

CITY OF ALBANY
City Council & Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Task Force
Joint Meeting
City Council Chambers, 333 Broadalbin Street SW
Monday, May 20, 2013

MEETING SUMMARY

Present: Mayor Sharon Konopa and Councilors Floyd Collins, Bessie Johnson, Rich Kellum, Ray Kopczynski, and Dick Olsen; CDBG Task Force Members John Donovan, Wanda Kinney, Terry Knoll, Frank Moore, Dala Rouse, and Joann Zimmer; Liaisons Theresa Conley and Tara Dixon

Absent: Councilor Bill Coburn; CDBG Task Force Members Paul Barnes, Danniell Butler, Bill Higby, Larry Nelson, and Debra Powell; Liaison Donna Holt

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Sharon Konopa called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT UPDATES, PROGRAMMING AND ADMINISTRATION

Konopa said that when the Albany's population reached 50,000, it was put in the category of an entitlement community and became eligible to receive CDBG funds. The City Council directed that the CDBG Task Force be formed to propose a plan for these funds. The Task Force is made up of representatives from Albany agencies that know the needs and gaps.

Lead Long Range Planner Anne Catlin drew attention to the written staff report and the Draft CDBG Funding Allocations spreadsheet. She reviewed the three primary objectives of the CDBG program: 1) Decent housing – retaining and increasing the affordable housing stock; housing rehabilitation and energy conservation; homeless prevention and support; 2) A suitable living environment – eliminating blighting influences and deterioration of property and facilities; improving the safety and livability of low and moderate income neighborhoods; and 3) Expanded economic opportunities – job creation and retention. She said eligible activities must meet one of three national objectives: benefiting low and moderate income persons, prevention or elimination of slums or blight, or having an emergency situation.

Catlin said the Consolidated Plan is a five-year plan that describes the community needs, resources, priorities, and proposed activities to be undertaken with CDBG funding. In addition, there is a one-year Action Plan that describes the specific programs and performance outcomes. The Task Force has been gathering data for the five-year plan and has proposed draft recommendations for the first two years. The City received citizen participation in the form of surveys which were developed to gain input from clients and providers; many of the activities selected were represented as high needs in these surveys. A public forum is planned for June 10 to receive initial public feedback, and a required public hearing is tentatively scheduled for July 24.

Councilor Floyd Collins said the memo lays out three primary objectives; he asked if there are secondary objectives. Catlin said the three objectives are fairly broad in scope but the program does not identify secondary needs.

Collins said that some organizations have restricted the use of CDBG funds to capital spending because if the funding goes away, any operations and maintenance costs would fall back to the General Fund. Konopa said the Task Force also had that discussion.

Catlin said the CDGB money will come through the City; programs will be carried out by the City or by a combination of the City and partners who have the capacity and experience. There will likely be some combination of entities responsible for the programs but the City will oversee the funding and reporting requirements.

Konopa said the Task Force proposed to divide the \$300,000 allocation into categories: \$100,000 to Decent/Affordable Housing/Homeless Prevention; \$100,000 to Suitable Living Environment & Neighborhood Revitalization; \$50,000 to Economic Opportunity; and \$50,000 to Public Services.

Catlin reviewed the proposed activities, recommended program/assistance, and administration & implementation for each category, as detailed on the spreadsheet. The first two programs under Decent/Affordable Housing/Homeless Prevention were recommended based on demonstrated need in the community - a housing rehabilitation loan program and a program to fix health and safety issues so units are eligible for weatherization grants. It is proposed these programs be managed by an intergovernmental agreement with Community Services Consortium (CSC).

Task Force Member Terry Knoll, Community Services Consortium, spoke about the CSC weatherization program. She said many households are eligible to be weatherized; however, if there is a health and safety issue, such as the front porch being rotted away, the organization cannot go into the home to provide weatherization measures. CSC is allowed limited health and safety dollars which could be leveraged with CDBG funds.

Collins asked if the loans are repaid. Knoll said the housing rehabilitation program is a revolving loan fund; the weatherization services are provided as a grant.

Collins asked if the programs are available to renters as well as owner-occupied households. Knoll said the CSC program currently applies only to owner-occupied; however, the Council could establish criteria to include rental rehabs. Collins said he wouldn't want to invest public money with no return to benefit landlords. Knoll noted that including rentals could help keep low-income housing stock if we ensure that owners cannot raise rents or evict people.

