Minutes
Block Grant Working Committee
Wednesday, April 3, 2019 - 4:00 pm
Neighborhood Redevelopment Division
Aurora City Hall, 5th Floor, Room 5B - 44 E. Downer Place, Aurora, Illinois

The meeting was called to order at 4:10 p.m. by Co-Chair Ms. Walton

I. Roll Call
Members Present: Veva Walton, Maria Hernandez, Helen Ratzlow, Earle Robertson, George Scowins
Members Absent: Gerald Lubshina (Chairman), Warren Barton, Debra Meeks, Aziz Alam
Staff present: Chris Ragona, Amy Munro, Tara Neff, Liz Carrizales

II. Minutes of meetings
A. March 6, 2019 – Regular Meeting

A draft of the minutes was considered. The minutes were approved as prepared.

III. Old Business
Ms. Munro reported back to the Committee on a question that came up at their March 6, 2019 meeting regarding the classes that are being offered at the Aurora Arts Centre School of Performing Arts would qualify for any sort of academic credits. Ms. Munro reached out to the School of Performing Arts and they confirmed that the classes will not offer any academic credits.

IV. New Business
A. The Neighbor Project – Safety First Program – To modify the scope of eligible activities for clients, budget, and terms to the homeowner agreement.

Mr. Ragona provided the committee with a summary of the proposed changes to The Neighbor Project’s Safety First Program. He stated that the Neighborhood Redevelopment Division (NRD) staff has been working with The Neighbor Project on its single family rehabilitation program. The goal is to expand the list of eligible activities to further accommodate homeowner needs. Mr. Ragona stated that the modifications to the Safety First Program will have to go through the formal approval process, starting with the Block Grant Working Committee; Planning and Development; Committee of the Whole; City Council.

The NRD staff and the Block Grant Working Committee (BGWC) reviewed the revised eligible activities shown as Exhibit A (attached). Mr. Ragona said that eligible activities under Category A would be changed from a deferred loan to a 3-year forgivable lien for projects below $5,000. He said that The Neighbor Project has requested to increase the amount of funding per household for certain activities because $5,000 is not enough for some of the most expensive home repairs. Those eligible activities are listed under Category B. The projects could not exceed $10,000. Anything over $5,000 would be a deferred loan against the home until the home is sold. This would allow the City to recapture funds when the home is sold and reinvest those dollars back in the community. Discussion took place.
Under the proposed program updates, Mr. Ragona said that the City’s CDBG funded lead pipe replacement pilot program would be administered by The Neighbor Project rather than the City. This activity would work in partnership with the City of Aurora’s Engineering Department as the Neighbor Project would rely upon direct referrals from the Engineering Department and the development of project guidelines. The proposed policies and procedures can be found as Exhibit B (attached) – Policies and Procedures for Lead Pipe Replacement. Mr. Ragona said that the NRD staff will come back at a later date to present a substantial amendment on reallocating an additional $50,000 from Engineering to The Neighbor Project for this activity.

Mr. Ragona reviewed minor revisions made to the budget for The Neighbor Project Safety First Program. The revised budget can be found as Exhibit C (attached). Mr. Ragona hopes that with these modifications to the Safety First Program will increase the number of eligible clients. Discussion took place.

A motion to recommend to the City Council the modifications to The Neighbor Project – Safety First Program was by Ms. Ratzlow and seconded by Mr. Scowins. The motion was approved unanimously.

B. Preliminary approval to modify City of Aurora HOME projects to adjust and update legal documents to meet Federal requirements.

Mr. Ragona stated that this item is part of the City’s long term compliance for its affordable housing portfolio. Upon review of the portfolio, revisions should be made to decrease the affordability compliance periods on several projects. These revisions will reduce financial risk while also maintaining affordable housing. In several instances, the affordability periods extend well beyond HUD’s requirements. Essentially, projects will have two affordability periods. The first affordability period will meet HUD’s minimum standard of affordability. The second affordability period will match the City’s affordability periods which may or may not extend well beyond HUD’s minimum requirement, but would not subject the City to HUD’s compliance requirements. Depending upon the revisions, City Council approval may be required. Given scheduling logistics and the potential time sensitivities, the NRD staff seeks the BGWC preliminary approval on the proposed modifications. Discussion took place.

A motion to recommend preliminary approval to modify City of Aurora HOME projects to adjust and update legal documents was by Mr. Robertson and seconded by Mr. Scowins. The motion was approved unanimously.

V. Other Matters

Mr. Ragona stated that the RFQ for consultant’s deadline is April 12, 2019 for the City’s 5 year plan. NRD staff will review the submissions. Staff will present a substantial amendment to the BGWC at a later date. Discussion took place.

VI. Upcoming Meetings and Events

A. Wednesday, May 1, 2019, 4:00 p.m. – Block Grant Working Committee Regular Meeting.
B. Thursday, May 9, 2019, 10:00 a.m. – 2020 CDBG Application Workshop (Aurora City Hall, Council Chambers – 2nd Floor)

VII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting by Mr. Scowins and seconded by Ms. Ratzlow. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 4:45.