

May 24, 2010

City Council

Proceedings by Authority

State of New York
City of Jamestown
City Council Chambers

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A Public Hearing of the City Council of the City of Jamestown, New York was held on Monday, May 24, 2010 at 7:15 p.m.

Present: Council President Greg Rabb, Council Members, Paul Whitford, Kim Ecklund and George Spitale; Director of Development Steve Centi and Planning and Research Specialist Amanda Chapel

Mayor Sam Teresi called the meeting to order.

Director of Financial Services/City Clerk James N. Olson read the Public Hearing Notice.

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LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Public Hearing sponsored by the Mayor of the City of Jamestown, New York, will be held on Monday, May 24, 2010 at 6:15 PM, in the City Council Chambers, Second Floor, Municipal Building, Jamestown, New York. The purpose of this public hearing is to provide citizens with the opportunity to comment on the proposed FY 2010 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Action Plan for the City of Jamestown and FY 2010-2014 CDBG 5-Year Consolidated Strategic Plan, and to assess prior CDBG program performance and progress.

Copies of the proposed FY 2010 CDBG and HOME Action Plan and FY 2010-2014 CDBG 5-Year Consolidated Strategic Plan, including a description of the proposed activities, will be made available at the Public Hearing. Copies will also be made available for a 30-day public review period at the following locations: the Department of Development, 200 East Third Street, Municipal Building, Third Floor, Jamestown, New York; the City Clerk's Office, 200 East Third Street, Municipal Building, First Floor; Jamestown, New York, and the James Prendergast Library, 509 Cherry Street, Jamestown, New York.

The public is invited to submit their comments, in writing, to the Department of Development, Municipal Building, Third Floor, Jamestown, New York, 14701. All comments received will be considered prior to the formal authorization of the application by the Jamestown City Council and its submission to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development by the Mayor.

Samuel Teresi, Mayor

Mayor Teresi introduced Director of Development Steve Centi and Planning and Research Specialist Amanda Chapel, the two principle staff members that have been coordinating the public input process to date, getting input, reviewing our past performance within the Community Development Block Grant and HOME programs and they also have been leading the process of putting together the draft program that will be laid out for you tonight.

Mr. Centi: Thank you Mr. Mayor. What I'd like to talk about tonight is to kind of indicate what's brought us to this point, talk about some of the mechanics of what we're doing tonight. This is our second required public hearing. I will be soliciting additional input from the public after I present this year's staff recommended plan and this whole process started really after we were approved last year for our fiscal year 2009 plan by HUD. This is an ongoing process – it's not something that just takes place at a limited point of time in the year. We have meetings throughout the year with a number of different groups about this very source of funding here. I'd also like to thank the Mayor and City Council members and JURA Board members for their support and cooperation with us throughout the course of the year and I'd like to thank our staff who administer these programs; who work hard to do this – especially recognizing Amanda Chapel. As the Mayor mentioned earlier, Amanda has taken on quite a significant role in dealing with this particular funding in addition to her responsibilities in the Planning Department.

This year we're talking about CDBG funds in the amount of \$1,520,053.00 and Home Program funding in the amount of \$419,993.00. In addition to the submission of the fiscal year 2010 Annual Action Plan, we'll also be submitting for review and for Council's action the fiscal year 2010 to fiscal year 2014 Consolidated Plan. I have copies of the Consolidated Plan here if anyone would like to review the draft copy. It's only 85 pages if you have time to peruse it or look through it, but it's still a work in process that will be submitted to HUD after Council takes action on this at their June voting session.

Mayor Teresi: Mr. Centi – will that Plan also be available at different locations for public review, and if so, could you please state where those are going to be?

Mr. Centi: Actually, everything will be on review in the Clerk's Office here in City Hall, the first floor; at the James Prendergast Library and in our offices on the Third Floor of City Hall. Everything will be available after tonight's meeting for a thirty (30) day review period and input period and anyone that would like to make comments in writing can submit those during that period of time to our office before the Plan is brought to Council for action in June.

Mayor Teresi: And the summary line item is available for everybody this evening? Correct?

