

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Housing Opportunity Fund Advisory Board of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, City of Pittsburgh YouTube channel.

June 4, 2020 – 9:00 A.M., E.S.T.

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

Members Absent: J. Bey, E. Johnson, M. Lane & S. Su (resigned)

Staff Present: Messrs. J. Carter, D. Geiger, E. Miller, Mmes. B. Benjamin, V. Hage, S. Madden, S. Shore, J. Smith Perry, G. Taylor

Brenda Green, Jewish Family and Community Services, & Odell Richardson, Pittsburgh Community Services, Inc. were also present.

Ms. Smith Perry stated that the HOF meeting is currently being held remotely and the City of Pittsburgh is airing the meeting on its YouTube Channel. For this and all future meetings, the public is asked to pre-register if they would like to give public comment at HOF@ura.org. Zoom instructions will be sent to public comment speakers. Anyone who does not wish to make a public comment may view the meeting on the City of Pittsburgh's YouTube channel which airs live.

A. Public Comment

Celeste Scott, a community liaison representative for Pittsburgh United and Pittsburghers for Urban Transit, asked for information regarding demographics for the consumer programs, 211 referrals and how those are being coordinated, and the plan for the \$2,000,000 CDBG funds. In addition, how will the HOF provide resources to residents after the eviction and foreclosure moratoriums are lifted?

Bob Damewood, Regional Housing Legal Services, encouraged the board to review how legal services are being funded and not to deflate rental assistance funds with legal services. Legal services and rental assistance should be funded separately. Also, residents should not be penalized for receiving legal services by deducting the cost of those services from their assistance.

Carol Hardeman, Hill District Consensus Group, asked if there could be pre-counseling available for people who are facing eviction so that they can obtain legal help prior to the eviction.

Anne Wright, resident of South Oakland, asked for flexibility of the programs for legal services and rental assistance. There needs to be a rapid response for people who are facing eviction issues.

Crystal Jennings, City of Bridges Community Land Trust, stated that tenant cooperative housing can and should be a strategic priority to stabilize communities and individuals. It is another housing option that can be provided to renters. They have a stake in ownership in the communities of their choosing and have a say in how their housing concerns are brought up in the future.

Ms. Smith Perry responded to the public comment regarding the need for legal assistance for eviction. There have been a lot of discussions on the topic of eviction, and the subject can be addressed further at either a committee meeting of the Advisory Board or as an agenda item at a future HOF Advisory Board meeting.

Mr. Carter stated the eviction prevention program will be part of the HSP program. It is still in the development stage with the county partners and the court system. However, ways are being identified on how some of non-HOF funding could be used to help with eviction issues.

Ms. Walker asked if a phone number could be offered for people who do not have internet capability so that they may be able to add their names on the list to give public comment.

B. Roll Call

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

C. Review and Acceptance of Minutes from the April 2, 2020 Meeting

The minutes of the Regular Board Meeting on April 2, 2020 were approved as written and previously distributed.

D. Housing Stabilization Program Contract Administrators – Recommend the approval of contract administrators for the HSP / HSP-COVID Programs.

Staff Report

On April 23, 2020, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) of Pittsburgh issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for program administrators for the Housing Stabilization Program and HSP-COVID programs. The responses were due on May 26, 2020. The URA will use multiple sources to administer the program.

Mr. Carter stated the RFP for the HSP program administrators was open for over a month and 16 responses were received totaling over \$5,200,000 in requests. The URA staff met with Advisory Board members Mark Masterson and Adrienne Walnoha to review staff recommendations for the awards. Staff recommendations were based on a uniform scoring mechanism that indicated the organizations readiness to proceed in terms of organizational experience, financial capacity, and approach to supportive services.

Proposals that are under consideration for HOF funding include: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh - \$100,000, Young Women's Christian Association - \$100,000, Chartiers Center - \$165,000, Goodwill SWPA – \$200,000, Jewish Family & Community Services - \$300,000, Reserve Funds – Community Ambassadors Program - \$150,000.

The Community Ambassadors Program is being developed with the County. It will be designated for smaller community-based organizations who may not have been funded in this round. The purpose of the Community Ambassadors program is to assist with outreach of the program to make sure that community members know of the assistance and what the eligibility is to help people collect and obtain their documentation for the program and to help them fill out the application. The neighborhood groups

will work hand in hand with the service providers to provide them with the paperwork as fast as possible to speed up the process to obtaining financial assistance.

There is additional non-HOF funding being proposed for other organizations. The URA received \$2,000,000 in Community Development Block Grant-Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) and \$400,000 from the Pittsburgh Foundation for mortgage and rental assistance directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The following are being considered: Macedonia FACE, Urban League, YWCA, Pittsburgh Mercy, ACTION Housing, Chartiers Center, Veterans Leadership Program, NeighborWorks, & Pittsburgh Community Services, Inc.

It is hoped that the new service providers will begin services by July 1 to be ahead of the July 10 moratorium. Staff anticipates that there will be a surge of applicants at that time. The funding will serve between 253-422 households dependent upon the amount of assistance that is needed. There are two new providers who would like to make a comment regarding their participation in the HSP program.

