

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Housing Opportunity Fund Advisory Board of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, City Council Chambers, City of Pittsburgh, 414 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219.

September 5, 2019 – 9:00 A.M., E.S.T.

Members Present: Messrs. K. Build-Hudson, M. Lane, M. Masterson, S. Su, D. Tillman, Mmes. L. Andrews, J. Deming, S. Tilghman, D. Walker, A. Walnoha, K. Ware-Seabron, M. Winters

Members Absent: J. Bey, J. Jackson, T. Kail-Smith

Staff Present: Messrs. D. Geiger, E. Miller, Mmes. V. Hage, J. Reese, J. Smith Perry, G. Taylor

A. Public Comment

April Ziner, Case Manager, Pittsburgh Mercy. Ms. Ziner spoke of her experience with operating the HSP program grant. There has been a lot of interest in the program. Pittsburgh Mercy pulls from different funds in order to compensate for her time. However, the 10% funds that are being received from the HSP fund are not enough for someone to work fulltime as a case manager at Pittsburgh Mercy. To be able to maintain a case manager would require a 25-30% disbursement. It would be appreciated if a consideration to raise the rate was made so that the work can be continued.

Jay Dworin, Executive Director, Fair Housing Partnership. Mr. Dworin feels that a City employee in place of a Fair Housing advocate is not a valid representative of Fair Housing. Someone should deliberate and make determinations about how the HOF funds impact segregation.

Megan Hammond, Program Director, Fair Housing Partnership. Ms. Hammond stated that urban planning policies decimated Pittsburgh's middle-class black neighborhoods. As a result of the urban policies, neighborhoods are racially segregated, and blackness is correlated with poverty. Studies have shown that it is not simply an issue of economics or an issue of affordability, but an issue of racism. Black neighborhoods are valued at 11% less simply for being black neighborhoods and it is not an issue of amenities, but an issue of racism. The HOF needs to consider the factors that segregated the city.

Adrienne Walnoha asked if Megan Hammond and Jay Dworin would present Fair Housing Principles and some strategies at a future meeting which they have agreed to do.

Julian Auer, Housing Court Data Clerk. Mr. Auer stated that everyday there are people who come to the Department of Court Records who could use this program. There is not a way for them to direct people to access to the program right now but would like to see that issue addressed.

Alethea Sims, COR of East Liberty. Ms. Sims stated that COR of East Liberty is a non-profit who is partnering with a developer. They want to be a partner in the development. More neighborhood organizations want to be a partner. This is the way that neighborhoods, community organizations, and community residents that are going to be impacted by development decisions can actually make a difference. There needs to be some changes made in the requirements of the partnership with a developer.

Celeste Scott, a community liaison representative for Pittsburgh United and Pittsburghers for Urban Transit. Ms. Scott stated that the HSP program is very important to people who are at or below 30% Area Median Income and have a need for the funds.

Ronell Guy, Managing Director, Landless Peoples Alliance. Ms. Guy is grateful that there is a program for the most vulnerable and that poor people are truly being given an opportunity to stabilize their homes and stabilize their lives. A house is the foundation of everything that you and your family are built on and it critical for poor people in the city to have decent places to raise their children and their loved ones.

Crystal Jennings, CJ Consulting. Ms. Jennings stated that the 30% AMI set-aside for the HSP program matters for people of low income. There is an obligation to help people who need these resources and try to find a better way to help them get out of the crises that they have.

Rick Swartz, Executive Director, Bloomfield Garfield Corporation. Mr. Swartz stated that there are changes that are being proposed for the HOF. Those who advocated for the HOF fought hard to get it passed, and suggested that before any changes are made that the advocates and those who had a major role in getting the fund established sit down with the Advisory Board and the URA and representatives of the administration to talk about how to be very strategic in implementing the changes.

David Breingan, Executive Director, Lawrenceville United. Mr. Breingan stated that the income targets being as low as they are is a really good policy. There are families earning below 50% AMI and that is why the income targets are vital and why the HSP program is very important. In addition, older adult homeowners are truly vulnerable, and that is why the homeowner program is essential as well. Seniors who need home repairs can use the HOF homeowner repair program and may not be able to be served by any other existing programs.

Carol Harteman, Co-Director, Hill District Consensus Group. Ms. Harteman stated that this is an opportunity for many of the residents that live in the community. May this continue to be an opportunity for all people that need housing especially since housing is a human right.

Swain Uber, PPSA. Mr. Uber stated over the past year and a half there has been a big demand, not just for developers and rental gap funding, but with the HSP for renters and for homeowners needing assistance at income levels that don't fit the program. There should be a push to double the fund as \$10,000,000 is not enough, it's a first step and one tool for different programs that have different issues.

