

Meeting Minutes

Housing & Community Development Advisory Council

Wednesday, November 1, 2023, at 4:00 pm

Location: 2101 O'Neil Avenue, Room 104

Attendees: Chair: Wendy Soto, Vice-Chair: Steve Ganison (attended via Zoom), Secretary: Elizabeth Haigler (attended via Zoom), Councilman: Ramon Moya, Councilman: Justin Huntley. City Staff Present: City Grant Writer, Renee Smith; Community Development Managers, Deanne Widauf and Amy Gorbey

II. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Soto at 4:08 pm.

III. Approval of the Minutes for October 2023:

The minutes for October 2023 were approved as written at 4:10 pm.

Motion: Councilman Moya

Second: Councilman Huntley

Discussion: There was no discussion.

IV. Review of the Program Year 2024 Letters of Intent

Chair Soto opened the discussion on the Letters of Intent for the Public Service funds received from local organizations seeking Community Development Block Grant funding for the Program Year 2024.

- Equal Justice Wyoming, a first-time potential applicant, is intending to apply for \$20,000 for Legal Services. The council discussed that legal services qualified as an eligible activity under the Public Service category and the need to track that beneficiaries are City residents and that the requested amount may not serve many beneficiaries. Executive Director, Angie Dorsch, attending on Zoom, explained to council that the organization managed multiple grants and tracked which beneficiaries were city residents and other required information through a case management system. Additionally, the funds requested for legal services, if awarded, would be added to a larger legal services budget that would increase the organization's capacity to serve more clients.
- Needs, Inc. intends to reapply for funding for Food Assistance for City residents in the amount of \$30,000. City staff reported to the council that Needs Inc. has a system for ensuring the food

purchased with Community Development Block Grant funds is kept in a separate part of the food pantry and staff are trained to verify that a recipient is a city resident before providing them with the food. The council discussed scheduling a second site visit to the food pantry to allow council members who could not attend the first site visit the opportunity to see the food pantry. Staff reported that Needs Inc. has been awarded \$364,670 in funding since 2003 and has spent all awarded funding with one exception of recaptured funding due to project ineligibility.

- Safehouse Services intends to apply for Utility Assistance in the amount of \$12,000 and Victims Assistance in the amount of \$20,000. According to CDBG Eligibility Guidelines- a homeless shelter is eligible to apply for utility reimbursement funds. The council had no further questions or comments about the Letter of Intent for Utility Assistance. The council discussed the types of expenses covered by the Victims Assistance fund and was interested in learning about any programs that help recipients work toward self-sufficiency, as this was referred to in the Letter of Intent. Chair Soto requested that staff contact the Safehouse Executive Director for more information about their programs. The staff explained the process for approving expenses and verifying the eligibility of a submitted expense prior to approving a reimbursement request to the council.
- The amount requested for Public Service projects by Equal Justice Wyoming, Needs Inc. and Safehouse Services is \$81,000 and the anticipated amount available for Program Year 2024 Public Service projects is \$65,000. Applicants were told, if awarded, they may receive less funding than they requested. The council discussed the general need for more detailed information about the projects than applicants had provided in past applications. Chair Soto requested that the staff remind the organizations invited to apply that they are required to provide specific details about their projects scope of work and budgets in their applications.

Chair Soto opened the discussion on the Letters of Intent for the General Service funds received from local organizations seeking Community Development Block Grant funding for the Program Year 2024.

- Comea Shelter: Men's Dormitory Construction: Comea Shelter seeks funding to raise the ceiling of the Men's Dormitory. The project budget amount of \$75,000, included in the Letter of Intent, was insufficient, according to Comea staff, as the estimates they recently received were higher than anticipated. The council discussed the need for organizations to submit more documentation and estimates for construction projects. Chair Soto requested that staff ensure that the submitted applications include detailed project budget information for construction projects. Staff reported that applicants are advised to add 10% to the project budget to ensure that they are requesting adequate funding and planning for the inflated costs.

- Habitat for Humanity of Laramie County submitted three Letters of Intent: Acquisition of Land or Blighted Property and for Acquisition for \$100,000, Demolition of Blighted Property or Rehabilitation for \$100,000 and Critical Home Repair for Low-to-Moderate Income Homeowners for \$65,000. The council discussed the need to have the two applications clearly outline the project differences. Habitat for Humanity of Laramie County, Executive Director, Dan Dorsch, attending on Zoom, commented that the Letters of Intent were written to give more flexibility in adding affordable housing stock for families. Chair Soto said she appreciated that, but wanted to make sure that the grant applications clearly distinguished the two projects. City staff recommended that one application for Acquisition of Land and a separate application for Acquisition of Blighted Property be submitted and that amendments could be requested in the future to include rehabilitation or demolition, if needed. The council requested clarification from staff about the Critical Home Repair for Low-to-Moderate Income Homeowners past funding. Staff reported that no awarded funds had been recaptured, but extensions had been approved and explained that it was a challenge finding contractors registered in Sam.gov. Rehabilitation funding is critical in allowing people to age in place in their homes. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development considers this type of activity a priority. Habitat for Humanity of Laramie County, Executive Director, Dan Dorsch, informed the council that Habitat will be partnering with the Southeast Wyoming Homebuilders Association to register contractors in Sam.gov. This will shorten the wait time for rehabilitation projects and spend down the grant funding more quickly.

Chair Soto requested a motion to invite all agencies who submitted Letters of Intent to apply for the Program Year 2024 Community Development Block Grant.

Motion: Councilman Huntley

Second: Councilman Moya

The motion was approved unanimously at 5:15 pm.

V. Discuss the Application Review Timeline and Presentation Schedule:

The council discussed the new application deadline, January 10, 2024, and decided to postpone the application review meeting until after January 15, 2024. Chair Soto recommended using the regularly schedule January 3, 2023, to schedule a second site visit to the Needs Inc. food pantry. Staff will email the council about availability in late January and early February and select a new meeting date to review applications for the Program Year 2024 Community Development Block Grant. At the application review

meeting the council will determine if it is necessary to schedule an additional meeting for organizations to present additional information about the proposed projects to the council.

VI. Financial/ Workload Report:

The current Community Development Block Grant balance is \$743,723.54 and the Community Development Block Grant COVID fund balance is \$63,351.00. The Habitat for Humanity of Laramie County Grant agreement for the Street, Sidewalk, Curb, and Gutter project may need to be amended as there may be an issue with the project being eligible to receive funding. The current balance for the Pioneer Park project is \$0.0.

VII. Other Business:

- None.

VIII. Adjournment:

- Adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Next Meeting:

- December 6, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.

Secretary