

Minutes

Housing Committee
Monday, March 11, 2013
6:15 p.m.
Police Training Room, 4th Floor
Municipal Building, Jamestown, New York

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Paul Whitford, Steve Szwejbka

MEMBERS ABSENT: Michael Taylor

OTHERS PRESENT: Peter Lombardi, Laurie Adams, Lisa Schmidtfrerick-Miller and Vince DeJoy

Chairman Whitford called the meeting to order.

The minutes from the February meeting were approved.

Remarks from Community Members

No one appeared to speak.

New Business

Land Banking Program

Peter Lombardi, Executive Director, Jamestown Renaissance Corporation, 190 Newton Avenue, Jamestown. I was here two months ago talking about the landbank and the progress it's making as it starts its first real year of action here and Councilman Whitford asked me if I could prepare a resolution for the City Council to support the mission of the landbank. In the resolution it stated that the landbank supports the language in the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Plan - The Livable Community - adopted back in 2010. Many of the goals of the landbank are imbedded in that document and the resolution also calls for partnerships between the landbank and the City to think about how the landbank and the City can compete together for resources that might be available from the State and other resources to support the work of landbanks now that there are five and will be a growing number of landbanks in New York State and also to identify opportunities where resources can be paired between the landbank and the City since the landbank will be starting out with some seed money from the Chautauqua County Housing Trust Fund and in hopes to develop a sustainable revenue stream from the sales of properties around the County and would be looking to the City for opportunities to pair its resources with the City when it comes to demolition of the most unsalvageable properties or developing properties that have potential and could help turn around an entire block. So I guess I'll be presenting this resolution for your review.

Mr. Whitford: Just for your information, it was emailed to me and Jim Olson and Corporation Counsel had an opportunity to look it over and we didn't see any problems with it.'

Mr. Szwejbka: I think most importantly, Mr. DeJoy needs to really reflect on it - that's your baby.

Mr. DeJoy: Right. And I concur with Mr. Lombardi's comments. I think we're fortunate that we are one of the few places in New York State to have this and I like the collaboration and it's not just a city effort, but it's a whole county effort and I think this will end up really helping us forward our revitalization plans for the neighborhoods and it can only be a good thing. I spent like one-half of one board meeting, and I'm looking forward to really making a contribution and working with Mr. Lombardi and all the other agencies so this resolution basically needs support by the Council. It's nothing but good from our perspective - the Department of Development and JURA.

Mr. Whitford: At this point, with this presented to Housing, we don't send resolutions through housing, we're not a standing committee so I'll make a motion to move it forward to Public Safety for their approval and then be voting on it on the 25th.

Mr. Szwejbka motioned to forward it.

Mr. Lombardi: Thank you.

Mr. Whitford: Thank you Mr. DeJoy: Once it gets off to a running start here this first year, they have quite a bit - two houses in Jamestown, two in Dunkirk and then you're looking at some of the adjoining properties...

Mr. Lombardi: Vacant lot disposition...

Mr. Szwejbka: I think it's kind of exciting - we've got two new people in charge and full of energy. I think it's a good thing. We're going to keep things moving.

Mr. Whitford: We're not saying it was stagnant...

Mr. Szwejbka: No - it's just fresh ideas - fresh minds coming together - it's a good thing.

Community Transformation Grant (CTG) Overview

Lisa Schmidtfreerick-Miller, 2373 Erickson Rd., Ashville, New York - I'm here on behalf of the Chautauqua County Health Department as Healthy Communities Consultant. I get so excited about it when I'm talking about it...

So we wanted to come here today to bring you up to speed on our Community Transformation Grant – I’m not sure that Council’s had much of an opportunity to hear about it or learn about it. This is kind of a summary sheet I’ll run through quickly. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta funded these Community Transformation Grants for small communities...

