

# MINUTES

Citizen's District Council Meeting  
City of Muskegon CDBG  
Conference Room 203  
Muskegon, Michigan  
Tuesday, September 15, 2009

## CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Patricia Montney at 5:30 p.m.

## ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken by Liz Parker.

Present: Patricia Montney, Ned Carter, Muhammad Hakeem, Virgie Jackson, Thomas Pastoor, Addie Sanders-Randall, Amy Varnado

Excused: Marcia Hovey-Wright, Dan Rinsema-Sybenga, Stephen Gawron

Staff Present: Wilmern Griffin, Liz Parker

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ned Carter made a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting (July 7, 2009). Addie Sanders-Randall seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

## OLD BUSINESS

- **NSP2**

Wil Griffin said CNS has applied for a \$5 million grant. The partners for this grant include the three CHDO's: Community enCompass, Habitat for Humanity and NIC. For Froebel school, Wil wants to demolish the school and build green homes with solar street lights, solar power, wind energy, energy-efficient appliances, etc. Wil said he got a deficiency letter, asking for additional information for the grant. He was told this is a good sign that he might get the funding. Muhammad Hakeem wanted to know if community members would get preference for working on this project. Wil advised CNS will work with their architect to come up with a design and all work will be bid out. Pat Montney mentioned the City's new website has a place for bids. Wil was aware of that and possibly his bids could go on the site. Muhammad wanted to know if any work could be started now. Wil advised nothing can be done until the grant is awarded.

- **Herman Miller Park Committee**

Tom Pastoor said the new park is on Terrace and Isabella. Herman Miller was challenged to do work on vacant City lots and to add playground equipment. Tom worked with several City departments, including Planning to get the area zoned for open space for recreational use. He also submitted site plans. McLaughlin Neighborhood Association already had \$10,000 from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. The total they had received was \$25,000, of which \$10,000 went to this project. Herman Miller was willing to donate \$20,000 to this project. The equipment was bought from Play World and July 31 was the work day, named Partnership Day. They originally had 125 workers, which ended up being 188 people total, including 48 from the neighborhood. Besides the park they got the alleys cleaned and vacant lots mowed, fire hydrants painted, rebuilt a neighborhood lady's back porch, rehabbed the plumbing for Sacred Suds' washers and dryers, power washed and painted another neighbor's fence and painted 20 litter barrels. The project was from 8am to 4pm. The City did the excavation and eight cubic yards of composite was deposited on Isabella to be moved to the playground. They used the team approach to get some of the work done. Kids from U-Turn, which is a last chance program for kids, were the leaders for the lawn mowing and neighbors let them borrow their lawn mowers to get the work done. YEP kids from Community enCompass cut all the lumber for picnic tables and built a few picnic tables themselves. This gave them the knowledge of what had to be done and they became the leaders for those crews. Herman Miller provided one person to video the entire project and another to take pictures. They also wanted a mural on a fence. They were able to project a picture on the fence and the kids painted the mural. Wood Street Market, Benson Drugs, Ryke's Bakery, among others, helped with food and beverages. After the event, Herman Miller contributed an additional \$10,000. Tom said it was an incredible Day. He gave a big Thank You to Wil Griffin to hook him up with the right people.

- **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Muskegon Unity Academic Olympics**

Wil Griffin said the event was held on Saturday, August 29. It was for 1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The technology area had a competition for the students on computers on various subjects including math, English and science. The idea for that program came from Study Island, where students can go on the computer to study. The computers used wifi as a wireless connection. The weather was terrible: cold, drizzling and windy, but the students enjoyed themselves. The parents seemed to enjoy it too. Seventy-seven students attended. It was important to do this to help the students reach their academic potential. Due to the economy funds were limited. Sappi Fine Paper was not the main funder this year due to their closing. The event ran much smoother than last year; having the field set up on Friday night helped greatly and the even finished on time. Like last year, the rain poured at the end. Pat Montney asked if the event would be held again next year and Wil was not sure.

Wil also mentioned part of the advertising was a contest with the journalism class at the High School. Students wrote commercials and the top four were chosen. Their commercials were aired on the radio and listeners could vote for the best. The winners will get \$100, \$75, \$50 and \$25 savings bonds, respectively for first thru fourth place.

There was also an award given posthumously to Michael Miller, past president of Nelson Neighborhood Improvement Association. The plaque was accepted by the NNIA.

Wil would like to see more of the community and schools involved. One judge made the comment that the kids had a lot of courage to attend; she wanted to try to set up a tutorial program and give the idea to a school. Another judge, a former coach from another state, stated this event showed him how much he missed teaching and would be applying to be a substitute teacher.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- **2010 Summer Adventure Playground Budget Cut**

