

MINUTES

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING **(via Zoom webinar)**

April 15, 2021

CALL TO ORDER: 7:02 p.m.

PRESENT: Committee Members: Chairman Vahey-Vice Chairman Winegrad-Carswell-Myers-Hecker

OTHERS: Finance Director Hermann
Township Manager Manfredi
Manager of Financial Services Embury

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Myers made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Hecker to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2021 Finance Committee Meeting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

PRESENTATIONS:

CDBG 2020-24 Consolidated Plan:

Ms. Kimberly Hamm, Director of Community Development, introduced Jon Haglund of Urban Design Ventures and presented the Township's 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan including the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing and the 2020 Action Plan as it pertains to the Community Development Block Grant Program. The consolidated plan aims to assess affordable housing, community development needs, market conditions and identifies housing and community development priorities, and since July 2020, HUD extended its deadline for submission.

Mr. Haglund added that the consolidated plan is a document that needs to be done every five years as the Township is a CDBG entitlement community and the sections of the plan are as follows: Needs Analysis; Assets; Strategic Plan; Housing Need; Homeless Need and Other Special Needs; Community Development; Economic Development; and Administration, Planning and Management, and goals have been identified within each action plan.

In conjunction with the consolidated plan, there is the expectation to complete an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, and by receiving CDBG funds, Abington Township states that it will affirmatively further fair housing. We identify impediments, goals, and specific activities as well as those in need of fair housing, education, and outreach. There is also a need for affordable housing; accessible housing; and public policy to affirmatively further fair housing as well as a regional approach to fair housing and fair housing education.

Commissioner Vahey asked for the timing of the process.

Mr. Haglund replied Fiscal Year 2020 began on October 1, 2020 ending September 30, 2021, so we are still in FY 2020 at this time, and due to COVID-19, HUD permitted delay of submission of this application for one-year, so we are behind, but still in compliance with the timeliness of submission of the plan. This consolidated plan would be completed by September 30, 2025.

Commissioner Vahey noted that approval of the 2020 consolidated plan is not listed on tonight's agenda, and he asked for further information on how it is to be used.

Ms. Hamm replied it was not listed for approval tonight because there needs to be a display of plans and public comment period.

Mr. Haglund added that the main use is that HUD asks the entitlement community to put together a planning document outlining the needs of the community and how will it be addressed, and then tie the project to one of the goals of the consolidated plan followed by an accounting system on what the funds are being spent on in the Township.

Commissioner Vahey clarified that every annual action plan is tied to the consolidated plan. Is that correct?

Mr. Haglund replied that is correct.

Commissioner Vahey said aside from annual action plans, are there any other activities that the Township could engage in to implement the consolidated plan?

Mr. Haglund replied not directly, although this is a document that has other planning purposes, so it would be something to incorporate with the Township's updated Comprehensive Plan. Also, if the Township were looking at a redevelopment plan, then this document could be referred to for statistical data, socioeconomic and demographic data to provide direction in terms of housing and community development specifically for low-to-moderate income.

Commissioner Myers said in the past, the Township has used the WGCDC (Willow Grove Community Development Corporation) to fulfill its obligation in rehabilitating low-to-moderate income housing, so would another nonprofit such as the WGCDC be used in the future?

Ms. Hamm replied currently, the Township is fortunate to still have a sizeable balance of CDBG funding to assist with projects and we are in preliminary discussions with the WGCDC and potential other nonprofits to identify projects to assist with rehabilitating rental properties.

Commissioner Carswell asked for further information on public policy.

Ms. Hamm replied public policy would be addressed by recommendations made in the Township's Comprehensive Plan and certain pieces can be put in the zoning ordinance to support and encourage fair housing.

The action plan is where we invest funds provided by HUD, so for the 2020 Action Plan, we identified four projects to focus on for the next year; Administration including training and outreach regarding fair housing policy; Public Facilities Infrastructure Improvements – the request is for support of a senior center in Roslyn ran by the Salem Baptist Church for the community at-large as well as invest in tenant-based rental assistance program; and Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Assistance Program. For program year 2020, HUD granted a total of \$789,126.00.

Commissioner Winegrad said regarding the owner-occupied rehabilitation program, there is a long list of those in need of assistance, so how will that be addressed and why is only \$282,000 allocated towards it?

Ms. Hamm replied this program has just restarted as of January as it was paused due to Governor Wolf's COVID-19 construction pauses. The funds for that program are through DCED as part of their HOME Program, which ultimately is a HUD program, and those funds have not all been used, but when they are expended, we will go back and use the funding through CDBG, which is sizeable balance from past action plan allocations.

Mr. Haglund added that the low-to-moderate income housing program is labor and time-intensive and requires a large financial commitment along with coordination of several individuals making it more complex, but it is important to be continued to address housing affordability.

Commissioner Winegrad said it seems that program has been neglected, although maybe because it is time consuming, but there is a need as the Township does have a long list and it should be addressed.

