



APPROVED

MINUTES

**Community Development Commission Meeting
October 25, 2022, City Council Chambers
400 South Vine Street, Urbana, IL 61801**

Chairperson Anne Heinze Silvis called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Roll Call: Breaden Belcher, Community Development Coordinator, called the roll. There was a quorum present.

Commission Members Present: Anne Heinze-Silvis, Chris Diana, Patricia Jones, Rev. Robert Freeman, Shawn Green, and DeShawn Williams

Commission Members' Excused/Absent: N/A

Others Present: Breaden Belcher, Community Development Coordinator, and Hillary Ortiz, Office Specialist

Approval of Minutes: Commissioner Jones moved to approve the minutes from the September 27, 2022 meeting. Commissioner Freeman seconded this motion. A voice vote in favor of approving the minutes was carried unanimously. The minutes were approved.

Petitions and Communications: There were no Petitions or Communications to discuss.

Audience Participation: Chairperson Heinze-Silvis announced that members of the audience could step forward and speak if they wished. No one stepped forward. Mr. Belcher stated that no public comments were received through email either.

Staff Report: Mr. Belcher reminded the commissioners that the City of Urbana is moving to a new email system. He urged them to get their new city email address set up as soon as possible. Mr. Belcher told the commissioners that the IT Department can help anyone who needs assistance doing this.

Mr. Belcher addressed an article that was published in the News-Gazette entitled "Urbana has \$750,000 in federal funding to use or lose by next April 30". He stated the City of Urbana is aware of the balance and is working on getting the remaining funds committed to projects before the deadline. Mr. Belcher informed the commissioners that the City was given a separate batch of money to be used towards helping combat the effects that COVID had on the community, which the city prioritized spending first. COVID funding did not have as many rules for what programs were allowed to be funded with this money, so the City was able to implement programs typically not allowed through regular CDBG funding. Additionally, many of the regularly scheduled CDBG programs were either postponed or suspended during COVID, further resulting in CDBG funds taking longer than expected to spend. Mr. Belcher announced that the City has officially spent all of the COVID funding and will now be able to focus on spending the remaining balance of the CDBG funds before the deadline. Mr. Belcher stated that the City already has a few projects in the works, but the city is unable to move forward with them until HUD approves the CAPER that was submitted in September. The City is expecting to receive a response from HUD soon.

Mr. Belcher also informed the commissioners that HUD is scheduled to conduct a timeliness check on the City of Urbana in the spring of 2023. This timeliness check is to ensure funds are being spent appropriately and within a reasonable amount of time.

Commissioner Jones asked if the commissioners would be given the chance to vote on the upcoming projects before they are implemented. Mr. Belcher responded, telling her, yes, commissioners and the City Council must approve all projects that make use of HOME or CDBG funding.

Mr. Belcher presented the commissioners with information about the new grant program that the City of Urbana and the City of Champaign are collaborating on. This new grant is called the Housing and Homelessness Innovation, which focuses on providing funding for organizations that serve low-to-moderate income populations, specifically those who are chronically homeless, literally homeless, imminently at risk of becoming homeless, or fleeing and/or attempting to flee domestic violence. The categories for the project/program types that will be eligible for funding under this new grant are Supportive Services, Housing Navigation Services, and Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Programs.

Funding for this new grant program totals \$5.8 million and comes from the City of Urbana, the Urbana HOME Consortium, and the City of Champaign. The City of Urbana has committed nearly \$2.7 million through its HOME ARP program and another \$500,000 of Urbana's HOME ARPA funding. The Urbana HOME Consortium has committed \$285,000. The City of Champaign has committed \$2.2 million of general funds and \$175,000 of CDBG funds. Mr. Belcher noted that Urbana's HOME ARPA funds have not been officially secured, however, once HUD approves the City's Allocation Plan, those funds will be fully committed.

Mr. Belcher stated that the purpose of this new grant program is to ease the burden placed on organizations in having to hunt down funding for their programs. The two cities were able to pool their money to make this process easier on the organizations. Additionally, a Consolidated Application was also created to further simplify this process. A Consolidated Application is an application that can be used to apply for funding on a variety of projects, through the use of the same form. Both cities have a group of knowledgeable staff members who will review each application and sort projects/programs into different funding categories, based on what best suits each individual's application. When scoring the applications, the HHI group will consider the following criteria:

1. The applicant must explain how their project/program meets each City's Council Goals.
2. The applicant must demonstrate their relevant experience in implementing similar projects/programs and they must provide detailed plans for they will do so again with this project/program.
3. The applicant must provide details on how they plan to collaborate with others in the community to maximize their project/program's potential benefit.
4. The applicant must demonstrate project readiness by explaining how they will be able to implement their project/program in a timely fashion.
5. The applicant must have clearly defined goals and accomplishments showing what their project/program will achieve.
6. The applicant's project/program must address and provide a solution to closing housing and homelessness gaps within the community.

