

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 2, 2015  
CITY HALL WEST CONFERENCE ROOM  
CITY OF WYOMING, MICHIGAN

MEMBERS PRESENT: DeJager, Dunklee, Hall, Krenz, Lopez, McGlaun, Ziembra

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Rebecca Rynbrandt, Director of Community Services  
Kimberly Lucar, Community Development Dept.

OTHERS PRESENT: Representatives from:  
Fair Housing Center of West Michigan  
The Potter's House  
The Salvation Army Social Services  
Home Repair Services of Kent County

Call to Order

Chair Ziembra called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Approval of Agenda

Motion by Lopez, supported by Dunklee, to approve the agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

There was no public.

Approval of Prior Committee Minutes

Motion by Hall, supported by DeJager, to approve the prior meeting minutes of November 4, 2015. Motion carried unanimously.

Grant Request Presentations Scheduled

Rynbrandt explained there would be four presentations that evening. After the presentations, the Committee would then discuss which sub-recipients should be considered for budget purposes at the January meeting.

Presentations

Fair Housing Center of West Michigan – Executive Director Nancy Haynes and Director of Advocacy Elizabeth Stoddard were in attendance and made their presentation to the Committee. They are requesting a total of \$17,000 in CDBG funding, with \$15,000 going towards complaint investigation and testing and \$2,000 for education and outreach. Ms. Haynes explained the procedures and costs involved with performing

and supporting investigations of a complaint. Krenz was concerned that the costs per unit did not match up. One document says \$1,000/unit and the Letter of Intent says \$400/unit. Ms. Stoddard said Krenz was referring to two separate things. The \$1,000/unit is for case investigation (complaints and testing). The education and outreach component is \$100/unit. Ms. Haynes explained that, with the current 2015-2016 funding amount of \$4,500, as of January 1<sup>st</sup> they do not have any education funds left because of the funding cut. They have been able to supplement the cut with other funding sources, but now those are depleted. Ms. Haynes described their budget allocation processes. A discussion related to quantity of work performed in Wyoming related to general education and training as well as complaint investigation ensued. Lopez questioned why the Fair Housing Center could not bill like a consultant with a per case cost.

The Potter's House – Ed Tolsma, Director of Development and Foundation, was in attendance and gave the presentation. They are asking for a total of \$50,000 to help fund their Literacy program, which includes English as a Second Language (ESL), Reading Recovery, Turning Pages, Study Skills and Summer Learning Program. They currently have 570 students enrolled within their school system, and are planning to add 200 additional students and more classrooms. The high school is located at 2500 Newport Avenue and the elementary/middle schools are located in the former Roosevelt Park Church at 811 Chicago Drive SW and the building behind the church at 810 VanRaalte Dr SW. He gave national statistics of the problems with literacy in America. Nationally 20% of the population reads at only a 5<sup>th</sup> grade level. He noted their school is very diverse, with 68% of children of a race other than Caucasian, 20 different language groups and representing 30 different countries. Over 95% of students need tuition assistance. Their ESL program serves primarily immigrant and refugee children, most of whom are two to three grade levels behind. They have 50 students enrolled in this program with two teachers. The Reading Recovery program is for elementary students not at their grade level in reading. Turning Pages services upper elementary and middle school students who are at a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading level. These students are given one-on-one reading attention. The Study Skills program is for 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. They are learning study skills and time management. The Summer Learning Program includes a half day of summer tutoring for students that are struggling. Overall, the school has an average 95% graduation rate, and last year had a 100% graduation rate, within a community where the graduation rate is only at 50%. Ninety-five percent go on to higher education. They have seen many students achieve success through their school programs, defying their challenging economic circumstances and language barriers.

Rynbrandt pointed out for the Committee that the high school building at 2500 Newport Avenue is not within a CDBG Low/Moderate Area. The elementary and middle schools are within a CDBG Low/Moderate Area. Lucar pointed out that the reporting requirements for them would be much simpler if the funding was provided only in the Low/Moderate Area. If the activity was classified as Low/Moderate Clientele, they would have to report information such as income, race, etc. Rynbrandt asked if they have experience with federal funding. Mr. Tolsma indicated they had not. Rynbrandt asked if they had a cost per pupil to operate the Literacy Program. Mr. Tolsma said

they could provide those numbers. He noted the cost of the Literacy Program is in excess of their normal operating budget of \$4.9 million.

Hall asked how many Wyoming residents were enrolled in their school system. Mr. Tolsma replied most of the students are from the Roosevelt Park community. There are currently 130 students living in the city of Wyoming who are involved with the Literacy Program.

The Salvation Army Social Services – Christina Soulard, Social Services Director, was in attendance and gave the presentation. They are requesting \$16,000 in funding for rental assistance and supportive services to assist in the prevention of eviction. The program's goal is to prevent homelessness. From July – September this year they have received 575 calls from Wyoming residents seeking help in keeping their housing. They have served six households so far since July and have spent 30% of their current \$36,000 funding award.

