
Call to Order

Chair Bass-Prieto called the meeting to order at 5:15pm.

The Quincy Community Redevelopment Agency Meeting of the Regular Board met on Tuesday, February 22, 2024, with the following present at roll call: Member Harris, Member Dr. Wood, and Member Sapp. On the phone Member Dr. Nash.

Also in attendance:

Manager Nixon, Admin Pam Tribue

Approval of Agenda

Motion by Member Sapp to approve the agenda as printed for the February 22, 2024, board meeting, seconded by Member Wood, motion carries 5-0.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Member Wood to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2024, meeting with any corrections should there be any, seconded by Member Sapp, motion carries 5-0.

CRA Projects

Home Repair Matching Grant Program Application – Based on the direction of the board, a draft of the home repair matching grant program was provided. The draft application was provided incorporating the adjustments per the attorney’s recommendation. The manager pointed out that because of the previous success of CRA programs he has gotten several requests from residents regarding home repairs. He feels that with the new program including a dollar-for-dollar match, this will limit qualifying applicants. He and Attorney Brown will collaborate and how to handle verification of the match availability.

Member Sapp inquired about the small business application previously mentioned. Discussion halted while manager retrieves copies of the paperwork related to the small business assistance program.

Manager re-enters. Member Harris asked (although they had not gotten to this agenda item)

- how much is available in the small business assistance grant? \$100,000
- Have we done a follow-up from the previous grants issued to ensure funds were spent according to the request made? Are they still in business? Two recipients were mentioned.
 - Leola’s Crab Shack – The manager explained that in this case they business is have difficulty finding people to work. They are opening a few days a week and are also providing food truck service. Definitely struggling.
 - Our Daily Bread is open but at another site and is doing very well. Their initial request was for a fume hood, but the new site was already equipped with one. They therefore did not receive any funding.

Manager Nixon will prepare an overall recap/update on the businesses that received funds.

Chair Bass-Prieto inquired about the release of liens for those property owners on S. Adams Street who received grant funds. Attorney Brown has provided the manager with the satisfaction of liens, the next step is for staff to pull the information and inserting it on the forms.

The discussion returned to the Matching Home Repair Program. The goal is to maximize the limited funds available. The matching grant is something that will help accomplish this. Anticipates a different

type of response given the types of repairs done in the past and the significant dollar amount associated with this dollar-for-dollar match. Noted that he has been in conversation with an entity that is interest in making a contribution that could effectively make the match for the homeowners. Waiting to hear back from them. The budget for this project is \$120,000.

Member Dr. Wood shared that the issues she has heard is affordability. Considering the income guidelines of the program she feels the match may be too much for those at or below poverty level. Struggling with how many of the residents would be able to match, if it were something with a cost of \$10,000 and they had to provide half or \$5,000. Asked what other programs are in place that may be able to assist senior citizens, the elderly, etc., that wouldn't be able to raise a significant amount of money. Comparing this program to the small business assistance grant wherein it is a gift with no match, she asked for enlightenment.

Manager Nixon explained that the board has complete discretion related to the details of the program. This is the first time the board is attempting the match, in an effort to maximize the dollars available. The program presented is based on feedback from the board. There are no programs that are active now, CRA programs change year to year. Each year a new program is created with new criteria and a new application process. Once again it is entirely up to the board if you require a match or not.

With the small business program there are a couple of considerations with this program. The goal is to help support a business that has already made an investment inside of a brick-and-mortar space. In the past the board offered a gig program for homebased business, but this board decided that going forward they wouldn't do that. This was also a way to address the effects of COVID on businesses.

With the new program there are some qualifiers:

- Needs to be brick and mortar.
- We are aware that bulk of our taxes come from the brick-and-mortar businesses inside the district.
- The board has seen great success in investing in projects like the paint program and others which we feel has led to a significant increase in property values by a \$1M overtime and the bulk of which is in commercial buildings. You don't see the same type of return on houses.

So, in this case the two programs can't be compared as it would not be apples to apples. He would prefer a program that did not require a match but perhaps adding caps and limits to stretch the dollars. Another option would be to create two programs, one of which would require a match and the other would not. Encourages the board to open the programs as soon as possible in order to complete some things prior to the end of the fiscal year.

Other board members chimed in on concerns and possible options. Attorney Brown clarified that applications are processed based on first come, first qualified. This was done in an effort to take the politics out of it as well as trying to remove accusations against board members about playing politics.