Brenda Green, Program Supervisor, ISAC - Immigration Services and Connections, Jewish Family and Community Services stated that they have a history of successfully meeting lower assistance programs including rental assistance. They have a bilingual, bi-cultural staff who speak Arabic, Nepali, Spanish, Swahili, and Uzbek. In addition, there are 37 contracted interpreters available and a telephone interpretation service. Their reputation is well established in working collaboratively in community efforts and they have the infrastructure to be able to begin the HSP program on July 1.

Odell Richardson, Executive Director, Pittsburgh Community Services, Inc. stated that the agency works with individuals below the poverty level to become self-sufficient. Rental assistance is something that they are working with and they provide supportive services. They are looking forward to working with HOF and the URA with the HSP program to provide rental assistance.

In addition, there may be resources to help with pre-legal counseling within the PCSI budget and they would like to look into this issue further.

Mr. Masterson stated that the subcommittee meeting went through the background of the proposals and how staff recommendations were determined. It's great to see that there are more participants, and there is a lot of capacity. Also, the importance of community outreach in those neighborhood connections is being addressed. The creation of the Ambassadors Program really focuses on what someone's strength is which is to meet people where they are and help them navigate entry into the system.

Mr. Tillman asked how the amounts for the HSP funding were determined? Are the amounts the same as what the organizations requested?

Mr. Carter explained that there were \$5,200,000 in requests, and there is \$1,000,000 in HOF funds to allocate plus CDBG and private funds but there are not enough funds for all the requests. In Tier I (existing providers), they were reviewed by how much they have spent on their existing contracts to determine how much to award them in new contracts. With Tier 1 and in Tier 2 (new providers), the proposals were reviewed and were tied to match their capacity. In some cases, organizations may have received HOF, CDBG and potentially foundation funds as well.

Ms. Walker stated a lot of people have expressed their concern for the non-English speaking communities' ability to access these programs. It is known that they are under a tremendous amount of strain as it

relates to housing. How will the new slate of program service providers help to establish non-English speaking partners that can work with this part of our population?

Ms. Smith Perry stated that is one of the reasons why the Jewish Family and Community Services was awarded \$300,000 of HOF funding. They have connections with a lot of the smaller agencies that are servicing the non-English speaking population. Additionally, there have been a lot of concerns from the URA Board and others about how long the application is for the non-English speaking population. There was a federal form being used by the Urban League that does not need to be used at its full extent. The application is now down to three pages with just a small amount of supplemental information.

Mr. Tillman asked if the Advisory Board will be involved in the decision-making process for other types of funds, such as CBDG funds, and the small landlord funds. How will those funds be administered?

Ms. Walker stated that City Council votes to approve CBDG funding dollars and allocates those to the URA. The URA's board has a series of votes of how those dollars are allocated. There are ways that the Advisory Board can help to shape policy and programs from a structural standpoint, and a regulatory standpoint. However, City Council and the URA's governing board have the final authority over the authorization of funds.

Councilwoman Kail-Smith stated that the Advisory Board has a voice in decision making. If there are items that the board would like to discuss, arrangements can be made to meet with some of the City Council members. Also, the Land Bank and the Advisory board should meet in order to work more cooperatively. There are times when there are questions about how the residents are benefitting, especially in terms of development and affordable housing.

RECOMMENDATION 11 (2020)

Derrick Tillman made the motion for D. Housing Stabilization Program Contract Administrators – Recommend the approval of contract administrators for the HSP / HSP-COVID Programs. The awards include the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh - \$100,000, Young Women's Christian Association - \$100,000, Chartiers Center - \$165,000, Goodwill SWPA – \$200,000 & Jewish Family & Community Services - \$300,000 for a grant total of \$865,000. Sonya Tilghman seconded. Lena Andrews and Adrienne Walnoha abstained in accordance with the Conflict of Interest policy. The motion carried.

E. Rental Gap Program (RGP) Commitment Extensions

Staff Report

Due to COVID related development and construction delays, all RGP commitments that expired after March 15, 2020 but before August 15, 2020 will be extended by four months from the expiration date.

Ms. Smith Perry stated as a result of COVID-19, construction, permits, licenses, inspections & HUD were shut down. Therefore, the Rental Gap Program projects have suffered additional delays that are all related to COVID-19. Also, there will be some delays for LIHTC developments with the state of Pennsylvania. Staff

is recommending an extension of four months for all Rental Gap Program (RGP) developments that had expiration dates between March 31 and August 31, 2020 because of COVID-19. There are two projects that received commitments but don't expire until the end of the year because of the 4% tax credit round. Those are Fifth and Dinwiddie Street and the Northside properties. They will keep their current expiration date of December 31, 2020.

The expiration dates that are being proposed include: Five Points – July 31, 2020; 5635 Stanton Avenue – July 31, 2020; Larimer/East Liberty Phase IV – 8/10/2020; Granada Square Apartments – 11/5/2020; North Negley Residences – 12/2/2020 & Flats on Forward – 12/2/2020.

