

MINUTES

Citizen's District Council Meeting
City of Muskegon CDBG
Conference Room 203
Muskegon, Michigan
Wednesday, November 17, 2010

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Pat Montney at 5:34 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken by Liz Parker.

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

Absent: Tiffany Seals, Stephen Gawron

Excused: Stephanie Marion

Staff Present: Oneata Bailey, Liz Parker

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ned Carter made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 20, 2010 meeting. Tom Pastoor seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

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OLD BUSINESS

• **Five-year Consolidated Plan Discussion**

Oneata Bailey started the discussion by handing out a summary of the results of the Neighborhood Surveys. She advised everyone if they want a copy of the comments to let her know and they will be emailed. For those neighborhoods association that did not turn in surveys, she said it's not too late for them to be turned in. If the neighborhoods need additional copies, CNS can provide them. Pat Montney suggested the survey be put on the City's website so people can complete it online and have it electronically returned to CNS. Oneata thought this was an excellent idea and Liz Parker will check into this. Oneata said if Muskegon has approximately 40,000 citizens it would be nice to get 10% response, but they are not even close to 1% response. Right now there is not enough information; however, from the two open forum meetings Oneata said there is a consensus of what people are saying across the board. She is hoping to get another group of surveys. Oneata did say that she has to include other agencies, such as the Public Housing Agency and the Continuum of Care into the City's Plan. She already has a copy

of the Public Housing's Hartford Terrace Consolidated Plan. She also needs citizen participation feedback, which includes the surveys. Ned Carter asked when the surveys end. Oneata said there is no deadline. She wants something in place to provide the City Manager in December, with the final plan being submitted in March. Tom Pastoor asked about other groups writing a Consolidated Plan for their facilities and getting separate funding. Oneata confirmed this and that Muskegon knows what the other facilities are doing and is on board with them to assist each other and help the community as a stronger unit because they are asking for more cooperation between agencies and faith-based groups. There are many areas to collaborate with and put into the plan. The survey comments show there is a lot of passion for what they see the City is lacking in. City Management will read the comments. Pat Montney also suggested having the information on the City's facebook page. Oneata said she'd have future meetings listed there also. She said things are progressing well and it's good to see there is a common thread among the comments received. Pat wanted to know if Oneata was going to have meetings in the target areas. Oneata said once things are written, she'd like to have another open forum and to go to one other open area before it goes out for public comment. She'd like to do better with announcing the meetings on facebook and the radio. The two open forums in October were not well attended but they did share the same information. Tom said the significance of anything generated would be demeaned by the low participation. Pat stated if the plan has to be submitted in March that two public hearings would be required. Oneata said there were two meetings in October, which were publicized in the Chronicle. Oneata said there is a tool provided by HUD for this plan. When you have answers to all the questions in the tool, then the document is considered complete. At that point there will be a public forum meeting for people to discuss and comment on it (probably in February) before it goes before a final public hearing. Pat asked how Oneata was going to come up with the listing of vacant housing in Muskegon. Oneata said Planning has an ordinance regarding vacant housing and she will get her information from them.

- **2011 CDBG/HOME Grant Process**

Tom Pastoor wanted to bring up conflict of interest. He said at the previous hearings, as a citizen, he spoke about the concern that most the monies for the CDBG program go for bricks and mortar. He feels there needs to be money set aside for community building and community development internally, inside the City, not services to the citizens, but as a way to bring citizens together. The neighborhood associations met with the police department and put together a goal of more citizen participation in all of the activities. His concern, speaking as a citizen, feels that should happen. He is also serving as the president of a neighborhood association and some of the monies that might go to training might go to neighborhood associations. As a president, if this happens, he wanted to know if he would have to step away. He said he is not personally gaining from this as it would be for the association. Several people said the funds would go to the association of which he is president. Addie Sanders-Randall said he is the president and he represents the neighborhood. Oneata Bailey said if it looks like a conflict to the CDC, it would also look like a conflict to others. Rasheedah Gillespie-Muhammad said she could see the conflict of interest because the citizens that sit on the CDC and other committees are citizens. The citizens are serving as a volunteer on the various City boards because they want to, not to gain anything from the position, yet they are told is a conflict of interest if they apply for a benefit from the City that citizens are normally entitled to if they qualify. As a citizen, the same as a neighborhood association, it would seem that the dollars would go to the neighborhood associations before it goes to any outside agencies. If the dollars that come to the City go for neighborhood services, then you have functioning neighborhoods

