

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

December 3, 2020

Members present: Lena Andrews, Oliver Beasley, Jamil Bey, Knowledge Build Hudson, Joanna Deming, Jerome Jackson, Mark Masterson, James Myers, Sonya Tilghman, Derrick Tillman, Diamonte Walker, Adrienne Walnoha, Kellie Ware-Seabron, Megan Winters

Staff present: Breanna Benjamin, David Geiger, Doren Hilmer, Victoria Jackson, Derek Kendall-Morris, Evan Miller, Brett Morgan, Jessica Smith Perry

Others: Megan Aitken, Megan Confer-Hammond, David Finer, William Lamar, Joy LeViere, Mark Paliotta, Christiana Whitcomb

#### **A. Public Comment**

Megan Confer-Hammond, Interim Executive Director of Fair Housing Partnership (FHP), requested that the HOF Advisory Board establish a committee to quantify a fair housing lens for funding disbursement for the 2021 calendar year. She provided an example of affirmative marketing of the Down Payment and Closing Cost Assistance Program as an example of an equitable action that can be taken by the committee to ensure fair housing practices.

#### **B. Roll Call**

Jessica Smith Perry called the meeting to order. A quorum was present.

#### **C. Review and Acceptance of Minutes from the November 5, 2020 Regular Board Meeting**

Derrick Tillman moved to approve the minutes of the regular board meeting on November 5, 2020 as written and previously distributed. Knowledge Build-Hudson seconded. The motion carried.

#### **D. Homeowner Assistance Program (HAP) & HAP Plus Program Administrators**

J. Smith Perry presented the recommendation for the approval of a contract with The Pittsburgh Project for up to \$250,000 for administration of the HAP Program. The 12-month contract would allow The Pittsburgh Project to service six to nine houses on the Northside. There is 20% overhead factored into the contract.

Kellie Ware-Seabron asked if the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) has previously worked with the Pittsburgh Project.

J. Smith Perry replied that the URA has not worked with them; however, the URA has been aware of The Pittsburgh Project's work for many years.

Joanna Deming asked if the demographic target for The Pittsburgh Project houses will be in the Northside where The Pittsburgh Project is located.

J. Smith Perry replied that the URA asks program administrators to be open to working city-wide. If an administrator concentrates on a neighborhood or region of the City, and there are enough projects in that area for them to remain busy, the URA will assign the administrators projects from those neighborhoods.

Jeremy Carter added that The Pittsburgh Project expressed a preference to work on projects in City Council District 1.

J. Deming asked about The Pittsburgh Project's capacity and management.

J. Carter responded that The Pittsburgh Project has enlisted a partner contractor to do the work given that they do not have a construction staff. The URA plans to start The Pittsburgh Project with one to two projects and will continue from that point.

### **RECOMMENDATION 23 (2020)**

Mark Masterson motioned to agree to the recommendation to approve a contract with The Pittsburgh Project for up to \$250,000 for administration of the HAP Program. Jerome Jackson seconded. Lena Andrews and Derrick Tillman abstained. The motion carried.

#### **E. Discussion Regarding Bylaws and Chair Position**

Christiana Whitcomb, Senior Analyst at HR&A Advisors, described the process by which HR&A Advisors drafted both the HOF Advisory Board bylaws and chairperson description as well as presented the resulting recommendations. The drafted recommendations were distributed to the advisory board prior to this meeting.

J. Smith Perry asked board members to submit any amendments to the drafted recommendations by December 17<sup>th</sup>. The submitted amendments will be brought to a vote in the January advisory board meeting.

J. Jackson asked that the composition of the board be included in the bylaws.

J. Smith Perry noted that the composition is included in the enabling legislation for the Housing Opportunity Fund. She suggested the portion of the legislation outlining the 17 seats can be included as an amendment or attachment to the bylaws.

K. Ware-Seabron recommended accountability metrics for board members.

Sonya Tilghman suggested the inclusion of verification that an interpreter should be secured for advisory board meetings. Asked, in reference to section 5.8, if the requisite two-year term of chair or vice chair prohibited an individual from becoming chairperson if they are in the third year of their term as an advisory board member.

Mark Masterson proposed that the chairperson have a one-year term limit.

