

CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2014
6:00 PM

ATTENDANCE: Co-chair Taylor-Moye; *Co-chair McBride-Lee,
Council members: Torres, Halstead, Feliciano

*=arrived 6:23 pm

REPRESENTATIVE: Tammy Papa; Director Lighthouse Program

Informational Session with Tammy Papa, Director, Lighthouse
Program: Brief Update on the Lighthouse Program.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm.

She stated that the agenda item was an informational session only and that no quorum was required.

She introduced the committee members and the representative that were in attendance.

Ms. Papa referred to the booklet she distributed that highlighted the Lighthouse Program after school program, as well as other services they provide. She reviewed the following programs outlined in the booklet:

Bridgeport Conservation Corps – she explained that this program deals with youth during the summer and it's why it falls under the Lighthouse Program. The program focuses on the education of young people in an after school environment. And during the summer, they are taught about recycling and other environmental issues.

Council member Torres asked if the Conservation Corps was funded through the Lighthouse Program. Ms. Papa said yes, noting that the salary for the program administrator is in her budget through The WorkPlace.

Council member Torres asked if they would request CDBG funds this year. Ms. Papa said yes, as well as receiving assistance from another funding source the Youth Service Bureau that requires a city match.

Canvassing Neighborhoods – this program involves talking to residents about energy assessments through United Illuminating. It's primarily targeted for CDBG eligible neighborhoods and the canvassing is done by college age students.

Work in the Field Program – this program involves partnership with the Student Conservation Association where youth conduct small projects with the Parks Department at places such as Beardsley Park.

Ms. Papa stated that it's a 3-prong approach: 1) build on the program 2) work more closely with Groundwork Program 3) work with the NRZ's to promote community clean-ups. There is also focus on the Be-Green Program.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye asked the number of students that participate in the program. Ms. Papa said there are approximately forty (40) students that participate.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye asked how the information is distributed to the students. Ms. Papa said distribution of the information is done through the school system.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye questioned why there are only a limited number of students accepted into the program. Ms. Papa explained that the city doesn't decide which students get jobs, eligibility is based on stringent income guidelines; as well as having to meet other criteria. She noted that the primary focus is on students in need.

Co-chair McBride-Lee stated her concerns about the Lighthouse Program. She expressed that although she is aware there is a shortage of funding, she stated that it appeared that the after school program is for those that have versus the have nots. For example: she stated a situation where a child may owe \$15.00 towards the program expense and they are told that they must pay the amount. Ms. Papa responded that the program coordinator should only have this discussion with the parent regarding any money that is owed. She emphasized that they never keep a child out of the program for non-payment and there should never be a threatening situation. However, she said there are limited funds to go around. She further noted that if a parent is behind in payments, they are contacted and urged to set up a payment arrangement. Overall, she stated that each situation is individually assessed and the program coordinator should discuss this with the parent.

Council member Torres asked what the budget was for the Bridgeport Conservation Corps. Ms. Papa said the budget was \$100k that consists of CDBG funding.

Council member Halstead asked what the duration of the program was. Ms. Papa said the students start working mid-July through August, noting that it's an 8-week program.

Council member Halstead commented that he has an interest in getting students involved with the community gardens during the gaps in the summer months, noting that cultivation of the gardens runs from April through November.

Ms. Papa mentioned that the Youth Service Bureau Grant is a dollar-dollar match that was funded for \$140k.

She went on to say that the Youth Empowerment Program provides trips and guest presentations and they are still developing this program, noting that they rely a lot on the schools for assistance.

Ms. Papa referred to the School Year Activities Guide that was distributed. She said the booklet is distributed every year to every student and updates are added as requested.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye asked if the guide is put in the health clinics. Ms. Papa said she wasn't sure, but they could start doing that.

Ms. Papa spoke about the Lighthouse After School Program. She gave a history of when the program began and she noted that in the past, they received direct federal funding and they also receive state funding. She mentioned the parent fees, noting that \$750k comes in through parent fees. The program is active in twenty-four (24) schools and they serve approximately 2,100 kids over the summer.

Council member Halstead asked if the Conservation Corps only works outside of the schools. Ms. Papa said the Lighthouse Program works strictly outside of the schools due to the funding source.

Council member Torres asked what the process was for the kids to get into the program. Ms. Papa said it's a first come, first serve basis. She explained that they send out contracts to area providers and they partner with other social services programs. She mentioned that the agency puts up the money for the program and then they are reimbursed by the city. She said they take a waiting list and during the first couple of weeks, every attempt is made to get kids in the program. She noted that the program operates for two hours from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm. She clarified that neither the city nor the Board of Education retain any funds that come in for the programs. The funds come into the city, flow through the Board of Education directly to the Lighthouse Program and they subcontract out the services.

Co-chair McBride-Lee reiterated her concern about students at Waltersville School and the issue of not enough of the students being accepted into the Lighthouse Program. Ms. Papa explained that the program coordinator is doing a good job considering he is

new and he is still getting acclimated to what's fully involved. She stated that she would talk to him about being more proactive and becoming more familiar with the student's parent(s) situation.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye mentioned that she noticed the program isn't in the churches or the community centers. She questioned if there is any way other after school programs can bridge an alliance with the Lighthouse Program; i.e., can they become the overseer of the other after school programs. She acknowledged the program's achievements, noting that she has observed the success of former participants through the years, as a result of participating in the after school program. Ms. Papa explained that the Mayor has made a request to develop partnerships with churches in the community and pocket programs to possibly help support these programs; however, there is a matter of finding the funds to do that, as well as having to follow specific guidelines. She noted that it's important that the pocket organizations don't lose their own identify, should they start to fall under the umbrella of the Lighthouse Program.

Ms. Papa referred to the executive summary that is devised yearly and independently by someone that is very familiar with after school programs. She noted that the Lighthouse Program is the largest program in terms of the number of children served on a daily basis in Connecticut. She urged the committee members to submit any suggestions they may have for improvements or program ideas.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye asked if the program is receiving good parent participation. Ms. Papa said yes and she mentioned that sometimes they conduct parent seminars to feed information to them. She expressed that the night activity of the program has been successful, due to the focus on families. She clarified that the rules and regulations are closely followed and they work hand in hand with the parents.

Co-chair Taylor-Moye recalled that during the summer, the Parks and Recreation Department has kids doing varied activities. She asked if the Lighthouse Program was involved with this. Ms. Papa said no.

Council member Torres asked if the Lighthouse Program is primarily an educational program. Ms. Papa said it's a combination of education and recreational and they don't consider it to be a child care type environment. She relayed that other aspects are promoted and encouraged to enhance the growth of the child, such as helping with homework.

Council member Torres asked if the Lighthouse Program is in conflict with the Board of Education in terms of budget and other circumstances. Ms. Papa said they always had

a good working relationship with the school superintendents; especially when it comes to writing grants. Overall, it's a comfortable working situation.

Council member Torres left the meeting at 7:07 pm.

Council member Halstead noted that he would like the Lighthouse Program to consider becoming involved with the health, nutrition and gardening areas. Ms. Papa acknowledged the request and she stated that they set up a time to discuss the matter further in conjunction with other departments.

Approval of Committee Minutes of December 11, 2013.

Correction:

The minutes should reflect that Council member Halstead requested that the Excel Program should be used as a platform.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER McBRIDE-LEE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR-MOYE SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

ADJOURNED

**** COUNCIL MEMBER FELICIANO MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HALSTEAD SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham
Telesco Secretarial Services