Mr. Belcher then shared a timeline of how the application process will work. It is as follows:

- Applications will open on Friday, November 4, 2022, through the online Neighborly Portal.
- City Staff will host an informational session at Champaign's City Council Chambers on Friday, November 4, 2022, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. During this informational meeting, staff will walk the applicants through the application, project criteria, and scoring process. This session will also be streamed live for those who cannot attend in person.
- City Staff will host a second information session in the Lewis Auditorium of the Urbana Free Library on Monday, November 28, 2022, from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm. This informational session will be an

opportunity for applicants to come in and ask any last-minute questions that they may have. This session will also be streamed live for those who cannot attend in person.

- The deadline for application submittals ends on Monday, December 13, 2022.
- The cities will jointly evaluate the applications between Tuesday, December 13, and Friday, December 16, 2022. Once potential projects/programs have been selected by each city, the two will go their separate ways from this point forward.
- All projects/programs that the City of Urbana's HHI staff have selected for potential funding will be presented to the CD Commission, for their approval, on Tuesday, December 20, 2022.
- All projects/programs the CD Commission has approved and recommended for funding will be taken to Urbana's City Council Meeting on Monday, January 17, 2023.
- All projects/programs that the City of Champaign's HHI staff have selected for potential funding will be taken to Champaign's City Council Meeting on Tuesday, January 24, 2023.
- The City of Urbana will submit funding agreements for the approved projects/programs to Urbana's City Council for final approval on Monday, February 6, 2023.
- The City of Champaign will submit funding agreements for their approved projects/programs to Champaign's City Council for final approval in March 2023.

Mr. Belcher stated that this timeline moves quickly because both cities need to be able to commit the funds to each project before HUD's deadline. With this timeline, both cities to review the applications, submit them to their commissions/councils, and then draw up contracts and agreements by the beginning of the new year.

Commissioner Freeman expressed his concerns about whether the timeline gives the staff and CD Commission members enough turnaround time to fully consider each application before they need to be voted upon at the December 20th meeting. Commissioner Freeman also noted that many people may have plans to travel around the time of the December 20th meeting and asked if the commissioners would be provided a Zoom link for them to call into the meeting. Mr. Belcher responded to Commissioner Freeman's concerns by reminding him that HHI staff members from both cities will be conducting an initial review of the applications, so only the applications that have been "pre-approved" will be presented to the commissioners for their consideration. Mr. Belcher assured Commissioner Freeman that once staff has narrowed down the applications, they will send out a packet ASAP for the commissioners to review. In response to the Zoom Meeting request, Mr. Belcher said that staff would discuss the option internally and let the commissioners know if they can accommodate the request.

Commissioner Jones asked how applicants will know what kind of documentation they need to provide. Mr. Belcher told her about the Companion Manual that is included with each application. He said that this manual not only gives the applicants examples of different types of projects/programs each batch of funding can be used towards, but it also lists the required documentation for each category.

Commissioner Jones asked Mr. Belcher if he knew how many applications the City was expecting to receive and/or if there was a certain number of applications that the commissioner will be reviewed for approval. Mr. Belcher replied that he is optimistic as to the number of applications the City will receive, but it is too early to tell. He also stated that there is no set number of applications that will be approved, it just depends on how much funding each applicant requests and how far the funds can be stretched. If the commissioners are curious about what the unapproved projects/programs were, they will still be able to read through a brief summary of those projects in the Commission Packet.

Commissioner Diana asked Mr. Belcher to explain how the selection process works in terms of if there are any strings attached to each category of funding based on where the funds originated. Mr. Belcher confirmed that there are rules for how each batch of funds can be used, but this information has been made clear on the application and the website. Mr. Belcher reiterated the fact that neither the applicants nor the commissioners will need to worry about this since the responsibility of determining an appropriate funding source falls on the

HHI staff. HHI staff will have already sorted the applications into different funding categories before they are presented to the commissioners.

Commissioner Freeman asked what safeguards are in place to ensure that someone does not miss funding opportunities because they did not explain something correctly on their application, specifically since the applicant won't know upfront what pot of money they are applying for. Mr. Belcher told the commissioners that the scoring rubric and examples of the different types of programming appropriate for each category have been listed on the application and website. Mr. Belcher also noted that since each city has different council goals, there is a little bit of flexibility for staff to potentially fit an applicant's program into more than one category if needed.