RECOMMENDATION 12 (2020)

Joanna Deming made the motion for E. Rental Gap Program (RGP) Commitment Extensions to extend the commitment expiration dates for projects by four months for the projects listed (Five Points, 5635 Stanton Avenue, Larimer/East Liberty Phase IV, Granada Square Apartments, North Negley Residences, and Flats on Forward). Kellie Ware-Seabron seconded. Lena Andrews, Jerome Jackson, Sonya Tilghman and Derrick Tillman abstained in accordance with the Conflict of Interest policy. Motion carried.

F. Update regarding the Roof-A-Thon happening in June 2020

Staff Report

Mr. Carter stated that 23 roofing projects are underway and will be completed in the month of June. The demographics for the Roof-A-Thon denote that the majority are female head of households, 69% are black or African American, 17% are white and 13% are non-disclosed. The average roof cost is \$13,000 and the average project cost is \$30,000. The total cost for the projects is \$691,000 and \$125,000 of that amount is being sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Mr. Masterson asked if any media releases were going to be issued regarding the Roof-A-Thon.

Ms. Smith Perry stated that there are discussions with the Mayor's Office on ways to have a media release which may be a Zoom event where several of the houses can be showcased at one time. In addition, there will be yard signs that will be displayed at all the properties.

G. Update regarding the Chair Nomination Process

Staff Report

Ms. Smith Perry asked if anyone would like to participate on the Nomination Committee to nominate one or multiple candidates for the position of Chairperson. The nomination(s) will then come back to the Advisory Board for a vote. The following board members volunteered to be part of the committee: Knowledge Build-Hudson, Jerome Jackson, Mark Masterson, Derrick Tillman & Megan Winters.

Ms. Andrews asked whether there is a timeline for expired board members terms for either renewing or replacing those members.

Mr. Geiger stated there is no timeline for replacements. However, it is possible that everyone with an expired term will be re-nominated.

Ms. Smith Perry that Sam Su has moved out of state and has resigned from the Advisory Board. Therefore, a new banking representative will be needed on the board.

H. Programmatic Updates, Expenditures, and Impacts

Staff Report

Ms. Hage stated that the Commitments and Closings to Date data now includes the Housing Stabilization Program participants. They represent the clients who entered and completed the program pre-COVID-19. The Closed/Committed Projects data also now includes Committed/In-Progress. Closed or completed projects signifies that documents have been signed and construction is near completion, in progress, or is completed. In progress projects signify that the client is eligible and is in the process of signing all necessary paperwork.

Ms. Deming asked how much time it takes when someone applies to receive help in the Homeowner Assistance Program (HAP).

Mr. Carter stated that there are 60 people on the waiting list right now for the HAP program. It is anticipated that more projects will be able to go to providers and contractors in July. There is a need for additional contractors and program administrators. The lag time is due to receiving work write ups, permits, and bid approval. Once there is an approved bid, it can take two weeks to prepare closing documents and another week to schedule signings.

A general update on the HSP program indicates that 80% of households are at the 30% AMI level or below. There is 75%+ of households identifying their need is due to COVID-19, 80% of households are minority head of households and 56% are female head of households. In terms of program access, almost 90% of households can complete their intake documents remotely with the providers. Those who are not able to are being sent to a provider who has designated hours to do in-person intakes. There are approximately 500 applications in the process with the four different providers and a continuation of applications from immigrant and refugee serving organizations. In addition, everyone who needs help should call the United Way's 211 hotline as the coordinated entry provider for HSP.

I. Update Regarding 2019 HOF Annual Report

Staff Report

Ms. Hage stated an RFP was issued to the consultants who were on the pre-approved slate of community and outreach firms. Two proposals were received, and E. Holdings Inc. was selected to design the 2019 HOF Annual Report. The report will focus on client's stories. 8-10 developers and clients were interviewed to learn about their experiences in HOF. If any Advisory Board members would like to submit a quote, please do so in the next couple of days.

J. Announcement – The next HOF Advisory Board meeting will be held via Youtube.com /citychannelpittsburgh on July 2, 2020.

Ms. Smith Perry stated a couple of weeks ago, the Advisory Board encouraged staff to meet with CREATE Lab at CMU. A meeting with CREATE Lab has been scheduled for next Tuesday. If any of the Advisory Board members would like to participate in the meeting, please send an email. Additionally, the Fair Housing Partnership had been slated to make a presentation to the board when COVID-19 hit. They will make a presentation at a future Advisory Board meeting.

Ms. Walnoha asked if there is a process in place to look at delays that have been related to COVID-19, capacity changes that are related to COVID-19 across all the funds and contracts? Is there a need to go back and reconsider contract guidelines or changing capacity that might exist? There might be some programs in the next six months that could be able to use an influx of some funds while other programs aren't going to be drawing down funds.

Ms. Smith Perry stated that is something that should regularly be taken into consideration. A team of Advisory Board members can meet once a month to talk about that subject. It is a constantly changing topic due to the economy and how the economy recovers from COVID-19. However, any changes would need to go back to City Council.

K. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.