Richard Morris, Urban League (via phone). Mr. Morris stated that the demand for the HSP program is extremely high. There are 125 calls right now, and a special line has been set up to take the initial assessment. Initially, it was thought that calls would be able to be linked to some of the Urban's Leagues other services but have found that the demand is too high. Also, there are compliance issues that need to be addressed which delays the process. The program has stretched the capacity of the Urban League and any help that can be given in that regard would be appreciated.

B. Roll Call

Ms. Smith Perry called the meeting to order and declared a quorum present.

C. Review and Acceptance of Minutes from the August 1, 2019 Meeting

Correction to Recommendation 25 (2019) to recommend the approval of Rental Gap Program (RGP) funding for the City's Edge Development in the amount of \$1,000,000 contingent upon financing being entirely committed; no outstanding litigation on the land; and a 99-year deed restriction. **City's Edge Development will come back to the Advisory Board if the project is not able to obtain the 99-year deed restriction.** The minutes of the Regular Board Meeting on August 1, 2019 were approved as corrected.

D. Introduction of New HOF Advisory Board Members:

1. **Knowledge Hudson – HACP Representative**
2. **Kellie Ware-Seabron – Fair Housing Representative**
3. **Megan Winters – Western Neighborhoods Representative**

Staff Report

The new members of the Advisory Board were introduced. Knowledge Build-Hudson has been with the HACP for the last 2-1/2 years and has experience in the community with advocacy for housing. Kellie Ware-Seabron is the Diversity and Inclusion Policy Analyst for the City of Pittsburgh and is an attorney. In addition, her prior experience includes eviction defense for Neighborhood Legal Services. Megan Winters works with State Senator Lindsey Williams, lives in the Western neighborhoods, and does a lot of work in the city neighborhoods.

There will be one more new member coming on the committee - Ethel Johnson is the tenant representative.

E. Educational Update: Housing Stabilization Program

Staff Report

At the August 2019 HOF Advisory Board Meeting, a member asked that during the September Meeting, the HSP Program be discussed. In the meeting the following will be discussed:

1. Describe confidentiality practices.
2. Summarize the content of the Program Guidelines that were previously approved by the HOF Advisory Board and the URA Board.
3. Show funding expenditures / commitments to date.
4. Describe Program Overview, Eligibility, and Appeals Process.
5. Describe the Program Administrators responsibilities / time commitment – need for increased programmatic funding to provide services at scale.

Ms. Smith Perry stated that due to the sensitive nature of the Housing Stabilization program and dealing with individual clients and the situations of their life, there is a letter from the URA attorney reminding everyone of confidentiality practices.

The Housing Stabilization Program (HSP) is a housing crisis prevention program designed to promote the economic independence of renters experiencing a temporary, non-recurring crisis by providing limited, short-term financial assistance to help them access and/or maintain safe, stable, and affordable permanent housing.

A household that lives in the City, or is moving into a unit in the City, with a total combined household income at or below 50% Area Median Income (AMI) may qualify if they are experiencing a short-term non-recurring setback.

Ms. Walnoha stated that the Housing Stabilization program was created to target housing stabilization and focuses on people who are in crisis but not yet in the homeless system. Some people need a little bit of rental support and other people need a deep array of rental support. This program is focused on a more-shallow and short-term amount of support for families who are in crisis, but who could relatively quickly recover from that crisis with a small amount of support.

This program is for someone who owes arrears or owes future rental or utility payments but has the ability and the resources throughout their network to be able to move forward without an ongoing subsidy. However, if a household needs a deeper subsidy or more resources, it is the board's due diligence to make sure that they are referred to a program that can give them that level of support. The Dept. of Human Services and the United Way can both help provide assistance.

Mr. Masterson asked what the appeal process is and what happens when people who have reached out to the service providers are not being re-contacted?

Ms. Hage explained the proposed Housing Stabilization Program Appeals Process. If an applicant has been denied assistance through HSP, the applicant may choose to submit a letter of appeal to the HSP Appeals Committee. An applicant may only submit a written letter of appeal once they have completed the full intake process and received a letter of denial from the Service Provider.

Ms. Walker asked if there is another way to file an appeal without submitting a formal letter. When the person at the point of contact wants to appeal the decision, can the service provider send an email stating that the person asked to appeal and include the person's contact information and the reason why they were denied.

Ms. Walnoha stated the service provider should not communicate another person's issues. The client's statements, their words, their impression, their needs and concerns should be communicated by the client.

Mr. Build-Hudson stated that a Google voice number could be established to capture the person's voice who is appealing which would then go through email to the people who are sitting on the Appeals Committee.