Mr. Centi: Actually, that's going to be published – the Legal Notice – in the newspaper indicating the proposed Plan as I'll get to you in a couple of seconds just to give you the specifics about it, but just to remind everyone – where the funding comes from and what the objectives and parameters of it are. The CDBG Program is something that...we've been an entitlement community since 1990. Since that time, we've utilized more than \$40,000,000 of Community Development Block Grant funding for a variety of activities including owner/occupied and rental housing, infrastructure improvements, public facility improvements and energy conservation, public parks and handicapped accessible improvements and business expansion and job retention activities. It's important to keep in mind that this funding does have restrictions associated with it. The funding does have to meet one of three national objectives that HUD has – those being projects that benefit low and moderate income individuals and families, activities that result in the elimination or prevention of slums and blighted conditions, or projects addressing urgent needs and situations posing a serious and immediate threat to the health and welfare of the community that cannot be funded with other federal or state or local private resources.

In regard to that, a minimum of 70% of this funding needs to be allocated for activities that address low-moderate income needs. For fiscal year 2010 this means that at least \$852,987.00 needs to be allocated for low-moderate income activities. The HOME Program we use primarily for our owner/occupied rehabilitation. We've been an entitlement community for HOME since 1996 and during that period of time, we've expended more than \$5.6 million for those activities. One of the important aspects of this and the reason it's called Community Development Block Grant is because an important element is the input from the community. I've listed on the program that I've handed out to you, a list of input meetings that were held. In addition to the input meetings with members of the community, there's also a significant effort in-house, internally, to take a look at existing programs and the needs for funding those particular programs. I've identified in here some of the priority areas that have come out of these discussions. A lot of those are things that we've heard many times in discussions about neighborhood revitalization; but we've also had some other areas that we've added to that and we've incorporated into our five year Consolidated Plan; things that are compatible with the recently introduced and yet to be approved Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. Those things being things such as reducing the number of rental units in the City and decreasing the density of housing units; expanding target area code enforcement capabilities in the City; improving infrastructure; improving parks. A couple that we're actually asking for and requesting a moratorium from State and Federal funders on the construction of the new senior housing in the City of Jamestown and the Greater Jamestown area. That goes the same for new low income housing because one of the main proponents of the new Neighborhood Revitalization Plan is not to add new units until such time that we remove some of the existing overstock that we have.

With that in mind, I'd like to move into the actual Plan itself just to give you an overview of what we're proposing this year. We feel, and staff's unanimous in their opinion, that the program that we're offering to you tonight is one that is administratively manageable given the size and experience of our staff and also addresses the critical timeliness issue

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which we just found out today that we've achieved for the tenth consecutive year our CDBG Timeliness Expenditure which has to reach a certain threshold by the end of May.

So what we've proposing for this year's plan under the CDBG Program which represents 77.43% of the active funds so it meets that 70% threshold. Under the Americans With Disabilities line, we're proposing \$210,000. For ADA improvements to continue to address the non-compliance of the City with established ADA Guidelines and to make Jamestown move navigable for the mobility challenged.

Secondly, we're proposing to put \$235,000 into neighborhood target area infrastructure improvements which will help upgrade substandard curbing, sidewalks and streets in designated target areas.

Thirdly, we're proposing \$135,553 in neighborhood target area demolition funds. These funds, in addition to the funds we have in hand, will permit us to move forward somewhat aggressively on removing some of the vacant and abandoned public safety hazards that we're dealing with out there.

The fourth item is the Neighborhood Target Area Code Enforcement. This is a line item that we've been able to do since 2005 more than 55 mini-sweeps throughout the City and targeted areas. We're proposing \$118,000 for that line.

The fifth item - we're proposing \$155,000 for our City-wide Rental Rehab Program which is leveraged dollar for dollar with private dollars to improve the rental stock in the City. It also provides additional financial incentives for the reduction of rental units in the City of Jamestown.

The sixth item under CDBG is the Downtown Handicapped Accessibility Improvement Program. This is a program that helps downtown commercial business owners and building owners to adaptively re-use currently vacant upper floor and street level commercial spaces. We're proposing \$90,000 for that line bringing the sub-total to \$943,553.00.

Under our Slums and Blighted Activities which represent 22.57% of active funds, we're proposing \$275,000 in Downtown Greenlining Façade improvements. Even though this won't meet our need right now, currently we have over \$500,000 worth of potential projects in the cue. This will allow us to make significant progress toward addressing that need.

