

***Minutes of the Special Meeting/ Public Hearing of the Board of Trustees for the Village of University Park For Purposes of The Will County 2012 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Application, Held on Tuesday, May 8, 2012 at #90 Town Center Drive in the Village of University Park.***

Mayor Covington called this Special Meeting/Public Hearing to order at 6:12 pm.

PRESENT WERE: Mayor Covington, Trustees Oscar Brown, Payton, Griffin, and Larry Brown.

ABSENT WERE: Trustees Williams, and Roudez.

Also Present Were: Village Clerk Dorothy R. Jones, Village Manager Lafayette Linear, Village Attorney Ivan Tomic, Village Treasurer Devon Dilworth, Public Works Director Jerry Townsend, Fire Chief Charles Exner, and Executive Liaison Johnna Townsend

Ms. Val Williams, representative of Robinson Engineering (the Village of University Park's officially appointed Village Engineer) explained the purpose of Will County's CDBG program. And proceeded to explain eligible activities for funding regarding the Village of University Park's application. Funding for public infrastructure improvements were discussed as the most viable eligible area for funding.

Ms. Williams explained the purpose of the Will County CDBG program as an annual grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provided to states and local governments on a formula basis. HUD's main purpose for funding is to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, as well as to expand economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons.

Ms. Williams explained Will County's adherence to CDBG's NATIONAL OBJECTIVES as funds that must be used to carry out activities that will meet one of the three broad National Objectives: benefit low- and moderate-income persons; aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight; or meet other community development needs having a particular urgency.

Ms. Williams further explained the three national objectives and HUD's and Will County's qualifying factors to meet at least one of them as eligibility for funding. She further explained her conversations with staff at the federal level (US HUD) regarding the national objectives and the requirement to meet at least one national objective in order to qualify for CDBG funding. However, it was explained that a Block Grant recipient (County and State recipients) can fine-tune its requirements (*in writing*) and require that one, all, or a particular national objective must be met. Ms. Williams stated that Will County's guidelines and requirements (in this particular regard) mirrors that of the HUD program guidelines as stated in Will County's guidelines.

The following are Ms. Williams' explanation of the National Objectives as presented by Will County:

Low/Moderate Income Area Benefits all residents in a particular primarily residential area, and at least 51% of those residents (or less if the exception criteria are applicable) are L/M income persons.

Low/Moderate Income Limited Clientele is limited to a specific group of people, at least 51% of whom are L/M income persons. Services qualifying under this category serve a specific clientele, rather than providing service to all the persons in a geographic area. (Most public services qualify under this category.)

Slum or Blighted Area is provided within a designated slum or blighted area, and is designed to address one or more conditions which contributed to the deterioration of the area.

Urgent Needs are designed to alleviate existing conditions that pose a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community, they are of recent origin or recently became urgent, and the grantee is unable to find other available funds to support the activity.

Ms. Williams noted that we were not allowed to use data from the 2010 census, therefore we had to rely on the census from 2000 when gathering data, and commented that the total amount of funds allocated to the entire Will County area was approximately \$750,000.00, and the Village of University Park is applying for a \$200,000.00 construction Grant.

Ms. Williams asked for input relative to community needs as would qualify per these CDBG objectives.

**Audience Participation and Comments were as follows:**

Trustee Oscar Brown asked to know the time limit for completion of this project once approval of the grant is given. Ms. Williams replied that the project should be completed in twelve to eighteen months once the grant is approved.

Trustee Liz Williams commented on the road conditions in certain areas, and asked if funds for this grant could be used for road repairs in those areas.

Ms. Val Williams responded that this grant is not for road repair, but for sidewalk, curb and other matters that fall under the qualifying criteria.

Ms. Williams proposed that an application be submitted for sidewalk Improvements (new, removal, and replacement) - a public infrastructure improvement to the community in an area that is deemed exceptional blight with some levels of urgent need. The project proposed was regarding the need which was specific to sidewalks located at Blackhawk Drive from University Parkway to Olmstead Road; and Hickok Avenue from Sullivan Lane to Blackhawk Drive.

The total estimated cost for this proposed effort is \$230,000, whereby, the entire request for CDBG funding of \$200,000 would be utilized for construction activities only!

