

Citizen Advisory Committee
Minutes PY 47
Application Review
March 30, 2021
West River Hall, 37 Orlando Street
6:10 p.m.

The Meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Mark Bisaccia

Present: Committee Members: Carol Eagles, Colleen O'Connor, Jeffrey Moreno, Michelle Miller and Roberta Garlock.

CDA Staff: Mark Bisaccia, John Bernardo, Rosa Richardson

Absent: Victor Borrás

FISH- Food delivery for Homebound- Jill Meyerhoff introduced herself after the Committee and staff made their introductions. Mark asked her for a general overview of the program as well as the impact COVID has had on the program.

This nonprofit has been in existence since 1968 and its' mission is to deliver groceries to individuals/ families who are homebound due to illness, mental health issues or disability She explained that she took over as the Executive Director last April at the height of the pandemic. This agency assists home bound families in New Haven, East Haven, West Haven and Hamden area. This pandemic had increased the physical, emotional and financial stress of everyone. Additionally, it made it very difficult to operate this program because the pandemic took away the assistance of the many Social Service Agencies who deliver the groceries to each client.

Another food pantry reached out to FISH for assistance since the "Pantry to Pantry" organization was in need of a home. This organization was working out of New Haven. FISH took over the organization in September of 2020. Then in February of this year, FISH moved it's West Haven location to New Haven as well.

FISH is happy to report that in 2020 they provided this service to 97 West Haven Individuals/Families. So far in 2021 they have provided this service to 82 Individuals/ Families 9 of which are Veterans. FISH receives more and more referrals and has reached almost 600 families in need. West Haven CDBG Funds assists in providing 11.7% of the Program Manager's Salary and the Agency is very thankful for the support provided by the City of West Haven.

CAC Member Moreno asked if this organization applies for and receives funding from the other towns. Ms. Meyerhoff responded yes. He then asked how people find out about this program. She responded that they may be referred by 211, self referrals, Social Service Agencies, VA Hospital and other agencies.

CAC Member O'Connor asked how often the groceries are delivered. Ms. Meyerhoff explained that monthly each household receives a delivery with 2 and ½ weeks of food. This includes: milk, eggs, fresh produce, meat, and other healthy food options in mind. They are also aware of any special diets that their clients may have.

CAC Member Moreno thanked Ms. Meyerhoff and FISH for what they do. He was pleased that they were able to relocate to a larger, more appropriate facility that could accommodate their needs.

Mr. Bisaccia thanked FISH for the service they provide to our residents in need. Ms. Meyerhoff left at 6:17 p.m.

WH Board of Education- Capital Improvement – CDA and CAC Members introduced themselves and then introduced Michael McGrath from the Board of Education.

Mr. Bisaccia then addressed the Committee with an issue that the City Engineering Department is facing with the allocation of funds that were appropriated for the sewer installation in the Allingtown Section of the City. He went on to explain that the Board of Education has submitted an application for funding the PY 47 for the purpose of renovating a former Wood Shop floor at Carrigan Middle School and for finishing the playground area at Savin Rock School. This request is in the amount of \$105,000.

After a conversation with the City Engineer, Abdul Quadir, it was determined that the sewer project would not be completed by June of this year. There are strict HUD Guidelines (timeliness) that must be adhered to, so Mr. Bisaccia asked the Committee to consider moving the Allingtown Sewer Project for years 2 and 3 of the CON Plan and move this BOE request to this current PY 46 Annual Action Plan. He then explained the procedure to be follow in order to do so.

Mr. McGrath went on to explain that this is slightly different from the proposal for PY 47 because the asbestos tiles on the Third Floor at Carrigan are coming up and have to be removed as soon as possible. This has now become an urgent need. He stated that the 9X9 tiles will be removed using safe practices and proper abatement procedures. These tiles will be replaced by 18 X 18 tiles.

Mr. McGrath explained that dating as far back as Mayor Picard, there were no funds allocated for the city or the Board of Education for Capital Projects. Without the assistance from CDA and CDBG Funds we would have not been able to make necessary repairs let alone improvements.

Mark explained that this is a shovel ready project and can be completed expediently. Hence, moving the Sewer project to years 2 and 3 is appropriate. He then asked if this project can be completed by June. Mr. McGrath assured him it could.

CAC Member Miller asked Mr. McGrath what the timeframe would be for this project. He stated the work could only be done on the weekend while the children were not present. It would take 4 Saturdays to complete the project and all safe asbestos abatement practices will be used and there will be a tech there to monitor the air quality.

Mr. McGrath was reminded to put Davis Bacon Wages in the project specs

CAC Member Carol Eagles put a motion on the floor to move this BOE Capital Improvement Project to this Program Year. It was seconded by CAC Member Moreno. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

There was a slight break in between applicants so Mark took the time to inform the Committee that unlike other years, CDA has already been informed of what our allocation is for PY 47. There was a slight increase of approximately \$3,000.00 . This year, with the CDBG Funding as well as the COVID Funding we are at approximately 1.5 million dollars in funding.

