

**City of Cleveland Heights
Citizens Advisory Committee
April 20, 2021
Virtual Public Meeting (via Zoom)**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Lee Barbee
Laura Black
Cory Farmer
Diane Hallum
Allison Hite
Allison McCallum
Josephine Moore
Jessica Schantz
Patti Substelny

David Benson
Susan Efroymson
Jonathan Goldman
Christine Henry
Marc Lefkowitz
Gretchen Mettler
T. Nadas
Allosious Snodgrass
Steve Titchenal

MEMBERS ABSENT

Bradley Eckert (exc.)
André Witt (exc.)

Catalina Wagers (exc.)

STAFF PRESENT

Brian Iorio

GUESTS PRESENT

Amy Himmelein

CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Jessica Schantz called the meeting to order. Secretary Gretchen Mettler called the roll; a quorum was present.

GUEST SPEAKER

Chairwoman Schantz introduced the guest speaker for April, Amy Himmelein, the City's Finance Director.

Ms. Himmelein thanked the CAC for inviting her. She stated that she joined Cleveland Heights in April of 2020. She shared that the City took measures to conserve the budget early in the pandemic and then received over \$4M in CARES Act funding that helped the City pay for safety forces and retrofitting City work places for the pandemic. This helped the City budget end with a \$7M surplus in 2020. She noted that the City received over \$1M in CDBG-CV funds from the CARES Act, however none of these funds were used to offset anything in the City's General Fund.

She said that when the City receives one-time funds she encourages Council and the Administration to not use funds like this on reoccurring expenses. One example of something that ought to receive stimulus funds is the parking fund. The City did not charge for parking for much of 2020 and expenses related to parking still occurred.

Ms. Himmelein also noted that in 2020, discretionary spending that could be delayed was put off. In particular, capital projects were delayed in 2020. She is hopeful that the Federal Government will be providing infrastructure funds in order to fund delayed capital projects.

Ms. Himmelein shared that the City will be receiving over \$40M as a part of the American Rescue Plan. The guidance for these funds has not been released yet so she is unable to share how those funds will be used.

Lee Barbee asked if there are funds set aside for the Centennial. Ms. Himmelein said that there are, however, because of social distancing, many of the plans cannot go forward. She said that she is unsure if more events will occur after the Pandemic has waned.

Marc Lefkowitz asked how the CDBG-CV funds were allocated. Mr. Iorio said that he will pull up the breakdown and share it before the end of the meeting.

Diane Hallum shared her concern with how CDBG funds are being monitored. She asked how she can provide oversight as a member of the CAC. Ms. Himmelein said that the City's finance software is able to produce reports that can be shared. Ms. Hallum asked how the CAC can track which employees are being paid with CDBG and how she can be ensured that they are doing CDBG work. Ms. Himmelein shared that most CDBG employees are either 100% CDBG or distributed as a percentage across multiple budgets. Mr. Iorio said that employees that are split among multiple departments fill out a timesheet that reflects their budgeted department split.

Jon Goldman asked what the State of the City is after over 1 year of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Ms. Himmelein said the City's finances are actually in a good place. She is also encouraged by how the first few months of 2021 have gone and the American Rescue Plan allocation.

Patti Substelny asked what big projects are coming up for the City. Ms. Himmelein said that the refuse automation transition will be a relatively large project. She also said that the EPA consent decree is another item that will need a fairly large budget. She noted that her main goal is preserving the general fund's balance so that the City can weather unexpected downturns. Ms. Substelny asked how she can find out more about the consent decree. Ms.

Himmelein suggested going to the City's website. Public Works has put some documents and recordings on there. Mr. Iorio said that he saw some meetings on the consent decree on the City's YouTube channel.

Susan Efroymsen asked if the City intends on rehiring its seasonal workers. Ms. Himmelein said that they have been budgeted and that some have already been hired.

Josie Moore asked which capital projects have been delayed. Ms. Himmelein said that she doesn't know what projects were budgeted in 2020 off hand, however, very little was spent from the capital projects fund in 2020. Mr. Iorio said that he knows that the Shannon Road Waterline and Street Resurfacing Project was just awarded and that the City received some funds for a Coventry Road resurfacing project.

Ms. Efroymsen asked about the Taylor Road TLCI project. Mr. Iorio said that this was likely delayed due to the pandemic and that projects like this that follow a formal planning process tend to happen over a multiyear period.

Steve Titchenal asked what other sources of revenue, besides parking fees, are affected by the pandemic. Ms. Himmelein said that court costs and recreation fees have been impacted. She also said that gas tax, income tax and property tax revenues were higher than expected.

Ms. Hallum asked how the income tax revenue from major construction projects was coming in. Ms. Himmelein said that she is working with the main construction contractor for the Top of the Hill project in order to get information from their subcontractors. She said that this is the only project she is tracking like this because the City is a partner in the project. Other projects are not reported by RITA in this way.

Ms. Hallum asked if Cleveland Heights pays more in debt service fees compared to other cities. Ms. Himmelein said that debt is relatively low in Cleveland Heights and that the City recently refinanced some long term debt in order to save money.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairwoman Schantz asked if there were any revisions or changes proposed for the March 16, 2021 meeting minutes. Mr. Iorio said that he will need to amend the draft minutes to show that Ms. Efroymsen was in attendance. A motion to approve the minutes as amended for the March 16, 2021 meeting was made by Jessica Schantz. Seconded by Josie Moore, the motion passed unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS

Chairwoman Schantz asked Mr. Iorio to give the Staff Report. Mr. Iorio informed the CAC that at the prior night's City Council meeting, Source of Income was added to the City's Fair Practices Ordinance. The CAC played an important role in urging Council to examine the issue in 2018 and through the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice that was completed in 2020.