Ms. Williams discussed the project's impact as follows:

The project is a "need" area benefit consisting of sidewalk improvements (new, removal, and replacement). Some may say that hazardous sidewalks and dilapidation are not deemed part of slum/blight or pose any urgent need; but when coupled in an area with significant numbers of foreclosures, abandoned housing, rise in unemployment, difficulty with neighborhood watch programs (walking), travel safety concerns for grade school and middle school children, and travel safety for wheelchair disabled - it is not only slum/blight - it is an urgent need. Unfortunately, 2010 data cannot be utilized to reflect same. Upon completion of project – alleviation of significant problems & concerns will occur; and no additional funding needed. Sidewalks are so hazardous – just lawsuits waiting to happen.

The Village's comprehensive plan includes keeping sidewalks free of dangerous and unsafe conditions as these hazardous conditions can be costly in terms of injury claims and the wellbeing of residents. HUD's CDBG goals include projects of this nature that will address conditions which contribute to the deterioration of an area; and alleviate existing conditions that pose a serious and immediate threat to the safety and welfare of the community. Sidewalk issues are recent in origin due to the 2008 IKE flood disaster, whereby, recovery efforts call for addressing disaster recovery needs, long-term recovery, hazard mitigation & development/redevelopment initiatives. This project does just that! The plan also provides strategies to minimize future disaster infrastructure, energy efficiency, restoration and green technology.

There are no negative impacts as a result of this project. Sidewalk improvements will enhance quality of life for local residents and encourage non-motorized transportation options relative to healthy sustainability programming. Most important, it will adhere to the elimination of blighted conditions and address urgent need for the beginnings of revitalization. Improved non-motorized transportation options will provide positive impacts that will allow for better community policing, better neighborhood watch programs, elimination of some blight, safer travel options for grade school and middle school children to and from school, better travel safety for wheel chair bound residents, and the elimination of future law suits. The projects long-term positive impacts to these neighborhoods lead to community sustainability and the region's 2040 planning initiatives; and there is no negative impact to the environment.

Determining need (area benefit for low to moderate income residents) includes some University Park 2010 US Census Bureau demographic information regarding the Village's corporate boundaries.

Unfortunately, this data was not formulated into the statistics now required by HUD's 2000 Census tracts/ block groups, and therefore, this proposal seeks to qualify under slum or blight and/or urgent need. As stated in Will County's criteria "funds must be used to carry out activities that will meet one of the three broad national objectives".

The Village recognizes the need for safe sidewalks in the neighborhoods – it is the first step toward appreciating why the Village wants to do what is necessary to help make the neighborhood sidewalk system clear and safe. Although, the philosophical needs of good sidewalks have been discussed, slum and blight were determined by shifting blocks, cracks, spalling, and general disintegration or crumbling – butting up to additional blighted concerns.

In addition to improving quality of life by eliminating hazardous conditions and potential disasters, the sidewalk project will promote the Village of University Park's efforts to become a sustainable community. There are many benefits that sidewalks provide individuals and the community at large; however the project will greatly benefit low to moderate income residents within 3 categories: personal enjoyment & fitness (sidewalks encourage walking); safety (sidewalks separate pedestrians from motorist and provide for children safety and the safety of wheelchair-bound residents); and community (since sidewalks promote walking, people will begin to meet and know their neighbors better, take note of criminal activities, and police abandoned homes and foreclosed properties). Overall, improve quality of life and move toward sustainable neighborhoods.

Ms. Williams further explained the use of the income guidelines relative to census tracts/block groups regarding the 2000 Census report. And therefore advised that the proposed project area (based on 2000 Low to Moderate Income Data provided by HUD) does not meet Will County's CDBG 51% low to moderate income requirement. This is relative to "**one of the three BROAD National Objectives**" previously discussed in Will County's CDBG Application guidelines. However, upon advising of the information, the Village of University Park residents and public officials **sincerely believed** the proposed project meets two of the BROAD National Objectives as described in Will County's application guidelines, and it may be considered for funding. And therefore, the Village should proceed with the application.

Participants of the public hearing understood that the door-to-door survey is required to adhere to the low to mod objective because of HUD's 2000 census reports; but due to limited staff, safety concerns, and the willingness of homeowners/renters to provide income information to strangers – the consensus was that it was not advisable to try to provide survey information at this time. And therefore, will rely on qualifying from the other broad national objectives, again, as identified in Will County's CDBG guidelines.

Ms. Williams also noted that the 2008 IKE floods were in most cases a direct impact to the current conditions that brought for blight and now cause for urgent need.

Trustee Griffin moved, Trustee Larry Brown seconded a motion that the Board adjourns this 2012 CDBG Public Hearing at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Dorothy R. Jones, CMC  
Village Clerk

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