That brings the sub-total under that activity to \$275,000. We're looking at putting \$5,000 in Technical Assistance money which will assist businesses to do some design work relative to the use of this funding and the Administration Program Delivery is \$296,500. That matches the total of \$1,520,053.00.

Under the Fiscal Year 2010 Home Program Activities, we're looking at owner/occupied rehabilitation city-wide for an amount of \$314,995.00.

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The required Set-Aside for Certified Home Development Organizations, as required by HUD is 15% of our allocation which this year is \$62,999 and Administration/Program Delivery is \$41,999.00.

As I mentioned earlier, staff has spent significant time putting this together and pulling together this information. This is something that we work on every day that we're here. A portion of the day is dedicated to some aspect of this particular program and we feel that the plan that we've laid out here is consistent with the spirit and letter of HUD's regulations. It's consistent with some of the community development goals that have been previously established through our fiscal year 2005 – 2009 Consolidated Plan that was approved in 2005 and with the fiscal year 2010 – 2014 Consolidated Plan that we're offering here tonight as well. We feel that it's a well-conceived, well-balanced program and addresses some of the most critical problem areas facing the City, including neighborhoods, business districts, senior citizens, youth, low-moderate income clientele which was what the HUD funded programs were designed for and created to serve. It builds upon existing infrastructure and business district development priorities while meeting the long-term planning commitments of the City's adopted Consolidated Plan and the Urban Design Plan which was previously approved. This plan supports rental housing rehab, target area demolitions, target area infrastructure improvements and target area Code enforcement as a means to accelerate neighborhood revitalization in conjunction with the CZB, LLC neighborhood revitalization plan. It continues to address the City's non-compliance with the American's With Disabilities Act. It leverages limited CDBG and HOME dollars with private, public, not-for-profit and philanthropic funding sources. It provides a solid foundation for which to develop future programs and ultimately it meets all HUD mandated national objectives.

So with that, that's the Plan that we're presenting this year for your review. As mentioned earlier, this does open up another input period until such time the Council will take action on it and at this point we can turn it over to the public for their comments.

Mayor Teresi introduced the members of the City Council present. Now I'd like to turn it over to you – the members of the public and would like to hear any ideas that you have regarding the Plan that was just presented to you tonight. I'd ask you to step to the microphone to your left, to my right. Please state your name, your legal residence, if you represent a group or an organization who that group or organization might be and if you could limit your comments to five minutes, we would appreciate that.

Tami Downey, President of the Real Estate Investors Association, my address is 1267 E. Second Street: I have one question. How much was the cost that you put in for the demolition funds?

Mayor Teresi: Mr. Centi, do we have copies of the summary?

Mr. Centi: Yes – they're all right here.

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Mayor Teresi: I just want to invite everybody, excuse me Ms. Downey, anybody that would like to get a copy of the program, they're up front here as well as I believe there is a sign-in sheet going around we'd like to ask folks to sign that. Excuse me- go ahead please.

Ms. Downey: My second question is other than getting it at the Clerk's Office, the Library and the DOD Office, will this be available on the City website that we could just read it in PDF format?

Mayor Teresi: That's a great idea – we'll take care of that.

Ms. Downey: Thank you.

Mayor Teresi: In fact, Mr. Centi and Matt Hanley, our website administrator are probably two steps ahead of us already on that making the preparations, but a good idea.

Marie Carubba, 19 Widrig Avenue, Jamestown and I work for Southwestern Independent Living Center also in the city at 843 N. Main Street: I guess I have a couple of comments: (1) I'd like to thank the City Council and the Mayor's Office, Department of Development – Steve Centi – for all they've done to improve accessibility throughout the City. We've talked to a number of people who work for agencies and organizations similar to ours in New York State and they cannot believe what's been accomplished in this area. When we talk about the housing programs, when we talk about the curb cuts, the accessible parks, the funds that have been put into making City Hall more accessible – people just cannot believe it because other cities are not doing anywhere near the kind of work to allow inclusion of people with disabilities – especially those with physical disabilities. I really want to thank you all because you don't realize what an accomplishment it is and what you've done. We can be so proud. I know people always complain and always talk about the negative things about our City, but you really have to pat yourselves on the back for what's been done because it isn't being done anywhere else in the State. So thank you for all you have done and again to continue your efforts on the accessibility improvements. As much as has been done, there's always more that can be done and I know dollars are limited; but it really does enhance the City and the environment for everybody and as all of us baby boomers start reaching those ages where accessibility becomes more of an issue, I think we'll all appreciate everything that's been done by the City to help all of us – not just the few that may need it right now, but all of us as we age. So thank you and please continue your support.

