

**HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING**

Tuesday, May 19, 2009
EVANSTON CIVIC CENTER
7:30 P.M. – Room 2404

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah Breen, Ald. Holmes, Ald. Jean-Baptiste, Johanna Nyden, Ald. Rainey, Crawford Richmond, Ald. Wilson

PRESIDING OFFICIAL: Ald. Rainey, Chair

STAFF PRESENT: Stefanie Levine, Sarah Flax

I. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Ald Rainey called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm, there being a quorum. All committee members and staff in attendance introduced themselves; new committee members were welcomed.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF APRIL 21, 2009 MEETING.

Ald. Jean-Baptiste moved approval, Sarah Breen seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

III. PUBLIC HEARING FOR CITIZEN INPUT ON PROPOSED 2008/09 CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION REPORT

Ald. Rainey asked the two citizens in attendance if they wished to comment on the CAPER; both declined. Staff provided the following additions and corrections to the draft CAPER:

- a. Page 2, paragraph 4, sentence beginning “Connections for the Homeless served XXX unduplicated...” should read: “Connections for the Homeless served 401 unduplicated clients in between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008, an increase of 58% over prior year, through its Entry Point outreach program; since July 1, 2008, they have served 456 persons, exceeding prior year by 14%.”
- b. The header and footer list this incorrectly as the Third Program Year CAPER; it is the Fourth Year CAPER; CDBG Year 34 is correct. The program year will be corrected.

There being no additional input on the CAPER, Ald. Rainey closed the public comment session. Ald. Jean-Baptiste moved approval of the CAPER with the changes noted by staff and its submission to City Council for approval; Sarah Breen seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC HEARING FOR CITIZEN INPUT ON COMMUNITY NEEDS FOR 2010/11 CDBG PROGRAM

Ald. Rainey recognized John Mroczka, McGaw YMCA. John thanked the Committee for the 2009/10 CDBG grant to air condition rooms in the McGaw YMCA Residence facility. He noted that the Y continues to house very-low and low-income men, including seniors and persons with disabilities. John explained that the McGaw YMCA seeks to make its building more energy efficient and environmentally responsible. The Y has committed to an energy audit; some of the ideas under discussion are zoning the heat and water in the Residence facility, linking the air conditioning in the Residence facility to the main chiller and weatherization of the Residence room windows, which are original to the building. The audit is being undertaken this summer and John expects that the Y will apply for 2010-11 CDBG funds to assist with this project.

Ald. Holmes asked for additional information about the senior and disabled residents. John said that men aged 62 or older are considered seniors. The oldest current resident, Mr. Brown, is 85. Several seniors have lived at the Y for 25+ years. The youngest person with a disability is in his 40s, one resident has MS; George Martin, a long-time Y resident, is 68 or 69 and is disabled.

Ald. Holmes asked that the Y consider consulting the Network for Evanston's Future and the Center for Neighborhood Technology for their audit. Staff noted that based on a meeting with Pat Vance and members of CEDA's Weatherization program, the Y's Residence facility should be eligible for assistance through that program, which is limited to serving households at or below 200% of the federal poverty line. John will follow up with Bill Geiger and Pat Vance, who is on the Y board and the Residence committee.

Ald. Rainey thanked John for his input and commended the Y for its work.

Ald. Rainey asked Mary Friedl if she had input for 2010-11 CDBG planning. Mary responded that she was an observer. She reiterated the importance of ensuring all facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Relating to accessibility, staff noted that drawings for Family Focus' elevator project have been submitted to the Building division for approval, so progress is being made there. Mary asked if there is progress to make Connections for the Homeless' facilities at the Lake Street Church accessible. Staff replied that Connections has agreements with other organizations, including the McGaw YMCA, that enable them to provide comparable services to persons with disabilities. Committee members noted that the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009 may provide opportunities for funding for a new facility, but that getting approval for such a facility could prove challenging. Staff noted that Connections partnered with the Illinois Facilities Fund in an application for NSP funds to the State of Illinois, but the specifics of that application are not known. Staff will follow up with Paul Selden, Connections Executive Director.

Mary Friedl noted that she was pleased by staff's attention to the need to make programs and facilities accessible in Evanston. There being no additional input on needs for 2010-11 CDBG planning, Ald. Rainey closed the public input session.

V. CDBG-R – PROPOSED USE OF \$523,828 FROM THE AMERICAN RECOVERY & REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009; THE CITY MUST FILE A SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENT TO ITS 2008 ACTION PLAN WITH HUD BY JUNE 5, 2009

Staff reviewed the requirements for use of CDBG-R funding, including the focus on capital projects that can be underway rapidly (within 120 days of grant approval) to create jobs and stimulate the economy. Staff noted that several activities under consideration prior to release of the CDBG-R Notice were not being recommended. For example, because CDBG-R and regular CDBG funds cannot be co-mingled in a single contract, it is impractical to use CDBG-R funds to expand infrastructure improvements such as sidewalks and alley paving in the CDBG Target Area because efficiencies would be lost by the separate bid requirement. Staff noted that Public Services activities, though allowed, are being discouraged by HUD because they do not address the goals of the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act through which CDBG-R is funded as effectively as other activities. Discussion with the Chicago HUD office confirmed that a job training and subsidized work program would be considered a Public Service.

Two projects were recommended: Fleetwood-Foster Park & Playground Improvements Phase 1B at \$410,000 and Howard Street Improvement Project at \$61,446; \$52,382 would be used for Administration and Planning (10% of total funds as allowed).

