

**City of Cleveland Heights
Citizens Advisory Committee
August 13, 2019
Council Chambers, Cleveland Heights City Hall**

MEMBERS PRESENT

David Benson
Bradley Eckert
Simcha Geller
Christine Henry
Gretchen Mettler
Donalene Poduska
Jessica Schantz
Amy Smith
Sonya Trice

Laura Black
Cory Farmer
Jonathan Goldman
Allison McCallum
T. Nadas
Rory Saint Jean
Barbara Shelton
Steve Titchenal
André Witt

MEMBERS ABSENT

Patrick Akers (exc.)

Brittany Rabb (exc.)

STAFF PRESENT

Brian Iorio

GUESTS PRESENT

Bob Norton, HEFC
Amy Rosenbluth, Lake Erie Ink
Sruti Basu, FutureHeights
Hannah Morgan, FutureHeights
Gayle Payton, Severance Tower LAC

Rev. Jimmie Hicks, Start Right CDC
Deanna Bremer Fisher, FutureHeights
Abby Lawless, FutureHeights
Allan Butler, City of Cleveland Heights

CALL TO ORDER

Cory Farmer, Chair, called the Public Hearing to order. He opened the public hearing by welcoming everyone and giving a brief statement of the order of the meeting. He stated that this was the second of two public hearings.

Chairman Farmer stated that Cleveland Heights is an Entitlement Community receiving Community Development Block Grant funds directly from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The funds enable the city to develop a viable community by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and by expanding economic opportunities. He explained

that a final allocation for 2020 has not yet been made by Congress, but that the City is estimating that we will receive approximately \$1.6 million. He explained that CDBG is a federal program and that all applicable regulations must be followed including an environmental review of each project that includes a Section 106 Historic Preservation Review.

Members of the audience not affiliated with an applicant agency were invited to speak regarding the CDBG program or community issues that could be addressed by a CDBG-funded activity.

Chairman Farmer reminded each applicant to limit their prepared remarks to five minutes if they were applying for one activity and to eight minutes if they were applying for more than one activity. He stated that CAC members could ask questions after their comments. Presenters were reminded that a CAC Subcommittee would be contacting them after the public hearing.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ROLL CALL

Secretary Bradley Eckert called the roll. A quorum was present.

APPLICATION HEARING FOR CDBG

Heights Emergency Food Center – Total Request \$27,450

Bob Norton, Treasurer for the Heights Emergency Food Center (HEFC), presented HEFC's proposal for the Year 46 CDBG program. Mr. Norton expressed that the organization, staffed by volunteers, had a good year last year with the continued support of the CAC. The past 4 years has had steady participation by those in need. Last year, the cost per participant went down to around \$17 annually. This is due in part to an increase in donated food. Additionally, the possibility of moving due to Church renovations has been tabled for the immediate future.

Start Right Community Development Corporation – Total Request \$10,000

Reverend Jimmie Hicks, Executive Director of the Start Right Community Development Corporation, presented Star Right's Hunger Center Program proposal for Year 46 funding. Rev. Hicks stressed that CDBG assistance has

greatly improved the quality of service that the food pantry provides through improved appliances and accessibility improvements.

Lake Erie Ink – Total Request \$12,000

Amy Rosenbluth, Executive Director of Lake Erie Ink, presented her proposal for Year 46 funding. In 2018, Lake Erie Ink expanded into Monticello Middle School providing continuity from the Noble Elementary program. In the coming school year, they will be adding two days a week for 7th graders in addition to the 6th graders they started serving in 2018. Their goal is to serve 40 students between the Noble Elementary and Monticello Middle School programs. Ms. Rosenbluth read a poem written by one of their program participants to illustrate the positive work that they do.