Mayor Teresi: As Mr. Centi pointed out, this commences another public input period with the Plan on the table for input from the public, consideration by members of the City Council and will be brought forth for consideration and a vote at the June voting session of the City Council. Mr. Olson what's the date of that?

Mr. Olson: June 8th.

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Mayor Teresi: June 8th at their regular voting session time of 7:30. Members of the City Council – any questions that you might have of staff members at this point in time? I would like to again, publicly recognize the members of the staff – the entire team – led by Steve Centi and Amanda Chapel. I know firsthand how difficult a process this can be when you have unlimited needs in the community and finite resources, particularly the way that the Community Development Block Grant Program and the HOME Investment Partnership Program have been under assault in recent years. This year we saw a little bit of an uptick in funding for CDBG, but it's been a steady decline in funding for this program over the past eight years or so, so this was a welcome relief this year; but literally, literally, through the public input process, we probably generated 50-100 million dollars worth of worthy ideas for use of this funding with roughly 1.5 million of CDBG to spend and \$400,000+ of Home Funding to appropriate. It's an extremely difficult process that they try to achieve both hitting community needs and reaching balance out there and also trying to balance into the equation the ability with the staffing that we have available to actually deliver these programs in a timely way and with the contractor pool that we have available in the community to actually expend the funds in a timely fashion. As Mr. Centi pointed out at the beginning of his remarks, we do have performance standards that we have to hit every year that we have every year for the past 10 years and that is, in no small measure, due to the effectiveness not only of program delivery, but program design to make sure that we're developing activities that we can actually move the money out the door.

Mayor Teresi asked three more times if there were any members of the public that would like to speak to the Public Hearing.

Peter Morgante, 134 Euclid Avenue: I would like to ask Mr. Centi – a million five is not very much money. Is this the only amount of money that the City gets for rehabilitating the property issues? It's gone down every year – hasn't it? I mean, how much longer can you exist in the department if it's the only amount of money we're going to get? This is unbelievable – for the price of materials today, let alone labor. A million five is nothing. Does it do any...I don't know how you can survive. Is there anything...I don't know...it just doesn't sound right. All these different programs and nothing is actually going to be done. I'm not blaming you, but I'm just wondering...a million five is not very much money to fix up all the old properties and old buildings we've got in the City of Jamestown and something should be done.

Mayor Teresi: Thank you Mr. Morgante. I think we would all concur with your sentiments that we would like to see the Federal Community Development Block Program funded at a higher level. We would encourage you to support our efforts to communicate with our congressional delegation about the importance of the program. Congressman Higgins, Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand and also the Federal Administration as well. This is an extremely vital program that's not only helping the City of Jamestown and has helped the City of Jamestown, but is critical and vital to urban areas across the country. We obviously speak our minds about the need for additional funding, but it's all the more important that we try to use as effectively and in as timely a manner as possible what is allocated to the community. It's true enough that CDBG and

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HOME are the two primary players of public financing for us to deal on the housing and neighborhood front, there are other programs that from time to time do make themselves available and when we see an opportunity to go after funding through other outlets, we do that as well, including the private and civic sector. A primary example, Mr. Morgante, was stepping up and supplying the majority of funds for the new Neighborhood Improvement Plan for the City and we're hoping as it has with downtown development initiatives in the past will open up private and philanthropic not-for-profit funding opportunities to augment what we're able to and in some cases, not able to get, from Federal and State sources. So your point is well taken. We appreciate the support and will make sure that we pass that along in our comments to the Federal Government.

Mayor Teresi asked again, three times, if there were any other comments.

There being no others to come forward and speak, the Public Hearing was closed.

Director of Financial Services/City Clerk
James N. Olson