

JOINT COM DEV & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES from MONDAY, MARCH 28TH, 2022 [meeting began at 6:15 P.M.]

FINANCE PRESENT: Chair Stewart, Tollett, Cerra, Davis, Schneider

CD PRESENT: Chair Callahan, Mitchell, Lipian, Oswald, Schneider

OTHERS PRESENT:

Law Dir Deery, Safety Service Dir Brubaker, Mayor Whitfield, Finance Dir Pileski, Asst Finance Dir Farrell, Asst Dir Calvert, Asst Dir Williams, Engineer McKillips, WWPC Supt. Korzan, Fire Chief Pronesti, Police Capt Groomes, CD Mgr Almobayyed, Water Team Leader Jacob, IT Dir Rothgery, Council members Simmons and Corbin

This is a JOINT Meeting of the Community Development Committee and the Finance Committee of Elyria City Council. Chair Callahan called Community Development to order and Chair Stewart called Finance to order at 6:15 P.M.

1. The matter of Review and Approval of Recommendations from the Elyria Economic Development Committee.

Referred By: Community Development Manager Almobayyed

Ms. Almobayyed said this is the annual review that they do for the municipal income tax agreements. There are currently 6 agreements; Dura-line, Multi-Link, Nelson Stud Welding, Community Star Credit Union, Hydroaire, and Perry Fiberglass. Her department goes over the agreements and collect receipts from the companies to make sure that they are meeting their agreements. Depending on what was agreed upon for their formula for their reimbursement, they calculate to see what the reimbursement would be and if they would receive a reimbursement for that taxable year. They reviewed all of these agreements and they are all in compliance. The Elyria Economic Development Committee has recommended that these agreements should continue. There were two agreements which were not estimated to get a rebate; Nelson Stud Welding and Hydroaire because they did not meet their baseline withholdings or were below that baseline. They are in compliance with their agreements and they may get reimbursement next year as long as they exceed those requirements. It was calculated that everyone else would get a reimbursement.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE:

Mrs. Mitchell moved, second by Mr. Schneider to authorize a resolution adopting the recommendations of the Elyria Economic Development Committee as per attached list.

MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

FINANCE COMMITTEE:

Mr. Tollett moved, second by Mr. Schneider to authorize a resolution adopting the recommendations of the Elyria Economic Development Committee as per attached list.

MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

2. The matter of a Downtown Facade Improvement Application for exterior improvements at 333 Broad Street.

Referred By: Community Development Manager Almobayyed

Ms. Almobayyed said this is for the downtown facade improvement program. That property owner is Christina Jenson and the location is 333 Broad St. They are proposing to remove and replace 12 windows on the facade of Depot St. The estimate is \$10,900 and the guidelines allow for up to 50% up to \$10,000. This applicant had an application in 2021 to replace the storefront windows and entryway doors. That project total cost was \$30,000 and she was reimbursed for \$10,000 per the program guidelines. And this applicant is applying again for the work on the back of the building (on Depot). This application was considered by the EEDC and they voted to approve the application contingent on Design Review approval.

Chair Stewart said this is a way of utilizing these dollars that can help these businesses in the downtown area. He said it would be great if the committees can go through some of these building to see how their improvements are developing.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

Mrs. Mitchell moved, second by Mr. Schneider to authorize an ordinance to approve the 'said' Downtown Facade Improvement Program application.

MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

FINANCE:

Mr. Tollett moved, second by Mrs. Davis to authorize an ordinance to approve the 'said' Downtown Facade Improvement Program application.

MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

3. The matter of creating a support fund for Ukrainian and other refugees of \$50,000 to pay expenses incurred as a result of their resettlement.

Referred By: 1st Ward Councilman Lipian and Council-at-Large Schneider
[Continued from March 14th Discussion]

Mr. Schneider said that he and Council Lipian have been in discussion about this \$50,000 and that we can use ARPA Funds. It would be for refugees who are employed through businesses within the City of Elyria that were impacted by an industry of travel, tourism or hospitality sectors or eight percent employment loss from pre-pandemic or experiencing worse economic impacts. Mr. Lipian has invited some directors here this evening to speak on this topic.

Mr. Lipian introduced Elizabeth Cusma from Global Cleveland and Ron Hedrick from US Together is also in attendance to speak.

Elizabeth Cusma was first and stated her name and address; 1422 Euclid Ave., Cleveland and she is the Program Director at Global Cleveland. The organization was approached by Mr. Lipian with a proposal to support this work. They support refugee resettlement and immigrant integration work throughout Cuyahoga County and within a 3 or 4 county area. They also work in this at the State level and also do some advocacy work at the Federal level. They are mainly an Economic Development Organization that works with community partners that work within the immigrant integration ecosystem, such as US Together which is one of the resettlement agencies in Cleveland.