The Centers for Disease Control fund put out this application – 40 communities across the country were awarded a total of \$70,000,000 in funding. New York State Department of Health applied on behalf of Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Broome counties which similar back to the STEPS Program in 2003 we showed a tremendous need, but also tremendous capacity so it was part of the reason those three communities were selected. The grant’s administered by the Chautauqua County Department of Health. It started officially in September 2012 and it’s a two year stream of funding. Chautauqua County has received \$450,000 over the two year period. The focus population of this grant is youth aged – 0-18 and three high need school districts so I kind of summed that up that the three high need districts being Silver Creek, Dunkirk and Jamestown. They were districts that showed health disparities and the grant addresses three risk factors: physical activity, nutrition and tobacco and in three sectors: early childcare being mainly daycare centers, schools focusing on elementary but taking into consideration the entire school district and then the community at large in those three school districts. In the early childcare center you can see there’s initiatives about increasing the amount of physical activity and improving nutrition for children in those situations and in the school sector it’s integrating physical activity into the classrooms, safe routes to school and encouraging kids to walk and bike to school. In those three districts establishing a regional food procurement initiative and this will be actually a county wide initiative. Any school would be welcome to join. Implementing policies prohibiting tobacco off campus. Most schools have pretty strong anti-tobacco policies right now. And then in the community-at-large sector which we’re here to talk about this evening, we have the Complete Streets, which Jamestown has already adopted, and the guidance we receive from the State Health Department that we would be tasked with encouraging implementation of the Complete Streets Policy and trying to get some demonstration going that the City is, in fact, following that ordinance that was passed last year. We have a Sugar Sweet and Beverage Initiative to reduce consumption of sugar, sweets and beverages by improving availability. If you’ve ever gone for an unsweetened iced tea – good luck finding one. We’re trying to improve that. What we’re going to talk about with you briefly is the local housing authorities in the funded counties will be implementing smoke-free policy for their multi-unit properties. This actually has been extended by the State to include other properties, housing, low income residents so other subsidized Section 8 properties.

Laurie Adams is with me and she’s our consultant working on the Smoke-Free Housing Initiative with me.

Laurie Adams, Tri-County Tobacco-Free Program Director, 1869 Camp Street Ext., Jamestown, New York. I just have to say “this is huge gang, this is huge.” We were here for the steps great monies that happened for those years that we were able to get the ball rolling and

for us to be included in a State program that's been included in a Federal program dollars for us to have this money to work with for these sectors now – it is just amazing. For the New York State Health Department to pick Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Broome Counties – so here we are again in another capacity to do some great things because they believe we can, and so good stewards of this we know we're really going to hopefully change some health behaviors as Lisa mentioned – you have the larger scope there – but our role here tonight is to share with you our Smoke-Free Housing Initiative. So our goal is to make sure that in these need areas – obviously Jamestown, Dunkirk and Silver Creek – those areas will be reaching out to housing sectors that carry multi-unit housing, apartment complexes, HUD subsidized all of those units that we know we need to help these folks. Why do we need to? I know I may be preaching to the choir, but just a quick 101 – second hand smoke kills 42,000 Americans every year – non-smoking Americans, 42,000 of them. 65% of air in multi-unit dwellings escapes and seeps through in ventilations, cracks, pipes, and we know – brand new study out today – that second hand smoke coming into apartments where even no smoking is occurring, children, these babies are being harmed. How harmful – asthma, ear infections, upper respiratory, SIDS, which is sudden infant death syndrome – any of the elderly that are impacted – it's a dramatic upper respiratory, heart disease now core relation to second hand smoke. I know we've been around since the original Surgeon General's report, 34 years ago almost now, and we're still under full understanding that second hand smoke really hurts. So what we'll share with you is what our plans are, but more importantly to ask you “okay – let's work together.” We want to be able to reach out to folks to help solve this situation. So what we've seen a huge impasse happen is smoke-free housing across the nation and we're seeing, especially here in New York State, and I'll leave you tool kits if you'd like to really dive into what this really means, is subsidized housing, HUD's housing – all across the nation and especially here in New York State and especially in New York City – they're making huge inroads at taking care of establishing policies that establish these units as smoke free. I'm happy to report that March 1st, letters went out to Lutheran's one home here on Crane Street that as of June 1st, they will be our first housing unit here in the City of Jamestown to go tobacco-free. No smoking they've had on their grounds, now they upped it to no smoking inside any of the units anyhow, anywhere which is awesome. Not necessarily our true target audience, because we need to save these babies. We've got to protect these children from second hand smoke. Our rate of asthma in our county is off the charts and we know it's due to a higher rate of smoking by adults in general, but also a higher rate of children being exposed to second hand smoke in the homes; so it's a health issue and it's not against the smokers. This is not about the smokers. This is about the smoke and we know that the 7,000 chemicals in second hand smoke are really harming these children. So what we've given to you is what the State has provided to us is kind of the overview of it. We share it with you in hopes to be able to as we move forward – we have a great list in the City of Jamestown current units that we know are low income – HUD or subsidized housing – and now our education work begins because we need to work with the managers of those facilities; we need to educate them on this information. We also need to work with the tenants. We know successfully where smoke free housing has happened. It's a combination of management saying we need to do this for the health of these babies and those that are in our homes, but we also need tenants to see the importance of it also. We're not asking the smokers to quit – we're just saying “you can't smoke here for the safety of these