and they could take care of what happens in the neighborhood. She can't see those kinds of entities as a conflict of interest because you have citizens that are volunteering, really concerned about the City and it takes some of the work off the City government that they are having to take care of all this. Pat Montney explained in the past when a CDC member was a board member with a proposed grantee, that member would abstain from voting on the grant. Tom said he could talk about a particular grantee, but then leaves it up to the rest of the CDC to make their decisions. All agreed with the statement. Tom said he just wants to benefit the City and have a better place for all of us to live. Oneata said the conflict of interest is just there so if there is a conflict, there is a process to go through to complete a form that is then submitted to HUD for their review and determination. Tom said it's like you give up some rights by sitting on a City board. Pat wanted to know if there is any way the City Commission could get a copy of this conflict because there have been occasions where there may have been a conflict on a vote because a Commissioner might have been serving as a board member on a grantee's board. Isn't that a conflict of interest when the grants go before the City Commission for final approval? Oneata didn't understand the conflict and asked if the Commissioner abstained from voting. Amy Varnado felt that people don't feel there's a conflict of interest if the money doesn't come into their own pocket. They sit on those boards and don't get personal funds. Tom agreed. Rasheedah said that they do have information though about what goes on. Oneata said the City Attorney is the one would be the clarifier if there is a complaint about a City Commissioner. Oneata said the Conflict of Interest is there for anyone to read. If you want the Commissioners to have a copy of it they would want to know why and she needs enough information to share why they need to have it. Tom said they don't want to jeopardize the money that is distributed in a way that is not above board. Liz Parker explained that when the City votes on the grants many times they do it in bulk, not by each individual grant. For the 2010 – 2011 grants the Commission as a whole voted to accept the CDC recommendations for all CDBG grants and the Administration's recommendations for all the HOME grants. Only occasionally are individual grants discussed. Tom said the CDC votes on each one individually and people abstain.

Oneata said this is something to think about because the grant process will start sometime in February with the public notice to advise people applications are available to apply for CDBG/HOME grant funds. Then the middle/end of March will be the actual grant review meetings. Amy stated this is pushing back the process. In April the City Commission will have to make their determinations. This is only for this year because of the Five-year Consolidated Plan constraints and the new budgets. The City is looking at other ways to move money around. The presentations would be in March and hopefully they would be a quicker process. Amy reminded everyone that is was previously visited that since they knew the organizations that it just be questions to the agencies. Tom said they could give their questions ahead of time so the groups could be prepared and the 'interviews' go more quickly. Ned Carter suggested that when the notifications go out to state there are no guarantees to getting a grant. Oneata also suggested adding to the application if funds were received the previous year and how were they spent. This would give the group an idea of what the grantees are really doing with the money. Tom said he has two concerns. While all the groups previously funded are worthwhile causes, he's not sure CDBG is the way to fund them; wouldn't it be better to do internal community development. The grant name is Community Development. He thought it would be better if the money were spent on buying in books, trainers, etc. He feels it would be better for the entire community to create a 'we' instead of 'me.' His second concern is the money goes to low/moderate income, yet the bulk ends up going to low income. He feels some of the money should go

to low, but some of the money should also go to moderate income homes because of the current economy and they are the people who are working and they might be the ones coming into the City and may start to rehab the property and house. It's a huge challenge right now to get people to move into the City. Oneata says they need to address what is happening today. You can't address all in one year, but you can address it over the next five years. Some of the issues include kids with guns, violence and mistrust of the police department. It would make more sense if the public would come together and say this is the problem. Maybe a forum about a current issue might be in line.

