
Virtual meeting via ZOOM. The meeting ID was provided to the public to allow participation.

Call to Order

Chair Hannigon called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

The Quincy Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board met in regular session on Thursday, May 21, 2020 with following present at roll call:

Faircloth, Member Milton-Jackson

Also in attendance:

Manager Nixon, Attorney Brown, Reg Board Member Harris, Penny O'Connell-Quincy Main Street, Antonio Jefferson-Representing the Big Bend Minority Chamber, Admin Pam Tribue

Member Green joins the meeting.

Proposed Business Assistance Program

Manager Nixon acknowledged the presence of CRA Board Member Harris on the call. This program is an offshoot of a call hosted by him on May 4th for the business community. The purpose was to gather information as to how we could shape a response to COVID-19 and to figure out how to keep our businesses afloat. He then yielded the floor to Mayor Pro-Tem Harris.

Member Harris thanked the board for allowing him to be a part of the meeting. Reflected on the May 4th meeting. From that meeting it was realized tht COVID-19 was going to place a strain on business owners, especially small business owners. In particular we're talking about the Mom and Pops businesses that have had to close or limit their services. After that meeting he, City Manager McLean and Manager Nixon agreed that a program of some sort, a stimulus or grant/loan program would be ideal to help the small businesses in the CRA District. This is an attempt to give them some type of support to keep them in business. It was brought before the regular board and Member McMillian felt it would be beneficial to bring it before the advisory board for your review, input and ideas.

Member Green expressed gratitude to the board for their efforts as it has been very hard to apply otherwise. He is a business owner and knows first-hand the difficulties facing small business owners.

Antonio Jefferson of the Big Bend Minority Chamber was in attendance and thanked Member Harris and the other board members for considering this measure. He has had an opportunity to review the proposed program and is excited about the possibilities.

Member Harris pointed out that some members of the board are leaning heavily towards mandating that grant funds be used towards utility bills. It is his position that more flexibility is allowed and funds would be able to be utilized as needed by the individual business.

Manager Nixon then provided an overview of the program including eligibility, fiscal impact and funding source.

Attorney Brown commented that the regular board has some concerns as it relates to the new laws. He has reviewed those changes and found a direct correlation to the removal and prevention of slum and blight. He believes the program will fit the purpose of Chapter 163 and feels the board would not run into any issues with that. It is also consistent with other CRAs around the state, who see the need and also believe that CRAs can use its funds to try to keep businesses going thereby preventing abandonment of buildings, which leads to slum and blight. His legal opinion is that the CRA can move forward with this program. Concern 1) objective ways to show equal treatment of how grants are awarded; 2) criteria for eligibility amounts to ensure it is objective.

Member Faircloth asked if there was a conflict in him participating in discussions and/or voting because he is a property owner in the CRA District. Although he does not intend to apply, his tenants are eligible to apply.

Attorney Brown recommends that Board Member Faircloth not participate in the vote (especially since he is a property owner and as the program is written business owners could use funds to pay rent, which he could be the recipient of). That doesn't preclude him from discussion but would again not recommend taking part in the vote for potential conflict.

Member Green chimed in the importance of providing detailed guidelines as to who and what qualifies, ensuring everyone has equal opportunity to apply for funding.

Action item: In response to a question from Chair Hannigon, Manager Nixon agreed to provide the board with statistical data that reflects the current state of businesses (the number of businesses impacted, unemployment stats, closures, etc.)

Attorney Brown pointed out that the business or individual has to be within or working out of the CRA District. He is concerned if there is enough staff to cover the project and he will be looking at whether doc stamps will be needed.

Penny O'Connell, of Quincy Main Street, also participated on the call and added that she feels this is an exciting opportunity and looking forward to telling the businesses about it once approved. Likes the use of an affidavit. Suggested using first come/first serve. Thanks to all for the hard work put into this. Asked if property owners and business owners could both apply. Attorney Brown indicated there is no legal reason why a landowner wouldn't be able to apply as well as the business owner, as long as the other criteria are met. Ms. O'Connell is excited about the program and thinks it will be well received.

Manager Nixon reiterated that the plan is to rollout the program within the next week or so. Once the advisory board finalizes their thoughts and recommendations, he will meet with the regular board for final discussion/approval.

The board completed the discussion portion of the meeting and the Chair asked for the will of the board. Member Green and Faircloth will not participate in the vote to avoid a conflict. Member Ware was contacted via telephone (during the pandemic, the rules have been relaxed by the governor to allow participation via phone) to have a quorum. Member Ware was brought up to speed.

Member Ware joined the meeting via phone.

Motion by Member Milton-Jackson that the advisory board is in full support of the proposed loan/grant program by Quincy CRA, seconded by Member Ware, motioned carries 3-0.

Advisory Board Member Comments

Member Faircloth – None

Member Milton-Jackson – None

Member Green – Thanks for consideration of this program on behalf of the businesses.

Chair Hannigon – Hearty thank you for the effort and looking forward to seeing the results. Asked the manager to include her in discussions.

Attorney Brown – Thanked the board for reading the information provided and being prepared for the meeting.

Admin Tribue offered her assistance to the Manager and Board in moving this process forward.

Meeting adjourns at 7:30pm.