children.” Based on what we know really shows the proof in the pudding when children are not exposed to second hand smoke in the homes. We really see a reduction in all of those. Costs – for those that are maintaining multi-unit homes – if you have an apartment building or any type of rental property and you have a smoker in – you see the numbers there on the top of the sheet – it’s off the charts. What would be a \$500 repair for a non-smoking home, you go into the \$1800 to \$3500 whatever it is – it’s thousands and thousands of dollars so it truly is a cost. Fire safety – cigarettes and cigarette paraphernalia is still the number one cause of fires here in New York State – No. 1 cause – so by protecting the children, reducing your fire risks and also reducing the exposure to second hand smoke to everyone in those buildings, we know we’re going to do some really wonderful things – and that’s our goal. So we toss it to you for questions.

Mr. Szwejbka: Are you looking for willful compliance to begin with or are you looking to change legislation?

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: For now we’re looking at legislation right now. HUD and the housing and Urban Development has made a recommendation about two years ago, I think, that strongly encouraged public housing units to go smoke free and they just recently reissued a further encouragement to adopt smoke free housing policies so I think it’s something that’s coming down the road for municipalities.

Mr. Whitford: I don’t think it’s something you can really have much of an effectiveness through legislation because there’s always the enforcement portion of it and with the limited manpower in DOD and the logistics of monitoring the places...my question is “do you have a list of your target facilities and have you thought about speaking in front of REIA and that group – the landlord group?”

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: We absolutely are planning to do that. We’ll be meeting with the Housing Authority Boards at some point as well.

Mr. Whitford: Do you have something outlined that you feel that the City and the departments in the City that it will affect and we can partner with you to help? If you get a plan together – are you going to present that to the Council, because I know obviously DOD would be involved. Have you talked to CODE?

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: Yes we have. We haven’t made any formal presentations. You’re actually our first stop. We’ve done some data collection and talked informally with managers of different places. The only low income housing, multi-unit housing that’s not owned or managed by private landlords, is the Coburn Block Apartments in Dunkirk. There’s nothing in Jamestown. I find that sad in all of these units – you can see the numbers on here we’re talking about a lot – even pulling out the § 8 Housing that Bradmar, CODE, COI, Crestline Villas – that’s a big number of houses and the fact that somebody cannot go into a smoke-free unit that some family with children with health concerns...or even adults...

Mr. Whitford: Appleyard I & 2. ..have you talked to Michael Bradshaw yet?

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: No. I talked with Gail and they said they were fairly proud of the fact that there is no smoking in the common areas, but that was truly a missed opportunity to not start out with brand new buildings with a smoke free ordinance.

Mr. Whitford: I know in the office building for CODE where Michael works, there's no smoking in that building and I know because he smokes and he's outside...I know him...I kind of mentioned it to him and he said they really haven't presented anything concrete.