Pat Montney had handouts about the number of students attending the program by school, the number of meals served by school and an article in the Muskegon Public School publication, The Mirror, which talked about the free lunch applications that were available online and how 80% of the students enrolled are eligible for free or reduced price meals. She mentioned \$40,000 comes from CDBG to support this program, \$15,000 comes from another grant and money from a program for meals. Not all of the summer Adventure Playground Budget is from the general fund. It's possible that if CDBG funds aren't used for this program then they could be used for other activities. She mentioned she asked Cathy Brubaker-Clarke to the meeting but she didn't feel comfortable talking on items she didn't make the decision on. Wil Griffin said Commissioner Spataro mentioned not funding outside agencies this year and use the money for in-house activities. Three or four of the commissioners asked to cut something else out of the budget instead of this program. Tom Pastoor said they are back loading the system and they will pay down the road. If you don't make the investment when children are young then you will pay down the road such as incarceration, etc. He also said other things can be done to make activities for kids. His neighborhood has done summer activities for the kids in the last two years which had good attendance. He said there are other ways besides the City for activities, but that it's sad they are making the cut with children as there are a lot of other City programs. The City did ask for money for their summer programs back in January and the CDC agreed, but now it appears next January the summer programs won't even be on the list. Amy Varnado wanted to confirm that it is Leisure Services that requests funds for youth programs and Wil said yes. Wil also mentioned the \$40,000 is from the summer programs, but there are also other youth programs in the winter. Amy said she wasn't clear how this helps the City's bottom line by eliminating the summer youth programs that are funded by a federal grant. Wil explained, as an example of not funding the Senior Transit Program, that the money might be used to fund a police officer, which technically they can as long as they can show the office is working a low/moderate area. In the past the City took \$245,000 of CDBG money to fund Shoreline Drive as at that time it was considered a low/moderate area. Over the years that amounted to over \$2 million of tax-payers money. Now the City is using CDBG funds for the bond for the new fire station as a majority of their runs to low/moderate areas of the City. The City is no longer doing street assessments. These are just examples Wil used to show where CDBG funds could be used. Per Wil Griffin, CDBG funds can be used for infrastructure

if it is for low/moderate activities, it eliminates blight or the activities are used to rebuild after a major catastrophic event, such as a major flood, hurricane, etc. The main activities are to assist low/moderate areas and to eliminate blight. There is also an area for economic development; however, when using CDBG funds for this, for every \$10,000 you spend, you must develop three full-time jobs and this is hard to document this.

Pat Montney said she spoke to Karen Kendra and she said 36 people were employed by this program and many are college students and are excellent mentors. It was mentioned the economy will get worse and that the City hasn't felt the full effect of Sappi leaving, especially with the sewer issue. Ned Carter wanted to know how the City will use the funds in 2010-2011. With the bleak picture the City painted he wanted to know if next year the CDC would be looking no requests from the American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, etc. Wil explained the three CHDO's, Habitat for Humanity, NIC and Community enCompass, receive money from the HOME funds which are used for housing. The non-profits have the right to apply for CDBG funds and it's up to the CDC and the City Commission to deny them. Pat Montney reminded everyone one that helping the youth of the City of Muskegon is also part of the Consolidated Plan. Ned said it appears the City Commission will take the CDC recommendations as long as their recommendations meet the staff recommendations for activities the City is involved in and controls and it appears they take the CDC recommendations only on items that are not City related, such as the American Red Cross, etc. Wil mentioned the CDBG guidelines are a maximum of 10% for non-profits and a maximum of 20% can go to administration. Amy Varnado is concerned Steve Gawron is not at many of the CDC meetings and he is the liaison between the CDC and the City Commission. She feels the CDC is overlooked because of this. Pat Montney said this doesn't look good to the public.

- **CAPER**

Wil stated he is not finished with the report yet.

- **NSP1 Activities**

Wil Griffin stated NSP1 activities have been started with a \$1.4 grant from MSHDA. 940 Wood has already been started. 1387 7<sup>th</sup> Street has been demolished. Four to five more demolitions should be done by the end of October. Ten demolitions are scheduled. We are the first up and running with the program. One big factor for our community is employment. People are needed to purchase our homes and the economic issues need to be resolved. Muhammad Hakeem asked how the jobs were done and Wil explain they are all done through bids. Wil said with this grant they are going 'green.' They want to recycle items from the houses that are salvageable such as removing the roofing shingles and selling them to be ground up and used in asphalt. Egleston Township is already doing this. He also will be using energy-efficient appliances, solar energy when possible, 'green' paint, walls, etc. Tom Pastoor said the key is to put local people to work. He also asked about the YouthBuild Grant and Wil informed him it was not awarded to the City of Muskegon.

- **Program Updates**

Wil Griffin said 218 Catherine is now on the Lease with Option to Purchase program. In October Wil hopes to have an open house for the four homes that the CNS department currently has for sale. He mentioned the Housing Specialist who ran the CDBG Emergency Repair and Vinyl Siding programs, Ardyce Haken, retired on August 28. Her position will be posted inside. If no one qualified, then the job will be posted outside. It could be awhile before a replacement is found. Until then, there is a list of people who call for repairs and real emergencies will be taken care of. Otherwise, all is going pretty well per Wil.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Pat Montney said there were two additional items she wanted to discuss. The first was the homes for sale by CNS. She would like to see the CNS website expanded to not just have a flyer of the homes for sales, but to have pictures of the inside of the homes posted. She said the interior is what sells the homes. Wil Griffin said they already have a book with interior pictures and will work on getting it on the website. Pat would also like to see a tour of the homes scheduled in late spring.

The second item Pat wanted to discuss was having a second vice chair. Currently the vice chair is Marcia Hovey-Wright, but she has resigned due to her campaign for political office. Pat said someone needs to be in that position in case she cannot make a CDC meeting and needs to have good attendance. This position would be from now until June, 2010. Amy Varnado's name was mentioned. Virgie Jackson made the motion to have Amy Varnado as the vice chair. Tom Pastoor seconded the motion. The motion passed.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, October 6, 2009.

Patricia Montney adjourned the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Liz Parker  
Community and Neighborhood Services  
City of Muskegon