S. Tilghman asked M. Masterson if he suggests a maximum of two or three one-year terms.

M. Masterson responded that the maximum should be three.

Adriene Walnoha suggested that bylaws include language for committee chairs' commitment to upholding specific values around fair housing practices that guide funding decisions, determinants of applications, etc. as determined by the board.

K. Ware-Seabron agreed but suggested incorporating these values in the bylaws for all board members.

Diamonte Walker stated that the chair should have the responsibility to establish those values but incumbent upon board members to uphold those values in an individual capacity. She proposed the establishment of a committee to establish the mission, vision, and values of the advisory board.

J. Deming proposed adding language suggested by A. Walnoha in the section pertaining to the responsibilities of the board and of the chairpersons.

J. Smith Perry asked for a board member to volunteer to craft and submit language regarding the values. She directed board members to submit proposed amendments and red lines for a redrafted list of recommendations.

D. Tillman requested clarification on the recommendations that a board member with a conflict of interest may participate in a discussion so long as they state the conflict beforehand and that a board member can vote so long as the board member does not have a financial interest in the project.

C. Whitcomb responded that survey responses indicated that board members with conflicts of interest should be able to vote on the annual allocation but be unable to vote on funding requests from a program for which they are specifically eligible.

K. Ware-Seabron asked if those board members would be able to participate in the discussion.

C. Whitcomb affirmed.

M. Masterson asked for clarification around conflicts of interests on projects in which board members have an association with an agency involved with a project but are not directly involved themselves. Gave the example of providing gap financing to that agency.

C. Whitcomb agreed it would be beneficial to add language around financing as it pertains to conflicts of interest.

M. Masterson asked if the working groups must adhere to the Sunshine Act.

David Geiger, who stated for the record he is not an attorney, explained that the advisory board is not an official arm of government and its function is to make recommendations to the URA governing board. As such, the advisory board is not subject to the Sunshine Act.

J. Deming suggested a requirement of URA staff participation in the working groups.

J. Smith Perry replied that the URA staff will be conduits of information but cannot staff the working groups.

D. Tillman noted the recommendations included hiring of new staff to help advisory board officers.

J. Smith Perry acknowledged the recommendation from HR&A but noted the URA has not discussed the hiring of new staff members.

M. Masterson asked for clarification around section 5.4 which states that officers should not represent themselves as representatives of the URA.

C. Whitcomb responded that the URA requested this recommendation to provide clarity that the board is independent of the URA staff.

J. Smith Perry noted the recommendation is meant to clarify that any criteria established by the working groups is that of the advisory board and not the URA.

Jamil Bey asked if new staff is hired to support the advisory board would the new staff be funded from the money allocated in the HOF budget for administration.

J. Smith Perry affirmed.

J. Smith Perry reminded the advisory board that all comments on the draft bylaws must be submitted by December 17<sup>th</sup>. Any revisions and amendments will be voted on in the January meeting.

J. Deming asked if the recommendation is that fund applicants are not required to present at the board meetings.

J. Smith Perry responded that the recommendation resulted from the survey and interviews in which board members expressed concern about saving time.

J. Deming asked if the recommendation means that fund applicants can still be invited to present even though it is not a requirement.

J. Smith Perry replied that this recommendation must be decided on by the advisory board.

J. Deming commented on the recommendation that the advisory board is not responsible for reviewing or approving funding allocations from any other source of public funds. She asked if sharing of information about programs sourced by other funds would be helpful for the board's decision making. She gave the example of tracking outcomes of programs with multiple funding sources.

J. Smith Perry noted that the board was established to advise on the Housing Opportunity Fund as an individual source. As a concluding statement for the Bylaws discussion, she encouraged board members to include their comments in the bylaws document.

#### **F. Programmatic Discussion**

J. Smith Perry presented the commitments and closings to date of both consumer and development programs. She also presented tables detailing the total allocations over three years to each of the HOF programs, including total commitments and closings to date. She noted that Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds were added to the Homeowner Assistance Program (HAP) as well as the Housing Stabilization Program (HSP).

#### **G. Announcements**

The next HOF Advisory Board meeting will occur on January 7, 2021 at 9:00am.

#### **H. Adjournment**

Jamil Bey moved to adjourn the meeting. Kellie Ware-Seabron seconded. The motion carried.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.