The manager also mentioned the option of distributing the funds to another organization (i.e., Certified Housing Development Organization) that is already doing the same work. He will draft something, refer to the attorney and forward to the board prior to the next meeting in hopes of this being finalized at the next meeting. In the interest of time, the manager suggested that the board review the application, document what you want done and, in the meantime, he will try to come up with a couple of variations.

Small Business Assistance Program – Unlike the housing program there really are not a lot of programs available for these small businesses. Many are living off credit cards or loans. The primary vision of CRAs is to remove slum and blithe in the district. History shows that the investment made on businesses gives a significantly larger return than that from the housing program. Additionally, owners typically increase their level of investment as they benefit from their growth and the growth of others surrounding

them. Small businesses are also creating jobs. The suggested amount of \$10,000 may seem to be a lot but considering the possible repairs to these older buildings can be significant. Does not suggest reducing this amount. The district has already seen the benefit by the increase in the number of new businesses. The manager's suggestion is that the board continue with the same program approved previously, it is working, and he doesn't see a need to make any changes. He has recently received requests for assistance with signage for distinction in the district and/or along highway 90.

Member Sapp commended the board on the support of businesses especially in the past couple of years as many new businesses have benefited. Happy to see the City lite up after dark. Would like to help some businesses that are not in prime locations. Mentioned the upcoming activities related to the Black History Celebrations.

Chair Bass-Prieto is concerned about the outside of some businesses. Feels that the downtown paint program opened the door to revitalization. That being said, first appearances are so important, cracked parking lots, painting needed, effects possible clients and other businesses nearby. Would like to steer the funds for the best impact.

Member Sapp asked about the review/enforcement of sign ordinances, as she is seeing more and more of those floppy banners.

Member Harris inquired about the number of vacant buildings downtown. Suggested window wraps for vacant buildings that is attractive and gives an idea of what the area could look like. This is something that the manager, while serving on the board in 2019, discussed as a possible option.

Manager Nixon agreed to move forward on both programs including all the items discussed but suggested that monitoring be increased to provide regular reports to the board on the progress of the business or residence. In the past this has stopped after the transaction.

Member Dr. Wood wants to make sure that this trend is continued down highway 90 and not just focused on the downtown area. Wants to make sure that funds are not given to the same businesses over and over. The goal is to attract new businesses while assisting existing businesses as well. Supports the idea of oversight, important and necessary.

The manager will work with the attorney to re-create the application by next week and forward it to the board.

Member Harris mentioned that Mirror Cleaners has been subject to vandalism recently. Chair Bass-Prieto mentioned Crawford Street as the next opportunity for growth and the Helig Meyers building.

CRA Manager Position Advertisement –

Need to look at the transition to hiring a manager. Manager Nixon will work with HR once details are finalized. Job description and qualifications are provided for input/review from the board. Chair Bass-Prieto suggested using the same process previously used to hire City Manager, felt it was transparent and inclusive.

CRA Attorney Comments

Commended the board for their work over the past years. There are several CRAs that have shut down due to a lack of growth and failing businesses which impacts TIF funding.

The board also recognized the board members that served during this period of growth as well as the leadership of Mr. Nixon and Ms. Regina Davis (former manager).

CRA Board Member Comments

Member Sapp – Thanked Attorney Brown for his hard work and dedication to ensuring the board follows the established rules/guidelines.

Member Dr. Nash – Looking forward to applications being finalized and made available to the public and looking at qualified candidates for the CRA Manager's position.

Member Harris

- Suggested the board review the plans related to the \$2.9M grant for downtown. A lot of time has passed and would like to revisit for any needed changes.
- Asked for an update on the Andy Gay Park.
- Would like data from SHIP office on how funds are being spent as it relates to Quincy residents.

Member Dr. Wood – Thanked the attorney, Ms. Tribue and other board members and is excited about moving forward collectively.

Chair Bass-Prieto – Feels the signage ordinance needs to be reviewed and enforced. Thanked the attorney as well.

Local business owners were in attendance.

An invitation to attend the Grand Opening of Sweet Abayomi was extended to all. March 2 @ 11:00am.

Motion by Member Harris to adjourn, seconded by Member Sapp, motion carries 5-0.

Meeting adjourns at 6:53pm.