FutureHeights – Total Request \$148,695

Community Capacity Building - \$50,000

Cedar Lee Mini-Park Placemaking Project - \$21,500

FuturHomes Program - \$57,195

Noble Road Corridor Early Action Project - \$20,000

Deanna Bremer Fischer, Executive Director of FutureHeights, introduced her staff and organization to the CAC. FutureHeights has submitted 4 applications for funding for the Year 46 CDBG Program.

Sruti Basu, Director of Community Building Programs at FutureHeights, presented the requests for Year 46 CDBG funding for Community Capacity Building and the Cedar Lee Mini-Park. The Community Capacity Building Program has several components: The Neighborhood Leadership Program, the Mini-Grants Program (non CDBG-funded), Public Forums, neighborhood organizer assistance, and FutureHeights' Civic Engagement Committee. Ms. Basu provided an example of a program that utilized several of these components.

The Cedar Lee Mini-Park Placemaking project is currently undergoing design following a community engagement process and minor improvements conducted by volunteers. In the past year, FutureHeights secured Cuyahoga Arts and Culture funds for youth engagement and public art and private donations towards the implementation of aspects of the project.

Deanna Bremer Fischer spoke regarding the 2 SIO applications. The first is the FutureHomes program that seeks to rehabilitate a home in the mid-city area for

a low-to-moderate income homeowner or renter. Currently, the program is working with the City and the County Landbank in order to rehabilitate 3 vacant and abandoned homes. These are market-rate projects being renovated by private developers. Ms. Bremer Fischer discussed their model-block program and the neighborhood they are working to affect. They are also working to secure funds in order to construct infill housing in the neighborhood north of Cain Park.

The Noble Road Corridor Early Action Project follows the Noble Road Corridor Planning Process. The plan has identified the need for an early action project that provides a visual impact that signals to the stakeholders that the plan will be implemented. The Steering Committee for the planning process identified this project as an ideal early action project in order to unify the corridor's many nodes and neighborhoods through decorative plantings. The plantings would consist of hanging baskets, concrete planters and in-ground plantings. Currently they exist in the business districts along Noble Road and this project would extend them into the residential portions of the street. They hope to utilize CDBG funds in order to leverage foundation and other philanthropic funding. They would use other funds for the maintenance of the planters year after year.

Housing Preservation Office – Total Request \$630,000

Code Enforcement - \$50,000

Neighborhood Relations Program (public service) - \$50,000

Housing Preservation - \$480,000

Strategic Home Repair - \$50,000 (2019 SIO)

Allan Butler, Director of Housing Programs, presented his applications for Year 46 funding. The Housing Preservation Office's applications are very similar to last year's applications.

The first request was for the funding of an LMI area code enforcement inspector. This position conducts systematic inspections for health and safety violations in LMI neighborhoods. In 2018, they issued approximately 4,000 violations.

The second application is for the Neighborhood Relations Program. This program addresses issues that affect the quality of life for residents in LMI neighborhoods. Typical issues that need addressed are noise complaints, run down properties and inappropriate and illegal behavior. The neighborhood relations program works with the Police Department, Community Relations Department, Adult

Protective Services and various non-profit organizations to develop strategies and solutions to improve the quality of life for residents in LMI neighborhoods.

The third request is for the Housing Preservation Office (HPO) Programs. This office administers 4 CDBG programs: The Exterior Paint Program, the Exterior Violation Repair Grant Program, the Nuisance Abatement Program, and the Emergency/Short Term Deferred Loan Program. HPO staff also administers the HOME-funded Deferred Loan Program, the Lead Safe Cuyahoga Program, and the County-funded Demo Bond Fund Program.

The fourth proposal presented was for the Strategic Home Repair Program under the 2019 SIO. This program expands the Exterior Paint Program and the Violation Repair Program to LMI households that are not eligible under the existing programs. The expansion in eligibility includes non-senior and non-disabled households and both owner-occupied and renter-occupied households. This program was previously approved in 2018.