For the Finance Report, Mr. Iorio noted the CDBG program expended almost \$118k in March. \$53k of this amount was City personnel. Expenditures were also made on the Noble Road Early Action Project, Family Connections, Start Right Food Pantry, Heights Emergency Food Center, and HRRC and HPO Housing Programs. The City also spent \$9,896.13 in CDBG-CV expenses.

Lastly, Mr. Iorio went over the CDBG-CV allocations and showed what was approved by the CAC and City Council.

There was a discussion regarding Noble Road and the lack of CDBG spending. Several CAC members expressed divergent viewpoints.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Next, Chairwoman Schantz discussed CAC Diversity and Community Engagement. She shared an outline of what the subcommittees would be tasked with and asked if any additional CAC members would like to join:

Community Engagement Committee: *Increase/diversify communication output to better inform the CH community of both the CAC's purpose and the CDBG process.*

Volunteer Members: Lee Barbee, Chris Henry, Marc Lefkowitz

- *Create a schedule for publicizing CAC information. Outlets could include the city's social media feeds, the city's weekly newsletter, the Heights Observer, Focus magazine, etc. Work with Mary Trupo to generate and approve publicity materials and outlets.*
- *Create digital and print material synthesizing CDBG/CAC work to post in public spaces (school newsletters, church bulletins, library calendars, etc.)*

Diversity Committee: *Define diversity as it relates to the CH community, and strive for representation of that diversity on the CAC.*

Volunteer Members: Cory Farmer, Laura Black, Susan Efroymson

- *Identify the ways in which the current CAC both reflects and fails to*

- represent the diversity of CH.*
- *Work with city council to understand how CAC candidates are vetted and selected; review the application and suggest edits that formalize representation.*
 - *Meet with the Equity Task Force to share publicity materials and brainstorm how their work can help with the goal of increasing diversity on the CAC and other city committees.*

Lee Barbee said that he would like to join both subcommittees. Patti Substelny asked to join the Community Engagement Subcommittee and Diane Hallum asked to join the Diversity Subcommittee.

Chairwoman Schantz pointed out that the tasks that she identified are not mandates but rather suggestions in order to jump start the subcommittees' work.

There was a discussion on whether the subcommittees would be standing committees or more short term. Jon Goldman suggested that the subcommittees can evaluate whether they need to continue at the end of the year or if their work could be absorbed into the CAC as a whole. Chairwoman Schantz expressed that she likes the idea of calling the subcommittees task forces for the time being.

Chairwoman Schantz made a motion to create the Diversity Task Force and the Community Engagement Task Force. Seconded by David Benson, the motion was approved 17-0-1. Gretchen Mettler abstained from voting.

NEW BUSINESS

Next, Chairwoman Schantz reviewed general meeting protocol and time management in an effort to make the CAC more accessible to those with limited availability to participate:

CAC Meeting Protocol

1. **Keep meetings, when possible, to an hour or hour and a half**, recognizing that certain meetings (namely those in which committee presentations and voting on funding allocation take place) necessarily extend beyond that time frame.
2. **Focus meeting discussions around agenda items that serve the CAC's stated mission:** to provide a means for the community to obtain information on the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, assist in the evaluation and preparation of the CDBG yearly

application, participate in monitoring the implementation of the CDBG program, and review the City's annual CDBG budget.

3. **Use the chat option to document discussion items you'd like to include in future meetings** but that are not pressing or thematic to the current meeting's agenda. Brian or the chair will then formally recognize those items.
4. **Support the chair** in holding to two responsibilities: time management and graciousness.

Mr. Iorio next discussed the reallocation of Commercial Revolving Loan Funds. He reminded the CAC that the 2021 CDBG allocation was less than what was estimated by the City. This resulted in a loss of \$17,530. According to the 2021 contingency plan, the \$298 budgeted for the 2021 SIO would be eliminated and CD Admin, Nuisance Abatement and the Storefront programs would be cut by \$5,744 each. Mr. Iorio said that he is proposing to reallocate \$17,232 of Commercial Revolving Loan Funds in order to restore the CD Admin, Nuisance Abatement and Storefront budgets to what the CAC recommended and City Council approved. These three programs would be increased by \$5,744. The Commercial Revolving Loan Fund ended with an increase of roughly \$56k in 2020.

A motion to reallocate \$17,232 of Commercial Revolving Loan Funds to the CD Admin, Nuisance Abatement, and Storefront programs equally was made by Chris Henry. Seconded by Jon Goldman, the motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Iorio finished the meeting with some announcements. He shared that the City is soliciting comments on Use of Force and Bias Based Police Policies with a deadline of April 23, 2021. There will also be a Police Policy Review and Virtual Town Hall on April 27, 2021, 7:00-8:30pm. Also, the City will be having an Arbor Day Celebration on April 30, 2021 at 10am on the corner of Noble and Roanoke. HRRC will also be conducting 2 classes in May: "Ask the Arborist" on May 4, 2021 at 6:30pm and "Patio Pavers" on May 18, 2021 at 6:30pm. Lastly, Lake Erie Ink will be having a virtual fundraiser on May 8, 2021, 7-9pm. Chairwoman Schantz added that Shaker Lakes will be giving away native tree saplings on April 22, 2021.

The CAC discussed reviewing the Year 48 CDBG Application and Subcommittee assignments. Mr. Iorio said that he will send out a blank application for review and that the subcommittee assignments will likely be made following the application deadline.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:59 p.m.

Jessica Schantz, Chair

Gretchen Mettler, Secretary