Fleetwood-Foster Park & Playground Improvements Phase 1B

Stefanie Levine, Parks, Forestry & Recreation, explained the Phase 1A work currently underway at Fleetwood-Foster that will be completed in July. That project was scaled back when bid because of lack of funding. Elements that were not funded include perimeter fencing and landscaping, landscaping of the parking area, screening of building mechanicals and completion of the main entrance elements to the building and grounds. CIP funds of \$375,000 allocated in 2009/10 will not cover all those costs. Staff recommended using \$410,000 of CDBG-R funds for this project. The project is almost “shovel ready;” all manufactured goods would be reviewed to ensure they are made in America, as required by CDBG-R and the project packaged for bid. Anticipated construction start date is September 1 with completion by December 31, 2009, meeting the goals of CDBG-R to create construction jobs and stimulate the economy. The 2009/10 CIP funds could then be combined with 2010/11 CIP funds allocated for Fleetwood-Foster to complete the renovation of the baseball and football fields north of the building. This includes perimeter fencing and landscaping, entry elements at the corners of Simpson and Dewey and Simpson and Ashland, backstop, spectator seating, etc. for a total cost of \$70,000; work would begin in spring of 2010 and be completed by fall 2010.

In addition to meeting CDBG-R/ARRA goals, this project addresses community development goals of revitalizing in a CDBG Target Area neighborhood that has very heavily impacted by mortgage foreclosures and is the focus of the City’s application for Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds to purchase and rehabilitate foreclosed and abandoned housing. Public Improvements demonstrates commitment to the needs of west Evanston.

Staff addressed questions about entries to the different project areas and the capital needs of the building. The above-detailed recommendation would enable completion of this multi-year project by the end of calendar year 2010. Additional CDBG funding would not be sought for the landscaping and exterior renovations, though funds may be requested for interior projects such as renovation of the art room.

Ald. Jean-Baptiste moved approval of \$410,000 in CDBG-R funding for the above-detailed project, Ald. Holmes seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Howard Street Improvement Project

Staff recommended that \$61,446 in CDBG-R funds be allocated to improve the City parking lot at the corner of Howard Street and Chicago Avenue. The project is located in census block group 8102.002, which is 76.8% LMI based on the 2000 census, the highest in Evanston. This area has also been heavily impacted by mortgage foreclosures and identified as an area of high need for NSP funding. It is located near multi-family housing with limited parking and to the Howard L and Metra train lines, offering potential for commuter parking; it could also be used by customers of retail shops on Howard.

Ald. Rainey explained that this site is a major issue in her ward. The lot was used during construction of Howard Street Station Apartments to park equipment but is now underutilized and an eyesore. The bank property on the Chicago side of Howard is landscaped and well maintained and the building that formerly housed Pivot Point is being renovated as housing. The City lot on Callan has a waiting list but efforts to lease space in this lot have met with little success because of its condition. Needed improvements include repaving and striping the lot, perimeter plantings, clean up of the railroad embankment and adequate lighting.

Committee members asked if the recommended CDBG-R allocation would be sufficient for all

work needed. Staff responded that it was not. Ald. Rainey noted that funds to repave the lot should be available from the Parking Fund, which is used to repave lots on a rotating basis. Sarah Breen asked if the committee could get more detail about the work needed and its cost prior to considering funding. Staff responded that is not possible due to the required submission date to HUD of June 5 and the need for City Council to approve the CDBG-R Substantial Amendment to the Action Plan at its meeting on May 26. The Committee will have opportunity to review and approve plans for the use of funds at subsequent meetings, however.

Ald. Jean-Baptiste moved approval of \$61,446 in CDBG-R funding to improve the parking lot at the corner of Howard and Chicago, Ald. Rainey seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

Staff distributed a draft copy of the CDBG-R Substantial Amendment to the 2008 Action Plan and noted that public comment would open on 5/20; approval of said amendment will be on the City Council agenda at the May 26 meeting.

VI. COMMUNICATION: 2009/10 CDBG ENTITLEMENT GRANT AMOUNT OF \$1,951,570 WAS RECEIVED FROM HUD ON 5/1/09. THIS IS \$79,570 MORE THAN ESTIMATE USED IN OUR 2009/10 ALLOCATION.

Staff explained that the City's 2009 allocation of CDBG funds was larger than estimated; the increase, combined with additional program income in 2009, gives the City an additional \$135,619 to allocate for FY2009/10. Staff recommended that allocation of these funds be considered at the June meeting. Committee members asked if new activities could be funded. Staff responded that funding new activities or changing the funding levels by more than 10% would require amending the 2009 Action Plan. Considerations for funding that were discussed included projects undertaken by neighborhood groups in the CDBG Target Area and Alley Special Assessment Assistance. Staff will provide the November 11 allocation spreadsheet to committee members for review prior to the June meeting.

VII. CITIZEN/STAFF COMMENT

Staff noted that discussion of the disposition plan for 1817 Church Street would be on the agenda for the Committee's meeting in June. Ald. Holmes noted that the nature and condition of the building makes it challenging for redevelopment and that the option of demolishing the building but retaining the façade should be an option. Staff noted that is in the RFP and will ensure that option remains in the final disposition plan. Per the City's legal department, property can be sold by negotiation or by sealed bid only. Ald. Rainey noted that the City had issued a Request For Proposal that was approved by the legal department in prior years. Staff will review with Legal; the possibility of using a Request For Qualification to identify an entity followed by a negotiated sale was mentioned. Ald. Holmes inquired about the scaffolding and safety tape around the façade. Staff explained that roofing tile and other materials fell in a recent storm. Facilities Management conducted a thorough inspection and the scaffolding would be removed.

Staff will provide background information to the new members of the committee.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah K. Flax