Severance Tower Local Advisory Council Board - Total Request \$10,800

Community Garden - \$13,000

Community Center - \$13,000

Gayle Payton, President of the Severance Tower Local Advisory Council, presented her second request for funds for equipment to operate a community center. She was unable to attend the previous meeting due to illness.

The building houses over 225 low income seniors and disabled residents. The Local Advisory Council serves as a resident board for the building and has recently won an award from the Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority for their dedication and services to the residents of the building. This year, they LAC is asking for additional funding for their community room, resident computers and arts and crafts. Much of their equipment is old and unusable. This prevents residents from taking part in community building events and wellness activities that the LAC used to provide. None of the items needed are budgeted by CMHA and the funds the LAC used to receive from vending machines in the building have decreased significantly.

Home Repair Resource Center (HRRC) – Total Request \$219,377

Housing Counselor (public service) - \$30,000

Housing Rehabilitation Programs - \$155,204

Due to illness, a representative of the Home Repair Resource Center was unable to attend the public hearing. Keesha Allen, Executive Director of HRRC, asked Mr. Iorio to read the following statement at the hearing:

“Good Evening and please excuse my absence from tonight's CAC public hearing. I will be prepared to answer any questions members may have regarding HRRC'S application during the housing subcommittee meeting scheduled August 27 at 6 pm.

For almost a century, Home Repair Resource Center has provided the residents of Cleveland Heights with our client-focused programs, that educate and empower homeowners to keep their home in good repair. Our request \$185,204 for our financial assistance and housing counseling programs will help us continue these programs and also support our efforts along with the city's building department, to revive properties that have turned vacant and abandoned. The increase in our request is based on our ability to provide grants to seniors and LMI homeowners, while employing a quality staff that is mission focused and educated & equipped with the knowledge to help homeowners.

Again, my apologies for not being there tonight and I look forward to answering any questions you may have regarding our application. Thank You

*Keesha Allen
Executive Director
Home Repair Resource Center”*

CDBG Administration/Planning/Fair Housing – Total Request \$298,402

CD Administration - \$157,702

Fair Housing Activities - \$40,700

2020 Strategic Impact Opportunity - \$100,000

Brian Iorio, CDBG Coordinator, presented his request for administrative funding for 2020. Included in the request is funding for personnel, indirect costs, professional services and other non-personnel expenses.

Mr. Iorio also requested funding for Fair Housing Activities. Unlike previous years, this request combined several activities that are usually requested separately. The activities that funds are being requested for are: Fair Housing Rental & Sales Audits, HCC Diversity Programming, Fair Lending, Landlord/Tenant Education, and Racial Equity & Inclusion Institute Training.

Mr. Iorio's third funding request was for the 2020 Strategic Impact Opportunity. The goal for another round of SIO is that there is a pot of funds for programs and projects that can be focused on a particular geography and whose recipients do not expect an allocation year over year. This would also act like a contingency fund where increases or decreases in the annual CDBG entitlement allocation can be assigned. Mr. Iorio noted that it is his belief that if the SIO becomes a regular funding opportunity, proposals will become more competitive and more innovative.

Cory Farmer stated that this was the last applicant to present their 2020 request this evening. The public hearing portion of the meeting was closed.

STAFF REPORTS

Financial reports for the months of June and July, 2019. Mr. Iorio stated that he has created a key to help CAC members understand the Financial Report. He will distribute the key once it is finalized. Mr. Iorio also stated that there were not any unusual expenses for these months.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

Allan Butler, Director of Housing Programs, presented a request to reallocate \$10,000 from the Short Term Deferred Loan Program to the Violation Repair Program for Seniors. T Nadas shared that the Preservation and Housing Subcommittee reviewed the request earlier in the day and recommended that the CAC approve the reallocation.

Cory Farmer moved to approve the request to reallocate \$10,000 from the Short Term Deferred Loan Program to the Violation Repair Program for Seniors. Seconded by T Nadas, the motion was approved unanimously.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Cory Farmer, Chair

Bradley Eckert, Secretary