Mayor Whitfield asked what some of the other communities that this organization does work with and he asked how other communities and governments are funding to support the work of this organization?

Ms. Cusma said they work with large and small municipalities.

They work with Cuyahoga County as a county and the City of Cleveland, other cities, Beechwood and Lakewood. Currently not a lot of governments have put ARPA Funds allocated specifically. Cuyahoga is putting out an RFP for immigrant refugee support for the first time ever. Ms. Cusma thinks they will see more governments in places that have high immigrant populations already, such as Parma, Parma Heights, Lakewood putting some money toward it, particularly because there has been a large reflux recently and there is a crunch in the housing market. Her organization is doing work with private housing developers and government housing.

Mayor asked, if they were getting resources from municipalities before ARPA and if so, how were they funding that?

Ms. Cusma said they have received funding from Cleveland and Cuyahoga County since their inception, as they were part of the team that founded Global Cleveland 11 years ago. They've done contract work with Sandusky around a welcoming Sandusky project, like a Global Sandusky. They did some work in Norwalk around Economic Development and how to support their employers getting immigrants to fill some of their job needs.

Mr. Oswald asked if our \$50,000 come out of our General Fund or ARPA. How are these other places getting their money and where is it taken from their budget?

Ms. Cusma said that she can find out more information and confirm with a follow up email. But she believes some is General Fund and some is Economic Development.

Chair Stewart said the ratio of Elyria as compared to what cities like Cleveland or Columbus are giving and comparisons of their budgets. Are we in a position to do what is being requested here? Whether it's for the Ukrainian refugees or any others in need. Are we prepared, has information been drawn up yet and how will this play out if we move forward with at this time?

Dir Deery said that she is not aware of any structure in place for this as yet. There have been discussions as far as whether we would do this in-house through Community Development or something along the lines of a sub-recipient of an outside organization, such as the two that are here today. There will need to be guidelines that need to be drawn up but we're not at that point yet.

Mr. Lipian said he called the Ohio Budget Office to make sure we modified the bill with the input from Council to make sure it fits. He and Mr. Schneider said it would be if the industry is in travel, tourism or hospitality sectors or an industry that experienced at least 8 percent loss from pre-pandemic levels or if they're experiencing comparable or worse economic impacts as these businesses, then, an employee being hired by one of those companies would be eligible based on their financial aid and need to receive assistance with rent and priority given to those who wish to live in the City of Elyria. The \$50,000 would be sub-granted equally between US Together and Global Cleveland, \$25,000 each. He said he spoke to CD Dir Scott on this and our CD Dept. would be in collaboration with US Together and Global Cleveland to create the framework which to execute this which would include documentation on eligibility and collaborating and determining that. He's also had conversations with how they would match up the refugee with the right employer.

And how they would vet them for eligibility and looking under what the framework would be for this ARPA money. He asked Ms. Cusma how that collaboration will take place to help build this program after this legislation is passed?

Ms. Cusma said for example, they are working with a company called Permco, which is located in Streetsboro and they do not have a large immigrant population but they are in need of workers at different levels. She brought up the issue of transportation for employees to get to the jobs. They were told that the company is willing to arrange transportation for a cohort of individuals and also willing to provide or figure out some way to handle childcare and language assistance training if needed. This is an example of an employer who is not your typical employer and who is willing to attract employees and build employee loyalty.

Ms. Cusma said her organization works with community leaders and employment specialists at the refugee resettlement agencies and the ancillary immigrant support organizations. Through that network her organization a.) puts out job notices, b.) help people make sure they're connecting to the employer, to the hiring firm. They partner with Magnet, a county let program, to help with training and interviewing. It's a collaboration on how they can make this happen. A big part is helping immigrants figure out how to live their lives here, which is how organizations like US Together and Global Cleveland come in, to make sure they can facilitate that communication. They also provide translation and support interpretation.

Mr. Tollett asked if these funds would be available to all immigrants?

Ms. Cusma said that would have to be specified in the guidelines.

Mr. Corbin read a statement to the committee; Council passed a joint resolution between the Mayor and City Council on the Russian Invasion of Ukraine. It was written that we would resolve the instruments of our local power to provide aid and refuge for Ukrainians fleeing this infamy. This should be followed with action and not just words. This could replenish our workforce which covid has damaged. When this issue comes before City Council, he said he will do the right thing and vote to pass it and he suggests everyone else does the same thing. Today's refugees are tomorrow's Elyrians and they will help rebuild our City.

Finance Dir Pileski said that it's important that the framework is created and available because when the finance office reports to the treasurer on how ARPA funding was spent, this will be important as to the impact of covid and what the resolution to the problem is. This is very important that the framework is established and made available when they report.