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: And the fact that a lot of these places, we're not talking always about one huge structure, that they have multiple buildings - it makes it a fairly easy start for them...we encourage places to go smoke free 100% right from the get go.

Mr. Whitford: Yes. Had they done that in the beginning with Appleyard II...but you know, there's always the opportunity through attrition, changing tenants, and have the new agreement.

Mr. Szwejbka: I think it's definitely worth the effort even if you've only got 40% to begin with, you've still got 40%

Ms. Adams: And when you look at the data that just shows the harm to these children, let alone the cleanup and the cost for renovations - it's off the charts.

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: If we can encourage people of low income to reduce their smoking levels or hopefully to give up smoking...it's like 25% of their income. Some people's income is spent on tobacco and tobacco products - 25%.

Mr. Whitford: If you're paying \$10.00 a pack...that's a lot of money.

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: It adds up fast.

Mr. Szwejbka: It's a lot of power bars.

Mr. Whitford:when it gets to \$.50 a pack, we're going to quit. It was like \$.23 a pack - now it's \$10.00 a pack. I was going through the line in the store the other day and some guy had a couple of steaks and some vegetables and he went through and it was a little over \$11.00 and the guy behind him had a pack of cigarettes and it was \$10.76.

Ms. Adams: So would you suggest then, because this is our first education piece of coming to you guys because we want you to know (1) it's a wonderful opportunity being part of the CTG - the Community Transformation Grant - but more importantly besides knowing who we have...should we put together - not a resolution - but like in a support to your group, just so

as we go out in the community, we can say “we’ve presented this to our Jamestown folks here, and they really support this, or they feel that this is an important...”

Mr. Whitford: I have no problem with supporting a resolution...

Mr. Szwejbka: ...in support of definitely a healthier Jamestown...

Mr. Whitford: ...and I would think you have a list of all of these, and you know, there are probably some that you could add, and like I said get REIA involved - some groups there - tell them what you’re doing, and if you have all of them together in one room and start brainstorming - because I know you’re going to get a lot of support from a lot of people...

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: Yes - we know there’s landlords out there that have smoke-free property already.

Mr. Whitford: You’re not out there on a limb sawing it off - there’s a lot of people that are really looking for...

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: That’s why Laurie’s here to help with the “how to do that.” CTG has the...we can offer some incentives with advertising and signage and things like that so...

Mr. Whitford: But I wouldn’t hesitate to help you with a resolution and support through City Council and maybe at the end of next month if you get it together, move it to Public Safety.

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: Do you want me to send you a draft?

Mr. Whitford: You have my email?

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: Yes.

Ms. Adams: The toolkits that we have are just awesome because we do not have to reinvent the wheel. This has happened all across the nation. In fact, I’ll leave this one with you. This is the actual - there’s an Owner’s and Management toolkit and then there’s also one for the residents and the tenants so how we can build support or they can be educated on their own, but in the back of this first section, you’ll just look at all across the nation...Alaska, Arkansas - every state is...

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: Titusville, PA has...

Ms. Adams: Titusville, PA - how about that?

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: The City of Boston just made all of their public housing smoke-free. I think they’re the largest city to do that.

Ms. Adams: And we have this electronically so we can send this to you...

Mr. DeJoy: Smoke-free – does that include the grounds, the property outside around it, or...

Mr. Whitford: I think it's 15 feet away from an entrance.

Ms. Adams: It can be whatever they want to set.

Mr. Whitford: I know Lutheran is...

Ms. Adams: ...is completely smoke-free. And in this case because we would want to work with management and work with where are those buildings located, if the smokers and the landlords and the tenants know where they can't smoke – where can they? So that's where we work with them. Hopefully, it's as far away from those entrances so that no one has to walk through a fog of smoke, because then you're getting contaminated. If you can smell it – it's harming you. And yet we also don't want to give anyone the impression that we want these gazebos popping up everywhere and making these butt huts because that's not safe either. If it's got a roof, it's going to contain and everyone in there is going to be harmed even more.

