



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES
October 1, 2012
5:30 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

J. Waltman, D. Sterner, R. Corcoran, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, F. Acosta, S. Marmarou, D. Reed

OTHERS PRESENT:

L. Kelleher, S. Katzenmoyer, C. Younger, C. Snyder, M. Bembenick, C. Zale, D. Cituk, L. Agudo,

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 5:40 pm by Council President Acosta. He explained that the introduction of the 2013 budget has been postponed until Wednesday, October 3 at 5 pm.

Mr. Spencer arrived at this time.

I. 2013 CDBG Action Plan

Mr. Agudo distributed copies of the 2013 CDBG Action Plan. He stated that this review will cover CDBG, HOME, ESG, and NSP 2 funds. He stated that the consolidated plan means that the City coordinates with the County.

Mr. Agudo explained that compiling the Action Plan was challenging as the needs of the community are greater than what the City can fund. Mr. Agudo explained that the City is currently spending 2012 funds as the 2013 funds will not be received until June or July of 2013.

Mr. Wright arrived at this time.

Mr. Agudo explained that the ESG funds will be increasing by 25% in 2013. He outlined the considerations made by the Administration when compiling the Action Plan.

Mr. Agudo explained the caps on funding.

Mr. Sterner questioned if requests are made via application. Mr. Agudo stated that requests are made through application. He stated that the Administration has prioritized the requests. He described the challenge of the review process and stated that the Administration recommends that some applications be denied and others receive a decreased amount.

Mr. Agudo reviewed the draft CDBG budget for non-public services and public services and the caps. He explained that the activities can relieve the general fund but cannot be for general City government expenses. He explained that the commercial façade program will not be funded as the application process is difficult and it is not utilized. He also explained that the emergency demolition line is the only slum and blight item in the Action Plan. He stated that this amount is the maximum allowed within the cap.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the notification process for applicants. Mr. Agudo explained that once Council approves the Action Plan, he will begin the notification process.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the sensitivity of eliminating programming.

Mr. Waltman requested a comparison between the 2012 and 2013 allocations. He stated that this historical data is helpful. Mr. Agudo distributed a handout showing the 2012 and 2013 allocations for comparison.

Mr. Waltman questioned the major systems and residential façade amounts for 2012. Mr. Agudo stated that the commercial façade program was funded at \$20,000, the residential façade program was not funded and the major systems program was funded at \$75,000.

Mr. Waltman questioned the codes and trades allocations for 2012. Mr. Agudo stated that Codes was funded for \$400,000 in 2011, \$500,000 for 2012 and that the trades funding has remained the same.

Mr. Acosta stated that he would appreciate if the City would work with the Recreation Commission in the future on rehabilitation projects at parks and playgrounds.

Mr. Waltman questioned Community Policing. Mr. Agudo stated that this was funded for \$214,000 in 2012 but only 20% of funds are spent to date.

Mr. Waltman noted the need for benchmarks to be met. He questioned the funding for Community Policing in 2011. Ms. Reed stated that it was \$286,000.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that as with many grant programs, the challenge may not be spending but the draw downs. She suggested that CD monitor the draw downs on a regular basis.

Mr. Acosta questioned the purpose of Community Policing. Mr. Agudo stated that it was for officers to walk, bike and make home visits. He stated that the Police Department is now focusing on other areas due to the decrease in manpower. He stated that Chief Heim supports the decrease as the documentation is also very burdensome.

Mr. Acosta questioned the continuation of the Human Relations Commission with this decreased funding amount. He noted that citizens need a place to find help. Mr. Spencer stated that the City is currently under its total cap and additional funds are available for programming. Ms. Snyder explained that the Human Relations Commission also receives State funds on a per case basis and that staff will not be lost.

Mr. Agudo explained that the Administration has prioritized the requests and that City programs are funded first at the expense of public requests.

Ms. Reed expressed the belief that this is a well thought out plan. She noted her philosophical differences with funding BCTV. She stated that as more residents opt for satellite dishes that fewer people have access to BCTV. She stated that the City website holds a plethora of information and also has broadcast ability. She stated that this Action Plan does not address senior and youth issues. She requested that the BCTV allocation be amended.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed the belief that the Action Plan is well laid out. She suggested that some programs have decreases rather than being eliminated. She stated that public education has out-prioritized teen and senior programming. She stated that the elimination of funding to the SE Olivet sends a mixed message to Olivet when the City supported their project at Pendora Park.