Mr. Lipian said having the backing of legislation empowers good faith and his conversations with the budget office indicated that those sorts of frameworks do not have to be documented with legislation, they just need to be documented. His understanding from Dir Scott is that this is something that Global Cleveland, US Together and the CD Department can work on after the legislation is passed.

Law Dir Deery requested that the framework be finalized as an exhibit for the legislation and it will be needed in order to move legislation to council. If the committee report moves forward this evening they must bear in mind that they will need that framework to go onto council as soon as that program criteria is ready.

Chair Stewart asked that since we're still working thru the process can they develop the framework before making appropriations at this time? Since they're still in the process of getting that formulated. Mr. Stewart asked if we should have that in place before designating the dollars. It will be ongoing and we'll be evaluating it and revising it and it should be done correctly the first time.

Chair Callahan agreed that this needs to be done right the first time and move forward and so that there are no issues down the line.

Mr. Oswald asked if this is a one time request for \$50,000 or will it be coming back every year, and since ARPA won't be around forever.

Chair Callahan said this is ongoing tragedy and we don't know what the future is. Mr. Lipian came up with this number, other cities are coming up with different numbers.

Mr. Lipian said this is a one-time fund and will expire in 2024 at which time the unused funds will be returned to the ARPA Fund and if any adjustments want to be made they could be made afterwards. He feels it would be a mistake to hold legislation up from moving onto council. We could pass this today and then get Community Development to draft a working document that could be voted on. This committee is the place for the workshop and firm up for full council to make the final approval.

Law Dir Deery said that if this moves forward to council to have legislation approved, essentially all that will be approved is the authorization of a program which is wonderful, however authorizing a program that doesn't have any guts to it, there won't be anything to facilitate and that's why she needs to know if it's going to be the CD Director or working in conjunction with samples from other communities. That exhibit, which will be the program guidelines and criteria will be the guts of the legislation. Here fear is that legislation will happen and council will authorize this and unfortunately the reality is that the implementation will languish. She would prefer that if this gets moved through and the committee moves to vote on it tonight, her office would immediately begin reaching out to get the exhibit ready to go.

Mr. Lipian responded to Dir Deery's comments and said that he ran this through different departments and he was prepared to supply enough guts to create an anatomy of the entire bill, but he was assured that wasn't necessary for the committee meeting and many thought it was far too detailed. He said it was not too different from what Columbus passed in content, but in form, it's different, after feedback.

Our's would focus on getting refugees employed in Elyria and they would pay income tax and they would be giving back to the community.

Mayor Whitfield said if Council approves the allocation amount, we can work with Global Cleveland and others and come back with a contract or proposal that says, here's the detailed program. First the allocation of the funds needs to pass so they know what the dollar amount will be.

Finance Dir Pileski said they would need to consider the matter of entering into a sub-recipient agreement and the monies have not yet been appropriated, we need to create a new department under the ARPA Fund along with the appropriations, and we can do that at the next Finance meeting.

Mr. Cerra asked if this will fit for any immigrant or anyone that comes through and would cover other catastrophes that might happen in the meantime, and would it be on a first come, first serve basis?

Ms. Cusma said yes and as long as the individual has the right to work here.

Law Dir Deery said, as far as the agenda item, it's simply that we're creating the fund, setting aside the money, at this time, are we creating the program or maybe the committee is. But from Finance perspective, money needs to be appropriated.

Dir Pileski said he needs to put thought into what we're going to call the fund.

Chair Stewart said at this time he doesn't think it's worth rushing into this.

Mr. Stewart doesn't see why one or two more meetings would be too much to ask. We need to have clarity on what we're doing. We don't have a policy in place.

Mayor said there are a number of ways to get to the end point. We want Elyria to be a welcoming city.

In terms of the execution, one route between now and the next committee meeting, is to get a draft agreement between Elyria and Global Cleveland. And handle it all at once, the appropriation and the contract agreement. Or we can appropriate today and go meet with the organizations and establish a contract and move forward with it. Both of these pathways are reasonable.

Mrs. Mitchell said that the committee needs to make a decision on this matter.

Mr. Lipian said in respect to others that are here we shouldn't make a decision before we hear the other speakers.

Next speaker is Ron Hedrick, the Site Director of US Together Cleveland, 2800 Euclid Ave., Cleveland. US Together Cleveland is one of the 3 resettlement agencies operating out of northeast Ohio. This organization was founded by refugees from the former Soviet Union who created a pathway to help others coming from their communities and other countries. He is here today to support this bill. Mr. Hedrick worked in Washington DC at the Federal level doing economic integration working with different affiliates throughout the US and how they were able to work with different communities towards rebuilding resettlement networks in a way that provides economic and neighborhood revitalization. US Together is in support of the bill and will help work out the particulars of this. The Biden Administration announced that they want to do 125,000 refugees in this fiscal year. They've already resettled about 800 Afghan individuals in a short amount of time. They are looking at different pathways for the 100,000 refugees were just announced. The city of Cleveland is looking to welcome the largest number of refugees and immigrants that they've seen in a long time. He employed everyone to look at this as an opportunity for what it can mean for our communities, including economic vitalization and neighborhood revitalization through affordable housing and workforce development.