Someone asked if the position of HOME Rehab Coordinator has been filled. Oneata said the request to have the position filled has been submitted. HOME funds are on hold, waiting to see if the County gets a Lead grant. She hopes to hear something in December. If that happens Weatherization and Rental Rehab funds would be used to assist the Lead Grant for citizens of the City of Muskegon. There are 25 units proposed each year for the three-year grant. Pat asked if the group would meet in January. Oneata said yes as there would be a more of a document for the group to review.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Introduction of new member Stephanie Marion**

Stephanie was not at the meeting. This will be postponed until the next meeting.

- **CDBG/Streets – Funds not used**

Oneata Bailey said CNS originally took the funds back, but then Engineering said they had streets that the money would go to (Getty and Apple). The problem was the clerical person, who always submitted the paperwork for funds, was on medical leave. The money was returned to Engineering for the 2009 – 2010 year. Pat Montney said Oneata needed to look into 2008 – 2009 because the CAPER shows \$0 spent.

- **CDBG/Vinyl Siding & Emergency Repair program update**

Oneata Bailey advised the group Emergency Repair funds are getting very low. Now the main calls are for furnaces. Their funds are down because CNS started taking names in the spring for people who needed roofs but they were out of funds. When the money came in June, there was a large list of people who needed roofs so the money was largely spent on roofs. If they have to, they might move some Vinyl Siding funds to Emergency Repair. Tom Pastoor said these funds help all of us because when these people have a safe place to live, it's better for everybody. The question was raised about having Vinyl Siding be provided through the HOME grant. Oneata explained when you use HOME funds you leave the unit up to code. With CDBG funds, you are only there to do a specific job. If you use HOME funds to do Vinyl Siding and you find there is a problem with a roof, as an example, then that has to be fixed and the money gets used quickly. That is the problem Oneata has with the Weatherization Program. She has \$120,000. They do a special energy test on the home. You can address any of the problems found, starting with the least expensive first. With HOME dollars you can't pick and choose, you have to fix everything and the \$120,000 wouldn't go very far. She is hoping the County gets the Lead Grant and they can combine funds. Ned Carter asked if the CDC can make a recommendation to move funds. Oneata said yes, the CDC would meet and it might have to be a special meeting called.

- **IDIS Report for 2009 – 2010 year-end update**

Oneata thought the reports would be for this year 2010 – 2011 so all could see a more collective data report from IDIS for CDBG and HOME. Pat Montney printed a report from the HUD website and showed it to Oneata. Oneata didn't know the report. She said the CNS Finance Clerk handled all the financial reports. For HOME you just show where the money is going and how it was spent. For CDBG you have to provide more information such as what target area and what you spent the money for that meets the three goals, such as slum/blight, etc. It is more complicated with CDBG. If the CDC wants an IDIS report at the end of every year, the Finance Clerk would have to come and review it with the group.

OTHER BUSINESS

- **Status of Tiffany Seals**

The CDC By-laws state a member cannot have more than two consecutive unexcused absences otherwise it is considered a resignation and a replacement shall be appointed. Tiffany Seals has missed the meetings of 6/1/10, 7/20/10, 8/17/10 and 11/17/10 without acknowledgement of numerous emails sent and voicemail messages left regarding the meetings. She has also had no contact with the chair, Pat Montney. Pat is requesting the City provide a new member for the CDC. Amy Varnado said the group needs to stick to the policy.

- **Martin Luther King Day 2011**

Tom Pastoor, along with the neighborhood associations, is planning an event for young people in high school. He handed out a program for the day's events. He is asking anyone who would like to participate to contact him. The event is scheduled for Friday, January 14, 2011.

- **Next CDC Meeting**

The next meeting will be Tuesday, January 4, 2011, at 5:30 p.m. in Conference Room 203.

ADJOURNMENT

Pat Montney adjourned the meeting at 6:54 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Liz Parker
Community and Neighborhood Services
City of Muskegon