Councilor Bessie Johnson asked how people are selected for the weatherization program. Knoll said there is a waiting list and CSC has to prioritize. They prioritize seniors and families with small children, and may prioritize depending on heat type or area of town for additional savings.

Johnson said she can see using this program for owner-occupied housing but she may have a problem with using it for rentals. Konopa said that is something Council can look at. She noted that about 50 percent of the housing stock is rentals and the program could help a responsible landlord who needs weatherization assistance and help keep rents down. Knoll added that CSC is finding more landlords who are low income themselves.

Task Force Member Frank Moore, Linn County Mental Health, said the county works with a group of landlords who cater to the customers of his department, even to the point of helping to manage medications. While he would have some issue with public funds going to landlords, it is not hard to determine which are making responsible use of resources. The majority of those served by his department or the coordinated care organization are renters and probably will not acquire the wealth that would allow them to become home owners.

Councilor Rich Kellum said he doesn't have a problem with allowing the funds to be used for rentals as long as the owners don't raise rents. Konopa said that could be a condition of the program. Catlin said that staff is looking for approval on the concept of the program; the details can then be tailored in whatever way the Council decides. Brief discussion followed.

Catlin said the third program under the first objective would set aside \$30,000 annually to be responsive if a transitional housing or shelter project comes forward. Staff would propose that any transitional housing include a support program.

Task Force Member John Donovan, Albany Helping Hands, said his organization is currently able to house those who come to them. The next step of moving those folks on to transitional housing is critical for their long-term success. Last year, about 60 people moved from the shelter into permanent housing.

Task Force Member Joann Zimmer, Linn County 10-Year Plan to Address Homelessness, there is a need for a youth shelter as well as transitional housing for older youth. Jackson Street Youth Shelter can house about 12 youth. There have been a number of youth identified who are interested in shelter services but who don't necessarily want to go to Corvallis and be transported for school.

Catlin reviewed recommended programs under Suitable Living Environment & Neighborhood Revitalization, which address pressing needs with public facilities and infrastructure. Recommendations include curb ramp improvements near public facilities, and improvements to Sunrise Park and sections of Periwinkle Path. These projects would be City-managed.

Collins asked what portion of Periwinkle Path may need to be closed if not repaired. Parks & Recreation Director Ed Hodney said the City replaced the portion that surrounds Kinder Park and drops down to the church; everything south of that is in need of replacement. Collins said he understood that the Grand Prairie Water District was responsible for maintenance of that path. Hodney said the City has provided the only maintenance that he is aware of for some time. He agreed that issue should be vetted before the plan is adopted.

Catlin reviewed the proposals under the Economic Opportunity objective. The proposal would make \$38,000 available for projects that create new jobs. The idea under microenterprise assistance is to partner with LBCC's program and monitor the number of Albany residents being served through that program.

Kellum asked who determines which business enterprises would receive a grant. Konopa said the Council will want to determine whether those decisions would be made at the commission level. Kellum said we may need a different level of expertise for economic development activities than for housing issues.

Catlin said Public Services expenditures are capped at 15 percent of the total award. There are many eligible services and the recommendation is to consider a competitive application process.

Collins said he thinks the draft is a good start but we shouldn't be hesitant if it needs to be changed. Task Force Member Moore said the sentiment among the members was that there was no presumption the proposal was set in stone and that they would welcome oversight and input that allows flexibility so resources will be put where they are most useful.

Catlin said most communities appoint a commission to review and report to the City Council on CDBG activities. The staff report includes the memberships of the Corvallis and Salem commissions as examples. Collins suggested that a member of the Human Relations Commission be included. Staff suggested that appointing a member from the Economic Development Committee might address concerns about having the right expertise for business decisions.

The Council directed the following commission representation: general public (3), financial institution (1); housing industry (1); assisted housing/social services (1); Human Resources Commission (1); Economic Development (1); Planning Commission (1); City Council (1).

Catlin said a public forum is planned for June 10, 6:30 p.m., to receive initial public feedback prior to the public hearing.

Konopa thanked the Task Force members for their good work.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Meeting Summary prepared by Teresa Nix