Next speaker is Ignatz Csata of 626 Garford, Elyria and he said someone said earlier that a refugee now will be an Elyrian later, generations to come. There is now a fourth generation of Csata living in Elyria right now. The Soviet Union invaded Hungary in 1956 and his mother was 19 and pregnant with him and his father was 26 and they fled the country through a field and made it to the USA and ended up in Elyria on Irondale. He wanted to address the Ukraine issue and there is a labor shortage here in Elyria and if we help them come to Elyria, they will work, just like the Hungarians did in 1956, hard working ethnic people. We can't change the world, but we can make a difference.

Next speaker is Camille Rhodehamel, 133 Harvard Ave., Elyria. She grew up during the time of the Hungarian Revolution and her grandparents immigrated to the USA and settled in Elyria. It's so important that we help those who are trying to begin a new life here in the USA. Mrs. Rhodehamel is also a combat veteran and has seen the devastation of war. Everyone deserves food and shelter and clothing. This is a moral obligation for all of us. She is a Registered Nurse and a patient advocate, she protects patients against harm and she feels the same for these Ukrainian Refugees. We need to have compassion and take these refugees in and they will benefit the City. They will be good employees, they have good work ethics.

Chair Callahan thanked everyone for their comments.

Mr. Callahan said we have some options and if we vote on this tonight it won't go any faster. If we gather the additional needed information for the program and the decide where the funds will come from, we can vote on it at the next meeting.

Mr. Lipian said what is happening in Ukraine is an unprecedented humanitarian crisis the likes which we haven't seen since World War Two and this brings unpredictability. He is part of the committee; Lorain County for Ukraine, they are building the framework in anticipation of refugees coming to our shores. His concern is we're not taking stock, and we wouldn't be ready. It would be good to know that we have the \$50,000 in the pipeline and to work on the guidelines of the bill. He said to pass the bill today, allocate the \$50,000, then develop the anatomy which can be worked out with these organizations. We have to have good faith and if we don't work together we won't be ready for the emergency if and when it strikes.

Mr. Callahan said that everyone on this panel has good faith and everyone's hearts are in the right place. We will take advice and move this forward, but we want to do it right.

Law Dir Deery said that without the framework, this program will not be able to be implemented. If this is passed and council chooses to pass legislation so that the program is authorized, but without Exhibit A there is no framework for eligibility or even where to move the funds. Those funds have not been appropriated yet, the transfer for those funds is not ready for this evening, an exhibit would have to be prepared and a name for the department would have to be created to go with a name for the program.

Mrs. Mitchell said in light of what the Law Director has said and what the Finance Director has said, she will make a motion that we table this until all the ducks are in a row, to a later date, possibly the next CD/Finance meeting.

Motion made by Mrs. Mitchell and second by Mr. Oswald.

Mr. Lipian added that he has a great deal of respect for City Council, but what he perceives happening on this council is that there is a need for details and specifics that borders on reduction odd absurdum and that has been generated in order to delay certain things that have come to council. He said he's worked with everyone to get this bill ready and he's starting to perceive a desire to achieve specifics and details that's to the level of reduction odd absurdum which is seen as bad faith, he's told one thing and he comes to chambers and another thing happens. We have to make sure that we're not asking for specifics on the level of microscopic detail that comes down to good faith between departments and between parties, because at that point we're not really a functioning legislative body.

Mayor Whitfield said he hears the will to invite immigrants into our city and to work with Councilman Lipian, Global Cleveland and whether they approve the finances tonight or not, we still have to meet with Global Cleveland and come up with an agreement and bring it back. Moving forward we need the agreement and the \$50,000 to be appropriated.

Dir Pileski said he can have the appropriation change for the next meeting. He will need the name for the line item in the budget that they're going to use, it has to be under the ARPA Fund and the program that is selected.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

Mrs. Mitchell moved, second by Mr. Oswald to table this to the next CD/Finance Meeting on April 11th, 2022.

4 - AYES, 1 - NAY (Lipian)

MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

FINANCE:

Mr. Cerra moved, second by Mr. Tollett to table this to the next CD/Finance Meeting on April 11th, 2022.

All - AYES,

MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

Mr. Lipian moved and second by Mr. Oswald to adjourn this evening's Community Development portion of the Meeting at 7:25 P.M.

MOTION CARRIED

[The evening's meetings continued with the Finance Committee Meeting].

Respectfully submitted by,

*Colleen M. Rosado,
Council Clerk Secretary/Administrative Assistant*

CMR/