Ms. Schmidfrerick-Miller: This is a case where it may come to public safety as well. If Appleyard decided to do something and they have the sidewalk area which is a public right-of-way, but because of the proximity to the windows and the ventilation systems there, it may be advisable to make that area smoke-free.

Mr. Szwejbka: Did you say Titusville actually has a...

Ms. Schmidfrerick-Miller: They have I think public housing with four units, or something – it's in the list...

Mr. Szwejbka: Vince – do you know if we have the authority as a City Council...we'll have to check with Marilyn...to enact a resolution putting a law on the books to limit smoking?

Mr. Whitford: The resolution would be to support this and the other thing – it would be more like legislation that goes along with the City Code, but I think...

Ms. Schmidfrerick-Miller: I would leave that in the Housing management...

Mr. Whitford: ...because it's hard to...we have a hard enough time enforcing what we have in the City Code in 215 – because of the court system and a lot of different variables and smoking – I think your focus on getting cooperation with the owners and the managers that that's the way to go.

Ms. Schmidfrerick-Miller: I agree.

Ms. Adams: Well and I think what we've seen too, like Roswell Park, when they did tobacco-free outdoor, they got an ordinance from the City and the City-owned sidewalks that then they would agree that that would be a tobacco free area for those areas. So that's...

Mr. Whitford: Right. If that's the direction you're going and that's what they adopt - let's say at Appleyard I and II, then we could write in 215 that no tobacco products on the sidewalks in these areas.

Mr. Szwejbka: I just wondered because if federal or state monies are used to supplement, is there any way they could actually institute some type of regulation? I don't know - I'll have to ask Marilyn.

Mr. Whitford: I think they have a right to institute policy because it is...

Mr. Szwejbka: If Mayor Bloomberg can limit the number of sugar free drinks...

Ms. Adams: Our goal is to...really the main focus is on obviously the inside and I think there's a lot of misconception in thinking that if you don't allow smoking in your apartment then it's not going to harm you if someone next door is smoking and that's the education level and the resolution and the support and where we really...

Mr. Whitford: Right. Probably 15% of that at least is education, or even more.

Ms. Adams: Exactly.

Mr. Whitford: ...because once they're educated on it, then I think they're more receptive to stepping forward and saying "yes, this is a good thing."

Ms. Adams: So we'll put together a resolution and get it to you as a draft to see and then if you have any other questions, we're here to help. We're going to make this happen here in our Jamestown area - looking forward to seeing some great success and this happens all across New York State. We're kind of the last few to hop on board in our two counties here - Chautauqua and Cattaraugus County - because we haven't had the funding to work on this initiative. So now with the CTG Grant - we do - so that's a wonderful thing because then now we can really start educating and put some...

Mr. Szwejbka: It's not about telling people "you can't smoke," because they'll argue with you and say "we have a right to smoke." Well - "go out in the middle of the field."

Ms. Adams: And people hear that more and more now and there are a lot of places - I talked to a housing manager in Silver Creek today and she said "we actually have a number of smokers that don't ever smoke in their units. They do go outside to smoke."

Mr. Whitford: Well, it was the old argument about the seat belts for kids and protection for them and what it actually does – it protects them from the people who refuse to just go ahead and do it. The kids can't make those decisions that are the right decisions and the kids can't make the decision to stay out of a smoke-free area so you have to create that environment and create that safety for them. Same as a car seat.

Ms. Adams: Absolutely.

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: Great analogy.

Ms. Adams: ...and the social norm changes that have happened so that we know in certain indoor areas we can't smoke and it's been wonderful for all our health benefits in our work environment and now we can transpose that into helping protect these little lungs that are developing and protect them from so many harms.

Mr. Whitford: I'm a reformed smoker. I will tell you, it's the worst habit you could ever have. It took six bypasses to make me better. Thank you very much.

Ms. Adams: Thank you for your support. We appreciate it.

Ms. Schmidtfrerick-Miller: And thanks for the input too.

Mr. Whitford: And if you get that draft to me, I'll make sure that Councilman Szwejbka gets it.

Ms. Adams: We'll get that to you.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

James N. Olson
Director of Financial Services/City Clerk