He then asked if anyone had any questions while we waited for the next applicant.

Mark was asked how long the process is for Funding Applicants. He explained that CDA places a legal notice in November for Notification of Funding Availability (NOFA). Any interested agencies have an opportunity to request an application. The Application deadline is usually just before the Christmas holiday in December. These applications are sent to every recent and current applicants, sent to each Department Head within the City, and anyone who contact the CDA Office regarding funding availability is placed on the mailing list. There is a Public Hearing seeking input on how the funds should be used. Due to COVID these comments were to be e-mailed or written to the CDA Office to be read into the record.

Once the applications are received the CDA Office puts an Application Review Schedule together and the CAC begin the review process. Once this process is complete, the CAC Committee will meet to put review the requests and put a final approved budget together.

Once the final budget is set by the CAC Members, it goes to the Mayor and City Council for approval.

Rape Crisis- Victim Advocacy – Peggy Pisano, Director of Programming and Antonio Vitti, Executive Director as well as their Service Dog Lilly came before the Committee. They thanked the Committee for the opportunity to come before them and for their support and funding for this program.

Mr. Vitti started out by saying that when the pandemic first hit, they could hear crickets instead of the phone calls they were accustomed to. The Parsons Building, where the agency is located, was closed so they had to find the means to purchase the necessary equipment and supplies in order to assist victims. ONLY STAFF MEMBERS were allowed to respond to these crisis. Additionally, hospitals would not allow their advocates into the facilities so they were forced to support these victims from video conference. Courts were shut down. Needless to say it turned into a real adventure. But all in all, All services were available.

They knew they had to do more for those in need so they reached out to food distribution centers, churches, grocery stores, and social media. Then the flood gates opened. They were able to continue to provide all the necessary time, energy, and support through virtual group sessions, individual phone calls, and continue to address prevention within communities.

Mr. Vitti was pleased to inform the Committee that they were awarded a Grant for “Project Teach” from NBC. They were given this grant due to their presence on Social Media.

Now we have to begin to ask, “what’s the new norm”? Rape Crisis continues to work closely with victims, families, hospitals, Police Departments, Educators and provide services to anyone harmed from disclosure to disposition. They never turn anyone away no matter how many years it has been since the individual was victimized. Also, the services do not stop with the victim. Anyone affected by this act, has the ability to seek assistance (Parent, sibling, husband, wife, etc.).

CAC Member asked if they were able to provide clothing to the victims as they normally due. No. Since they were not allowed into the hospitals they were not able to provide the clothing for victims. However, hospitals assured them that they would make provisions for the victims.

Ms. Pisano wanted to let the Committee know that they have an outstanding relationship with WHPD and they just completed a certification training with then department.

They thanked the CAC Member for all their time. The CAC Members thanked them for all that they do.

They left at 7:20 p.m .

WH Youth and Family- The CAC Members and CD Staff introduced themselves to the new Director of Youth and Family Services. Diane Dietman introduced herself to the Members as well. She offered a little bio of herself. She let them know that she has taken over the reins from a man with over 45 years of Service to the City of West Haven and who provided services and activities to children/ adults with special needs.

She moved to this position in October while everything was stagnant and in limbo due to the pandemic. Many of the programs she is responsible are necessary, not only for the children but for the parents and families as well. She made a point of getting the Clinic, who provides therapeutic services to youth and families up and running again. She felt it vital since she was very aware that the pandemic had only enhanced the mental, emotional, physical and financial devastation that these families were already dealing with. She immediately met with the Clinicians who provide the services and was able to get them back up and running, via telehealth. It has been running since.

With the help of the Director of Health, the Mayor and with strict adherence to CDC guidelines, they were able to provide a walk through visit with Santa for all of the children with special needs and their siblings. Through donations from the Peer Advocate Group of WHHS, they were able to provide gifts to more than 70 children. Target was kind enough to provide Gift Certificates for those children who were too old to receive a toy gift from Santa.

They also had a Virtual Paint Party via Zoom where 70 people participated. They will be hosted a Virtual Trivia Game Night where 30 people participated.

Many of the parents of these children have collaborated and have been instrumental in implementing and assisting With all of these types of activities. For the most part, these parents volunteer a great deal of their time. However, there are occasions where a stipend is received for their work. There is no other staff member other than Diane so it is vital that the parents support the programs.

Comm. Member Miller asked Diane how information is disseminated to parent/ children. Diane explained that they are currently planning a Meet and Greet in April, if allowed by the Health Director and City. This will allow the opportunity for past members to join with current members and fly kites in the open area along the shoreline. They currently have a facebook page and will be able to hand out flyers, reach out to community members. This is one of the membership drive they are considering at this time. She explained that the facebook link on the City's WHYF page on the website.

CAC Member Miller asked where she gets the funding. Are they all Grant based? She explained to Ms. Dietman that the number of special needs students increase each and every year in our schools.

CAC Member Moreno thanked Diane for the services she provides. His other is a teacher of Special Education in New Haven.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Rosa Richardson