Hall asked if The Salvation Army Social Services paid the rental assistance funds to the landlords or the tenants. Ms. Soulard said they assist the tenants with their needs, but make payments directly to the landlords. Hall asked if they anticipated any problem with expending their funding award for the current year. Ms. Soulard did not see any problem with spending down their current award.

McGlaun asked if they assist with rental deposits. Ms. Soulard said not through this particular program, but there are other resources available. McGlaun asked if they have turned anyone away from receiving services. Ms. Soulard responded that applicants must meet the eligible income requirements, with a monthly income of 40% or less of the Average Median Income.

Hall asked her thoughts as to the greatest needs within the city of Wyoming. Ms. Soulard replied that across Kent County the greatest need is affordable housing. Hall asked, once the \$2,000 is exhausted, where do these people go. Ms. Soulard responded they are referred to the Rapid Rehousing program or other resources.

Lopez asked about the six families they have assisted so far. Ms. Soulard said most of these families had children. The families are trying very hard, but have been faced with a financial crisis due to circumstances such as medical expenses, job loss, loss of transportation, etc.

Home Repair Services of Kent County – Executive Director Joel Ruitter, Repair Program Manager Bob Hengeveld and Grants Administrator Chris Romero were in attendance, and Mr. Ruitter gave their presentation. They are requesting \$50,000 to fund the Minor Home Repair Program and \$25,000 to fund the Access Modification Program. Mr. Ruitter mentioned HRS has been working with the City since 1999, and they have been in existence for 36 years. Their mission is to strengthen vulnerable Kent County homeowners, because strong homeowners build strong communities. Vulnerable homeowners are usually low income, elderly, disabled and/or debt-ridden. In Wyoming during the last 12 months they have assisted 131 households with minor home repair, with 72 of those funded with Wyoming CDBG funds. During this time they also assisted 8 households with access modification, with 6 of those funded with Wyoming CDBG funds. They are able to leverage other revenue funds to serve the citizens of Wyoming.

They are also able to provide Wyoming residents with financial counseling and homeowner maintenance training. Mr. Hengeveld gave specific examples of households they were able to assist in Wyoming. They were able to replace three furnaces this fall using Wyoming CDBG funds. They also provided a wheelchair ramp to a household on Marcia Street which enabled the resident's brother to leave a rehab facility and move in with her.

Rynbrandt asked if they would be able to spend down their current funding award of \$90,000. Mr. Ruiter responded affirmatively.

### Committee Discussion of Presentations

Fair Housing Center of West Michigan – Lopez thought the testing services, non-complaint based, seemed like a way to trap people. DeJager would like to see the focus on education. Lopez thought the largest problem was how they quantify the services for which they are billing. Hall realized the difficulty in quantifying the types of services they provide. He thought the Committee needed to decide whether they wanted the full-service fair housing package they are offering, similar to consulting services, or break it down in individual services. Lopez asked how their reporting is addressed in other communities such as Holland and Grand Rapids. Rynbrandt said a sample contract from Holland can be requested. The City of Grand Rapids only funds services in Low/Moderate Areas. The Committee agreed they would probably never agree on the Fair Housing Center's method of reporting, but they had to decide which services to fund. Rynbrandt recommended a meeting with their staff and ours, including Hall, to work out the details on possible funding amounts and services.

The Potter's House – Rynbrandt suggested a meeting with our staff and Mr. Tolsma to discuss reporting requirements, Low/Mod Area versus Low/Mod Clientele requirements, etc. DeJager said we need to know how many students will be served and how much money per student. Rynbrandt said they would come back to the Committee with more information.

Home Repair Services and The Salvation Army Social Services - The Committee agreed to recommend funding for these organizations, but the level is yet to be determined. Hall inquired about the Committee helping to build access modification ramps alongside HRS staff as a future service project. Rynbrandt said the inquiry could be made to HRS in this regard.

### Regional Consolidated Plan Public Review and Approval Process/Timeline Update

Rynbrandt noted the consultants have almost completed the final draft of this document. The City Council will consider it for approval at their January 18, 2016 meeting.

### Election of Officers

The nominations were opened for the office of Chair. Krenz nominated Ziembra. He accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations and the nominations were closed. Ziembra was elected unanimously for the office of Chair.

The nominations were opened for the office of Vice-Chair. Ziemba nominated Lopez. She accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations and the nominations were closed. Lopez was unanimously elected for the office of Vice-Chair.

#### Committee Member Concerns and Suggestions

Krenz asked the status of Demolition applications. Lucar said a large Demolition project has been finished, but there are no other applications in process to date.

#### Public Comment in General

There was no public.

#### Adjournment

Motion by Lopez, supported by DeJager, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

The Committee will meet again on **January 6, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.**

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Kimberly S. Lucar  
Planning & Community Development Dept.