Commissioner Carswell said it bothers her that there has been many on this list for years and we do not have a clear assessment, so there should be a better system for communication as well as looking at other ways to accomplish it.

Ms. Hamm replied she has been in communication with the eight homeowners who were previously identified for this round of rehabilitation projects, and as we get this program restarted, the hope is to build-in additional capacity to catchup with those on the waiting list.

Commissioner Hecker said it is important to focus on that backlog and he would be in favor of doubling down on the investment of this line item to clear that list as we owe it to the residents.

Commissioner Myers commented that not only is it labor-intensive, but staff-time-intensive and she questioned whether Ms. Hamm will have assistance in getting this done.

Ms. Hamm replied an RFP was sent out to secure a rehabilitation specialist who would speak with homeowners, create scope of work documents for estimates from contractors as well as perform interim inspections.

Manager Manfredi added that there is a clear plan for making sure that community development is addressed.

Commissioners Myers asked about the process of vetting those who want to be placed on the list as well as those who have been on it for a long time.

Ms. Hamm replied the process is that when someone inquires about being placed on the list, we share the requirements with them, and we wait to certify income-eligibility or property value assessment until we get into their project because DCED and HUD have certain requirements in terms of how old the information can be for a homeowner to continue to qualify.

Commissioner Vahey questioned whether it is realistic to be able to spend that amount of funding and still be in compliance with Federal timeliness requirements.

Ms. Hamm replied it is her estimation that given the increase in costs of contractors and materials that we will not be able to serve all eight of those who were identified as part of the HOME funding, but when we get through that funding, we will revert to the CDBG funding and that will occur no later than February 2022.

Next steps, April 20, 2020 will begin the display of plans and public comment period on the FY 2020 Action Plan as well as the Consolidated Plan and then a public hearing will be held on April 29, 2021 via Zoom with the time to be determined. Following the hearing, we will bring the comments on the plan before the Board of Commissioners Committee of the Whole and then a request a consideration of approval by the Board of Commissioners on June 10, 2021 with the intention to submit to HUD before July 1, 2021.

Commissioner Vahey asked about the FY 2021 Action Plan.

Ms. Hamm replied that information will be shared with the Board of Commissioners soon.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Consider FY 2020 Fund Balance Transfer:

Finance Director Hermann said it was previously discussed holding the scheduled FY 2020 fund balance transfer to the pension plans and OPEB Trust until we have the final financial status.

Manager Manfredi suggested carrying this forward until next month as a matter of unfinished business of the Finance Committee.

Commissioner Vahey asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

Commissioner Vahey asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, resident, asked for an explanation of the fund balance transfer.

Commissioner Vahey replied fund balance transfers are made to the pension plans and OPEB Trust at the end of each fiscal year, and it was decided not to make that transfer at the end of 2020 to wait and see whether the Township will need that additional funding for any shortfalls in the current fiscal year, so until we have the final financial status, we will hold the transfer.

NEW BUSINESS:

Item a.

Finance Committee reviewed financial reports for March 2021 including Investments; Clearing Fund; Deferred Revenue/Expense Activity; Petty Cash Balances; Travel Expenses and Statement of Conditions.

Item b.

Commissioner Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Myers to approve the March 2021 expenditures in the amount of \$1,302,055.00 and salaries and wages in the amount of \$1,915,945.32 and authorize the proper officials to sign vouchers in payment of bills and contracts as they mature through the month of June 2021.

Commissioner Vahey asked about ENVIREP, Inc. as listed in the vouchers.

Ms. Hermann replied that was for a replacement of a defective pump grinder at Rydal Pump Station.

Commissioner Vahey asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

Commissioner Vahey asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Item c.

Commissioner Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Myers to approve amendments to the 2019 CDBG Action Plan, amendments to the Citizens Participation Plan, and the CDBG-CV Action Plan activities.

Ms. Hamm explained that amendments to the 2019 CDBG Action Plan included the CARES Act funding as recommended by HUD and the activities were presented. Citizen Participation Plan updates were included; plan display and public comment period on these amendments were held from March 18-25, 2021 and the public hearing was held on March 25, 2021 via Zoom, and there were no written comments, and one oral comment was received.

Commissioner Vahey asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

Commissioner Vahey asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about items not being on the News List of the website.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Item d.

Commissioner Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Winegrad to approve the contract extension with BTC Foods, Inc. in support of the Summer Food Service Program.

Ms. Hamm said this contract is an extension granted as part of the Summer Food Service Program funded through the Pennsylvania Department of Education and total estimated amount of the contract is \$10,892.80 to provide approximately 3,000 meals this summer.

Commissioner Vahey clarified that there has been no issue with performance of this vendor. Is that correct?

Ms. Hamm replied their performance has been great and the children have been happy with the food. Also, they have been responsive and helpful in the process of the contract extension.

Commissioner Vahey asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

Commissioner Vahey asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern that those who are most in need should get the largest portion of funds; also, she feels the Grove Property is “blighted” and there are “potholes not being filled,” and she asked about the finances to “fix” the Boy Scout Preserve.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary