

**City of Cleveland Heights
Citizens Advisory Committee
February 23, 2021
Virtual Public Meeting (via Zoom)**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Lee Barbee
Laura Black
Susan Efroymson
Jonathan Goldman
Christine Henry
Marc Lefkowitz
Gretchen Mettler
T. Nadas
Allosious Snodgrass
Steve Titchenal

David Benson
Bradley Eckert
Cory Farmer
Diane Hallum
Allison Hite
Allison McCallum
Josephine Moore
Jessica Schantz
Patti Substelny
Catalina Wagers

MEMBERS ABSENT

André Witt (exc.)

STAFF PRESENT

Brian Iorio

Eric Zamft

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Cory Farmer called the meeting to order. Secretary Jessica Schantz called the roll; a quorum was present.

Chairman Farmer asked members to introduce themselves for people that were not at the January meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Next, Chairman Farmer asked if there were any revisions or changes proposed for the October 20, 2020 meeting minutes. A motion to approve the minutes for the October 20, 2020 meeting as presented was made by Patti Substelny. Seconded by Chris Henry, the motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Farmer asked if there were any revisions or changes proposed for the January 26, 2021 meeting minutes. Susan Efroymson said that during our discussion in January that she made the point that the CAC is diverse just not diverse by race. She also said that it was discussed that the CAC could reach out to other committees to work together on increasing community engagement and committee diversity. Chairman Farmer suggested that these points could be made during the unfinished business portion of this meeting and included in

February's meeting minutes. A motion to approve the minutes for the January 26, 2021 meeting was made by Jon Goldman. Seconded by Bradley Eckert, the motion passed unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS

Chairman Farmer asked Mr. Iorio to give the January Finance Report. Mr. Iorio pointed out that a large drawdown was reimbursed in January. He also noted that January had a lower expenditure amount due to the time of the year. Out of the roughly \$140k that was expended in January, \$88k was the final payment for the 2020 ADA Curb Ramp project. The remainder was primarily payroll.

Ms. Hallum asked what year was the funding from for the 2020 ADA Curb Ramp project. Mr. Iorio said that it was from the Year 46 allocation. Mr. Titchenal pointed out that the City is currently able to utilize funds from Year 47 that were reviewed in the Fall of 2020. The outside agencies will not be able to expend funds from Year 47 until July of 2021.

Susan Efroymsen asked for clarification on why the drawdown was so much larger than what was expended in January. Mr. Iorio explained that the drawdown was for expenses in 2020. She also asked if the personnel costs are recurring. Mr. Iorio replied that they are.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Next, Chairman Farmer asked Mr. Iorio to address the alleged misuse of funds that was brought up through email since the last meeting. Mr. Iorio investigated the allegations and shared with the CAC why he does not believe that there was any wrongdoing.

The first issue identified was regarding what Ms. Hallum was told when she applied for a HPO program. She was told that she didn't qualify for a program because the project needed to be a full house rehab and that lead risks would need to be remediated. Mr. Iorio gave a description of the housing rehab loan programs and explained that while those requirements are true for some programs it is not true for others. He explained that this was an unfortunate miscommunication and that because this happened in 2008, there wouldn't need to be any corrective actions taken because the issue has resolved since then.

The next issue identified involved the allegations by a contractor that the City was qualifying contractors as owner occupants and selling homes and providing incentives to them so that they could flip the properties. Mr. Iorio said that the only programs that the City offered that could provide enough funds to pay for a

whole house rehab were HOME or Lead Safe funded programs. CDBG-funded programs are far too small to be able to pay for a full rehab and NSP required that the City was the owner of the property. The HOME funded programs are loans that require multiple levels of review that include a loan review committee, city staff and county staff. This makes it very unlikely that malfeasance would take place because there would need to be a large number of co-conspirators. Mr. Iorio did say that the Lead Safe Cuyahoga program is not restricted to owner-occupants. He said that this program could conceivably fund the lead remediation or abatement of a housing unit intended for rental use that was eventually sold to an eligible owner occupant.