Ms. Smith Perry stated that it is agreed that an appeals process is needed. However, the details of how that is going to flow still need to be worked out. Staff will continue to work on the process. Adrienne

Walnoha volunteered to be on the Appeals Committee and there was a request for a second person from the Advisory Board to sit on the committee.

The Appeals Committee will be comprised of five individuals. All members will be subject to confidentiality practices. Volunteers for HSP Appeals Committee Members: Advisory Board Member (Homeless representative) – Adrienne Walnoha, Advisory Board Member (Fair Housing representative) – Kellie Ware-Seabron, URA Staff Person, United Way Staff Person, Department of Human Services Staff Person.

Ms. Reese stated that 53 households have come through the HSP intake process. Three or four fell off due to a landlord issue mostly being about taxes. None have failed an inspection. One was across the street from the City boundary. The committed amount is \$160,000. After the 10% administration fee, the amount is \$30,000 which includes Neighborhood Legal Services. With all four of the service providers there are 175 households. Currently, the 2018 funds are being utilized. The relationship between the 30% AMI or below and the 31-50% is 1.5:1. Emphasis is in getting enough households at or below 30% AMI. The payment timeline indicates that the typical timeframe is 7 days.

F. Recommend the Approval of Contract Amendments with the following non-profit Program Administrators to continue to administer the Housing Stabilization Program (HSP) with 2019 HSP funding:

- a. **Macedonia Family and Community Enrichment Center (Macedonia Face) – increase the contract from \$105,000 (2018) by an additional \$105,000 (2019) for a total contract amount of \$210,000**
- b. **Mercy Life Center Corporation – increase the contract from \$200,000 (2018) by an additional \$200,000 (2019) for a total contract amount of \$400,000**
- c. **Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh – increase the contract from \$200,000 (2018) by an additional \$200,000 (2019) for a total contract amount of \$400,000**
- d. **Young Womens Christian Association (YWCA) of Pittsburgh – increase the contract from \$105,000 (2018) by an additional \$105,000 (2019) for a total of \$210,000**
- e. **Approval for a waiver of Program Guidelines to allow for overhead / operating / programmatic costs to be increased from 10% to 25% of the contract amount.**

Staff Report

The total amount in the Housing Stabilization Program line item for the 2018 allocation Plan was \$750,000. The awards were as follows:

- a. Macedonia Face - \$105,000
- b. Mercy Life Center Corporation - \$200,000
- c. Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh - \$200,000
- d. YWCA of Pittsburgh - \$105,000
- e. Neighborhood Legal Services - \$140,000

The total amount in the Housing Stabilization Program line item for the 2019 Allocation Plan was \$800,000. The above-listed proposed contract amendments total \$610,000 and will leave a remaining \$190,000 for further contract amendments and or other agreements necessary to

operate the program. After the program operates for two funding years, the RFP will be reopened to allow new groups to enter the program. It is anticipated that both 2018 and 2019 funds will be expended in an approximate 10 –12-month period.

Ms. Ware-Seabron stated that as it is being considered to modify the overhead/staffing costs to 25% what kind of safeguards are going to put in place with the drawdowns to ensure that the providers do not draw down all of the administration at the beginning of the contract period.

Ms. Smith Perry stated that the administrative draws will be made proportionally as programmatic expenditures (i.e., payments to landlords and utility companies) are made. Also, this will be retroactive because the contracts are being amended. So, the 25% will be for both years contract amounts. When a payment request is sent in with the invoice attached for paying the landlord, and/or paying the utility bills, the service providers can take 25% in addition to that drawdown each time. In addition, if the amendment is not made, the service providers are not going to be able to continue with this program.

Ms. Walnoha stated that the increased administrative fee will allow the Service Providers to operate more effectively, more efficiently and more quickly, so that more households should be able to be served.

RECOMMENDATION 30 (2019)

Derrick Tillman made the motion for F,a-d . Recommend the Approval of Contract Amendments with the following non-profit Program Administrators to continue to administer the Housing Stabilization Program (HSP) with 2019 HSP funding for the following amounts: Macedonia FACE - \$210,000; Mercy Life Center Corporation - \$400,000; Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh - \$400,000 and YWCA of Pittsburgh \$210,000. Majestic Lane seconded. Motion carried. Sam Su and Joanna Deming abstained.

RECOMMENDATION 31 (2019)

Derrick Tillman made the motion for F,e. Approval for a waiver of Program Guidelines to allow for overhead / operating / programmatic costs to be increased from 10% to 25% of the contract amount. Majestic Lane seconded. Motion carried. Sam Su and Joanna Deming abstained.

