

Observer Report
Mental Health Board and Housing & Community Development Act Committee
November 17, 2020 (via remote Zoom due to Covid)

Observer: Pat Blumen

Meeting Began: 7:04PM

Meeting Ended: 8:16PM

Members Present:

MHB: Becky Feiler, Irene Zaya, Sandi Johnson, Rodney Orr, Demita Cravens, Nathan Carpenter

HCD: Hugo Rodriguez, Derrick Ohenya (sp? New member); Donna Win Sue and **Aldermen:** Don Wilson, Robin Simmons (chair) Anne Rainey, Melissa Wynne.

Quorum present (only needed for HCD)

Staff Present: Sarah Flax, Jessica Wingader, & two new City hires to observe the mtg: Marion Johnson (Housing & Economic Development Specialist, former Intern) and Megan Gibson (Housing & Homeless Commission).

No Public Comment either write-in or present for meeting.

Sarah Flax commented that the Social Services Core Committee project to focus on those in greatest need with an equity lens (started in early 2020) was derailed due to Covid. City staff have refocused on responding to those in greatest need due to the Covid crisis utilizing CARES Act dollars. (It is not clear if other dollars were also used.)

Update on 2021 CDBG Public Services & MHB Funding Process Memo.

Note: This memo is too detailed to summarize and can be found in the packet for the 11/17/20 meeting date.

Sarah commented the City has been developing strategies to address the perception that the department work in silos, thus getting feedback from all the relevant internal departments about how to address those most in need with an equity lens. No one knows when the community recovery will be complete, but the next step is to gather information from stakeholders and community partners. Rental support and food assistance will be addressed Mon in CDBG mtg. She commented that Parks & Rec. is not equipped to provide educational support needed for virtual learning and there are no facilities open to provide services. Organizations need to figure out what they are going to need.

2020 Activities Update:

Because of an error in HUD's funding formula, the CDBG grant was reduced by \$282 and the HOME grant was reduced by \$59, resulting in a \$42. reduction in public service funding.

Covid Impact on Programs & Projects:

Learning Bridge bought technology supplies to support teletherapy.

Childcare Network purchased therapeutic supplies to support development of occupational & gross motor skills.

Open Studios Project & Girl Scouts are having issues engaging income-eligible participants.

Northwest CASA: ED position is vacant. Board is attempting to verify program expenses.

CJE Senior Life returned its \$20,000 CDBG award for use in Covid as its capital project was adjusted.

Danita Cravens asked about Mental Health: City staff said that city is moving toward a client-centered approach with funds for individuals to get into services immediately perhaps at Medicaid rate. She said that traditional funding has not allowed those most in need because of access barriers. They are looking at giving minority providers 5% over the lowest responsible bid to provide services to minority individuals. A number of people talked about programs that are already operating: Skokie Parks for Bessie Rhodes and Walker students, Fleetwood Jourdain, YMCA/District 65. However, these efforts are insufficient to meet the need. There is no capacity at childcare centers as they can only serve 25 –50% of capacity due to Covid. MHB funding could be used for scholarships. CDBG money is restricted to 3 months of direct services.

Hard to get exact numbers of need in Evanston because numbers are aggregated into the Chicago Metropolitan area, so using estimates based on percentages. 374 Ev. residents applied for housing subsidies, but don't know how many got. There was a limit of 200 and it was done by lottery. Programs have tried paying meals forward, PTAs have donated reserves, Ev. Community Foundation raised money using match funds. There are 60 homeless families in hotel getting meals for free.

\$397,400.45 CARES ACT money already spent.

Draft 2021 Action Plan posted for 30-day public comment period

Discussion of allocation process and timing to allocate housing and public facilities/ infrastructure categories.

There is no 2021 federal budget yet; may be funded as a continuing resolution after 12/11. No one knows when there is access to funding.

In Dec. HCD mtg: Housing Rehab. and Code Enforcement on the agenda; also approving capital projects: low to moderate income alleys.

9/15 HCD minutes of 9/15/20 meeting approved.

No Staff Reports.

Comment: Challenge is best use of available funds

Next mtg: HCD 12/15

Next mtg. MHB 12/10