The third issue identified was regarding the City paving the parking lot behind Night Town. Utilizing the County GIS website, Mr. Iorio was able to show that the project that occurred in 2013 took place on public property in a low-mod area and therefore was an eligible use of CDBG funds. Unfortunately, City Staff referred to this public parking lot as the "Night Town Parking Lot" which contributed to the confusion over whether this project was on public property.

Next, Mr. Iorio notified the CAC that he accidentally communicated to Council in a memo that the CDBG-CV3 allocations were reviewed by the CAC on January 26, 2021. He said that the City Manager communicated the correct date for review of October 20, 2020.

Next, Chairman Farmer discussed community engagement and CAC diversity. This is a continuation of the discussion that started in January. Mr. Iorio listed some of the ideas that CAC members identified, such as informational pamphlets, informational articles, and social media. He also stressed the need to create a demographic profile in order to assist Council when they appoint new members.

Chairman Farmer made the point that any communication asset should be controlled by the City in order to maintain continuity as CAC members change.

Jon Goldman suggested that the link to meetings be more prominently placed on the City's website. Laura Black suggested live streaming meetings in order to minimize "Zoom bombing."

David Benson pointed out that the main issue is that not enough people know what CDBG and the CAC are. He stressed that it doesn't matter what's on the website if no one is going to it.

Diane Hallum suggested working with FutureHeights to set up online neighborhood meetings in order to engage residents.

Chairman Farmer suggested investigating how current CAC members first

engaged with the CAC. He also suggested creating an exit survey for members when they leave the CAC in order to identify any barriers to participating.

Susan Efroymsen pointed out that most political discussions are centered on National politics. She stressed the importance of educating residents on the importance of local politics, governance and funding.

Josephine Moore described the concept of ladders of engagement in community building and that we could start to look at our ladder and work on expanding the rungs of the ladder.

Catalina Wagers highlighted that we should be increasing awareness of programs available to residents as well as awareness of the CAC and CDBG.

Mr. Iorio shared that the Communications Department said that they could post information on the City's social media for the CAC. Chris Henry asked if we could have a representative of the Communications Department speak at our next meeting. Laura Black suggested that someone from this department work with any subcommittee created. Mr. Iorio said that it would be good to have Sruti Basu from FutureHeight join the subcommittee.

Susan Efroymsen said that we should consider an infomercial for the City in general with information regarding programs and the CAC included.

Diane Hallum suggested that the CAC minutes should be posted on social media.

Laura Black asked if we should be advocating for HUD to do more publicity for its programs because most cities deal with these same issues.

Marc Lefkowitz asked if we could post the recordings of the CAC meetings. He added that it would be good for the City to share the successes of our subgrantees and that through this work the CAC could be highlighted as a partner in order to increase awareness of the CAC and the CDBG application process in the community.

Mr. Iorio said that it is important that we create a plan that can identify communication activities, the frequency of the communications and who will be writing the content.

Jessica Schantz asked members interested in joining the subcommittee to email Brian Iorio. She also suggested that when it comes close to Council needing to appoint new members, the subcommittee could develop a concise informational document that can be shared in the community. Mr. Iorio added

that the subcommittee could also examine the current CAC application.

Chris Henry said that we should consider refining the annual grant application to be less tedious.

Mr. Iorio listed some activities that are specific to the CAC and CDBG that could advance racial equity. They included: identifying racial equity and inclusion as a priority and developing a question for the annual application; modifying the Citizen Participation Plan to require or aspire to a certain demographic makeup; modifying the geographic requirements of CAC members in the Citizen Participation Plan; and advancing the recommendations in the AI through community discussion and advocacy.

Susan Efroyimson said that we should consult with the Law Department to make sure that our approach to racial equity doesn't violate any antidiscrimination laws, particularly if we seek to have demographic quotas in the CAC membership.

NEW BUSINESS

Next, Chairman Farmer asked if any members would like to serve on the 2021 nominating committee. The nominating committee will be nominating officers for 2021. Chris Henry, Brad Eckert and Gretchen Mettler volunteered to serve on the nominating committee.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Cory Farmer, Chair

Jessica Schantz, Secretary