the Social Worker onsite.

The director said that it is not just the homeless population, but they also provide help for those in danger of homelessness.

#40 – Burroughs Community Center - Ms. Pritchard came forward and explained that she was a neighbor and a supporter of the Burroughs Community Center. She then said that the students enrolled in the summer program rotate through a number of classes such as homework help, computer skills, and life saving techniques. Burroughs works to help the students to achieve graduation from high school and college. Ms. Pritchard related how Burroughs Community Center helped her as a student and how she is now involved in the Community Center now.

#41 – La Casa del Inmigrante/House of Immigrant – Bilingual Employment and Vocational Program - The founder of the program came forward and gave a brief overview of the information. She requested that the Committee consider the request because the group has not applied for grants before. The program teaches ESL courses and working with immigrants to improve their job skills for employment. The Director said that the classes for English are taught in her living room and they work with immigrants towards taking the Citizenship test to become citizens in the U.S.

Council Member Martinez thanked the founder for the work that she has done in the community. Ms. Castilio then related a story about a Bridgeport resident who used the Connecticut Legal Services and the Legal Services followed the case for three years until a judgment was handed down in favor of the client.

Rev. Castilio then spoke about the outreaches to the homeless and the educational program.

#43 – FSW - Workskills Training & Employment – No response.

#44 RTCC – Ralphola Taylor Community Center – YMCA - The Executive Director came forward and gave a brief overview of the program which allows the youth to be at the Center between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. as an alternative to street life. She said that the program may not be able to run a full year. Council Member Brantley thanked the director for the work that the organization does on the East End.

#45 – McGivney Center – The director of the McGivney Center came forward and said that the Center hoped to have the 9th to 12th graders into programs that assist the younger student in the transition to high school and the high school students towards the transition to college. There are many different classes that are taught, and these classes are requested by the students. The funding will help provide tutors for the after school programs. The after school program starts as soon as school lets out until 5:30. The summer programs run six weeks from 8 to 5 and the Center has scholarships. There are

approximately 120 children for the summer program and during the after school program has about 200 children.

Council Member Brantley asked about a baking program and the Director reviewed the details. She said that the students suggest the courses and the staff tries to provide the instruction on the various subjects. Council Member Martinez said that she had been in the Center and really enjoyed the atmosphere there. The director said that there are volunteers from Fairfield University and Sacred Heart.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED.**

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes  
Telesco Secretarial Services