G. Recommend the Approval of a Contract with the United Way to conduct coordinated entry for the HSP Program.

Staff Report

The United Way's 211 call center is suited to serve as the Housing Stabilization Program's front door because it operates a 24/7 phone line. The call center offers text and online chat and can communicate in over 250 languages via telephonic translation services. It also maintains a comprehensive database of hundreds of partner agencies and programs to make referrals.

Angela Reynolds, United Way of Southwestern PA and PA 211. Ms. Reynolds stated that 211 operates 24/7 and is available by phone, text and chat. 211 is able to take in the questions and determine the eligibility screening for this program to make sure that people are connected. In the case where people do not live in the City of Pittsburgh, 211 is able to recognize that they are not eligible for HSP, but because

of resources that are in the database, they will be directed to other programs. If they are in Allegheny County, United Way has an emergency basic needs fund which could support those households in cases of emergency.

Ms. Deming asked why Allegheny Link wasn't being used to perform the coordinated entry service.

Ms. Smith Perry stated that there were conversations with Allegheny Link, but due to the call volume that is being received for the HSP program, the Link did not believe it could take on this task.

Ms. Reynolds stated that the United Way will make appropriate referrals. In some cases, that could be an emergency needs fund partner. Another appropriate connection could be Allegheny Link. With the caller's permission, the information will be put into the database and the agency partner will be able to retrieve that information for HSP related calls. The database of record includes the time and date that the contact was received. It will also include when that information was passed on to the service provider. They will also work with those agencies and partners to see when they picked up the referral. There is an additional program at United Way that is an integrative referral network where you can see that the agency programs were put in case notes and that the individual was assisted. This is a separate program that requires an additional software package and would require a different proposal.

Ms. Smith Perry stated that the current proposal has a contract flat fee of \$9,000 for the service from the United Way. There will be an additional fee to have the fourth service provider added to the system. However, United Way will be tracking by call, and if the call volume is higher than anticipated, this will come back to the Advisory Board to be amended. Staff would like to be in a position to have United Way get started because people are calling all four providers, and the providers have waiting lists.

RECOMMENDATION 29 (2019)

Majestic Lane made the motion for G. Recommend the Approval of a Contract with the United Way to conduct coordinated entry for the HSP Program and the URA will partner with the United Way for the shared data. Kellie Ware-Seabron seconded. Motion carried.

H. Acceptance of Qualifications (RFQ) for Community Outreach and Marketing Services

Staff Report

Ms. Smith Perry stated that there was a community outreach RFQ, a Request for Qualifications to have available whenever any type of community engagement or marketing services are needed. This will be a slate that can be used in the future. The firms are Bynums Marketing and Communications, Inc.; E. Holdings Inc.; Hilltop Alliance; LT's 4 ME; Keith and Co.; Perry Media Group; Pittsburgh United; and ULEAD LLC. Two are non-profits and the others all have different types of certification for MWBE. The slate will be current for three years.

Ms. Hage stated that the firms are for marketing or community outreach. Multiple organizations could be utilized for an event or community outreach.

Mr. Tillman requested clarification of the specialties for each firm.

RECOMMENDATION 32 (2019)

Mark Masterson made the motion for H. Acceptance of Qualifications (RFQ) for Community Outreach and Marketing Services slate. Derrick Tillman seconded. Motion carried.

I. Legislative Update

Staff Report

Mr. Lane stated that there are conversations regarding the HOF program income guide limits, and whether or not they should be raised in order to allow more people to utilize the HOF programs. There are people at 50% & 60% AMI who are being priced out of their neighborhoods and the process can be streamlined to get more money out of the door with a broader goal. In addition, there have been conversations with the advocates asking for their feedback and to determine how to get the resources to the people who need them.

Ms. Smith Perry stated there have been a lot of applications for HAP at 50% AMI or below, however, some people are right above the income cusp for that program.

Ms. Walker stated there are a lot of homeowners who are between 50% and 80% AMI who could lose their homes because they can't access the fund to potentially stay in their home. Funds would not be diverted away from the most vulnerable to help those who are also vulnerable. HSP needs to remain focused on the most vulnerable, and that is why the resource is needed. However, if a homeowner in an affordable unit needs a critical repair, and they are at 52% AMI, there is no reason why those homeowners should not be supported as well. If the homeowner is removed from that house, a speculator will then buy the house and sell it for market value, and it will no longer be an affordable unit.

Ms. Smith Perry stated it is the role of the Advisory Board to uphold the legislation. If any Advisory Board members have comments about the drafting of legislation, please email the comments. They will be reviewed and shared. All funding resources are being looked into and it is the goal to have one homeowner repair program so that people do not need to worry about different names for different programs. There will be a session for Advisory Board members over the next month to discuss this issue. There are some organizational changes happening at the URA, and the homeowner programs are all going to be under the Center for Housing Opportunities.

J. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.