Commissioner Freeman asked Mr. Belcher if the staff would be willing to let applicants know that their application is deficient in a particular area, and allow them to edit/submit a corrected version. Mr. Belcher responded by saying, unfortunately, this will not be permitted. All applications will be accepted "as is" to ensure fairness toward all applicants. Mr. Belcher reminded the commissioners that city staff is hosting two Informational Sessions where applicants can come in to get help or to ask questions about their application. Additionally, applicants will be encouraged to reach out to staff, through the HHI grant-specific email address, if they have any questions during the open application period. Any questions that are received during the application process, whether on the phone, via email, or during the information session will be compiled with together with the staff's responses and posted on the grant's website for everyone to view.

Commissioner Williams asked if an applicant is having a hard time meeting the application deadline, but it sounds like they have a really good program idea, would the staff be able to extend the due date in that scenario? Mr. Belcher explained that the application deadline is a hard deadline that was determined by HUD, so it cannot be extended for any reason. Mr. Belcher noted that the due date has been listed very clearly on the application, promotional materials, and the application's website. Mr. Belcher also stated that the scoring criteria have been weighted in such a way that as long as the applicant follows the instructions, no one specific answer to a question will automatically disqualify an applicant from receiving funding. The only exception to this statement is for any question that asks the applicant to explain how their proposed project/program meets one of the program's main objectives. For example, the proposed project/program must provide a service that is accessible to low-to-moderate-income households. The proposed project/program must address housing or homeless gaps within the community. The proposed project/program must meet the City's Council Goals, etc.

Commissioner Diana expressed that he is fearful the City will receive requests for funding totaling more than the \$5.8 million grant amount and that applicants will feel as if there are "winners" or "losers" based on whether your project/program is selected for funding or not. Mr. Belcher replied that he understands Commissioner Diana's concern, but the staff will do their best to fund as many projects/programs as possible, while still focusing the funding on projects/programs that provide the most benefit to the community. Mr. Belcher told the commissioners that the application has a section that asks the applicant what they plan to do if their project/program only receives 25%, 50%, or 75% of the requested funding. The answers to these questions will help the staff determine which projects/programs need to have their full funding amounts prioritized vs. those projects/programs that will still be able to be successful if only a portion of their requested funding is received.

Commissioner Diana asked how the grant and application will be promoted. Mr. Belcher told him that the HHI group has developed promotional materials that will be distributed through a proportional blitz on all social media sites and each city's websites. The group has also scheduled a few visits to different community meetings in which they will present the HHI Grant information.

Chairperson Anne Heinze-Silvis asked if there was a certain deadline for when the distributed funding would need to be spent. Mr. Belcher told her that HUD attaches a timeline to every category of funding, but since this money is coming from multiple different sources, it will vary for each application. Mr. Belcher believes the

HOME-ARP money, has a date of needs to be spent by 2030, but he does not know any of the others off the top of his head. Mr. Belcher offered to look into this and let the commissioners know at a later date.

Chairperson Anne Heinze-Silvis asked why County Consortium representatives are not helping fund or distribute this grant. Mr. Breaden responded by saying there is county representation through the HOME funding. He explained that any time HOME funding is referenced, it is coming from the county-wide HOME Consortium. The HOME Consortium includes Urbana, Champaign, and the county. The reason Mr. Belcher referred only to the City of Urbana and the City of Champaign is that those are the two entities that will be dealing with the hands-on aspect of processing applications and distributing the funds.

Chairperson Anne Heinze-Silvis asked how the cities will decide which projects/programs each city will be given. Mr. Belcher told her that distribution will depend on how many applications for each kind of project/program are submitted and how many projects/programs can be funded through each category. He stated that when it is time to review the applications, the two cities will sit down and discuss the potential benefit that each project/program would bring to each community, and whichever city will benefit the most from the program will be the one that receives it.

Chairperson Anne Heinze-Silvis asked what the word "innovation" means, in terms of this Grant's title. Mr. Belcher said the word innovation was used because the cities are looking for innovative ways to solve these Housing and Homelessness problems. He also stated having two cities come together to create a Consolidated Application was an innovative way to approach this project. Working with the City of Champaign to address these problems overall is not only going to benefit their city, but it will benefit Urbana's as well. Commissioner Diana said he thinks "innovation" was a good word to use because it means the cities are looking to make progress and provide solutions to these problems in a lasting way, even after the funding is gone.

Old Business: There was no old business to discuss.

New Business: There was no new business to discuss.

Study Session: There was no study session to discuss.

Seeing no further business, Ms. Heinze Silvis adjourned the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

Recorded by

Hillary L. Ortiz
Office Specialist