Mr. Waltman stated that the City's support of the Pendora Park project was the commitment of the parkland. He expressed his belief that BCTV recently lost much funding and that programming was sustained despite the decrease. He stated that the City must give funds to organizations that are prepared to use the funds. He expressed his belief that BCTV helps tell residents where to get the help they need or to find the programs they are looking for. He suggested that the funding for BCTV remain. He expressed his belief that the programs at Olivet are great but that they do private fundraising which should be used for their projects. He noted the need for the City to be careful with what it is funding.

Mr. Marmarou stated that seniors are not tech savvy and not all households have access to computers and the internet. He stated that BCTV advertises many organizations and programs. He noted that they are a benefit to the citizens and that the funding should not be cut.

Mr. Spencer stated that the City is still committed to funding the Recreation Commission at \$488,000 for 2013. He stated that CDBG funds will be used for playground rehabilitations.

Mr. Marmarou stated that the conditions at the 9th & Marion fire station continue. He questioned the renovation projects.

Mr. Corcoran stated that at the last update, Council was told that the contractor walked away from the project. Mr. Bembenick stated that an emergency bid was just issued. He stated that there were no responses. He noted his hope that this project move forward. He stated that the City will re-bid with a broader scope of contractors and a different scope of work. Mr. Spencer stated that the design of the roof has proven problematic.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that this is not a funding issue but a project issue. Mr. Bembenick stated that vendors are reluctant to bid and have been suggesting that the building be raised and a new one completed. He stated that the City does not want to follow this path.

Mr. Acosta questioned the payment of the other contractors. Mr. Bembenick stated that the City must pay for the original scope of work but that other payments will be reimbursed through the insurance bond.

Mr. Agudo reviewed the proposed HOME funding.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that no new housing be approved until the City's current housing stock is in better condition. She stated that she will not support the Delaware Valley Development project.

Mr. Acosta stated that the other groups will be making presentations. Mr. Spencer explained that the City wants to have additional information before committing funding. He noted the need for the City to know what areas the programs will focus on to ensure that they fit with Redevelopment, Community Development, CORE etc.

Mr. Agudo stated that the City has been heavily criticized in the past for not following a housing plan. He noted the need for HOME funding to complement the Housing Strategy and the Market Value Analysis and to maximize the projects through HOME funding. He stated that this portion of the Action Plan will be complete before the October 8 regular meeting for Council review.

Mr. Agudo reviewed the ESG summary and stated that the City has honored and accepted the recommendations of the Homeless Continuum of Care.

Mr. Acosta stated that this was an excellent presentation and that the specifics will be reviewed by Council during their budget review sessions.

Ms. Reed stated that the budget schedule will be set on Wednesday.

II. Meeting with the Reading School District

Mr. Acosta stated that Mr. Waltman recommended that this meeting be held between the President and Vice President and Administrations of the City and School District. He stated that this will lead to more productive meetings. He suggested that he, Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Mr. Spencer and Ms. Snyder meet with Ms. Stroman, Mr. Heebner, Dr. Purcell and Mr. Peters. He stated that this group can create the working plan.

Mr. Marmarou stated that the large group was not problematic in the past. Mr. Acosta stated that this will keep the meetings positive and will set the goals of future meetings.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that there are many items to address and this meeting will prioritize them.

Mr. Acosta stated that the meeting will take place in the Council office on Tuesday, October 9 at 5 pm.

Mr. Waltman stated that there are some obvious discussion topics. He stated that if there are too many topics or too many participants little is accomplished.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that the City have a presentation by the St. Joseph Medical Center on youth violence. Ms. Kelleher suggested that the presentation take place after the completion of budget discussions. Mr. Acosta agreed.

Mr. Agudo left copies of the CD funding applications at the Council office for Council's review.

The Committee of the Whole meeting adjourned at 6:41 pm.

*Respectfully Submitted by
Linda A. Kelleher, CMC, City Clerk*