

The April 23, 2008 meeting of the Common Council Ad Hoc Committee for Grant Agencies was called to order by Chairman Robert Riley at 7:30 PM.

Present were Committee members Joe Cavo, Ben Chianese, Jack Knapp Jr., Robert Riley and Gregg Seabury. Also present were Finance Director David St. Hilaire, Assistant Finance Director Daniel Garrick and Common Council members Robert Arconti, Mike Calandrino, Jane Diggs, Louise McMahon, Paul Rotello, Colleen Stanley and Mary Teicholz.

Chairman Riley said they would review the agency's requests in alphabetical order. He asked that the representatives from the agencies keep their comments to less than four minutes.

The following agencies thanked the City for the funding and briefly described the use of funds: AIDS Project of Greater Danbury, American Red Cross, Amos House, Child & Family Institute/CARD, Danbury Children First, Danbury Visiting Nurse, Danbury Youth Services, Dream Homes Community Center, Healing Hearts Regional Hospice, Interfaith Aids Ministry, Midwestern Council-Alcoholism, Northwest Regional Mental Health, Regional Hospice, RSVP, TBICO and WECAHR

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Reverend P.J. Leopold complained that she was surprised they were denied the 22% increase that they had requested. She said this funding has not had an increase in years. Mr. Chianese asked if there had been a reduction in any of their other grants for this program and Rev. Leopold say no, this was the only reduction. Mr. Cavo asked about the full page News-Times ad they ran about the ICE Partnership. Rev. Leopold said it cost \$2,300 and it was paid for by an anonymous gift. She added that none of the City funding goes toward their work with immigrants.

Finance Director David St. Hilaire said due to budgetary constraints, most of grant agencies were kept as the same level of funding as last year. The Mayor didn't want to cut their funding so they kept them all at the same level as the previous year. Mr. St. Hilaire explained that City Department budgets were cut rather than take funding away from these agencies, so there was no way they could accommodate the requests for increases.

Community Action Committee

Glenda Armstrong said food and fuel are the two key words. Normally they serve eleven families; right now they are at three times that amount.

Connecticut Institute for Communities

Jim Maloney, President, said there are six key points they want to do but the bulk of the funds will be used to maintain the Harrabee program. He said they are hoping that this additional funding will help them to get more money from other sources such as grants and private foundations. Mr. Chianese suggested they ask WCSU to donate the use of the Armory building, which would reduce their expenses significantly by eliminating the rent. Mr. Maloney said the State will not do that but a deal has been made for the City to buy the building, once the new Arts building is finished at WCSU.

War Memorial

Mr. Riley said the War Memorial is experiencing difficult times; they just don't have the membership to cover their expenses. He suggested that they merge the funding for the YMCA with this and split it down the middle. Mr. Chianese said they should wait until they get to the YMCA to discuss this idea.

Mr. Chianese said it seems that many of these agencies serve the same purpose and asked Mr. St. Hilaire how they can prevent the duplication of services. Mr. St. Hilaire said it may seem like there is some overlap on a lot of these programs but they are distinctly different. He said the Mayor insisted on keeping everything the same as last year. Any programs that were increased were done so because they were joined with other programs.

Hispanic Center of Greater Danbury

Executive Director Eva Colon thanked them for changing the amount of their grant. She said she has worked hard to get the agency back on track by finding out what the needs of the community are and providing programs to satisfy them. She added that they recognize the need to take accountability for what they do. Mr. Chianese said last year their funding was taken away because of problems with the previous management. He said there currently is an ad hoc committee looking into reinstating last year's funds. Mr. Cavo asked about the full page News-Times ad they ran about the ICE Partnership. Ms. Colon said it cost \$1,196 and it was paid for by a private donation. Barbara Roos, Secretary to the Board of Directors, then said since Ms. Colon came on board, the face of the agency has totally changed.

Boughton St. YMCA

Mr. Cavo asked Mr. Hilaire to explain the change in the funding. Mr. St. Hilaire said a few years ago, the City stepped in when the YMCA needed some major repairs. That funding was maintained to help them do the improvements but now since they are making money, it is time to cut back. These extra funds were split between the Connecticut Institute for Communities and the Scott-Fanton Museum, which will no longer be a grant agency. The museum will be run by an Authority, which is funded in a different manor than the grants are.

Mr. Riley again suggested merging the proposed funding for the War Memorial and the YMCA and splitting the dollar amount down the middle. Mr. St. Hilaire said the War Memorial is in a unique situation because it is in danger of closing. He said these two agencies need to work this out between themselves. Mr. Riley said the War Memorial was built to honor the dead and service the living, but they are in a bad way and Danbury can not afford to lose that program. Mr. St. Hilaire said the Council needs to consider who the money will help more.

Volunteer Center

Patti Cohen-Hecht, President, stated they have been in existence since 1974 and their allocation amount from the City has not increased since then. Every group in Danbury looks to them to provide volunteers, but they need additional funding at least to bring them up to every other non-profit in the community. This past year they went to other towns for funding, they received a \$20,000 gift from the Mayor, and the rest of the money they got was from sweat equity.

Mr. Riley thanked everyone for coming and said they would consider all that had been said.

At this point, Valerie Ventura-Saadi of Family & Children's Aid/Harmony House came forward and asked to speak. She said due to restructuring, they had missed the deadline and they were hoping that the Council would still consider funding them with the same amount as the past few years.

Mr. St. Hilaire said the reality is that this budget is very tight and the board needs to focus on the essentials.

Mr. Cavo said even in better times, these agencies had to take cuts. He added that the taxpayers have let the council know that they want the money to stop going out. He encouraged all of the agencies to go out and find other sources of funding in addition to the City. Mr. Riley then reiterated his suggestion about merging the funds from the War Memorial and the YMCA. He also mentioned the reinstatement of the 07/08 funds for the Hispanic Center. He also suggested giving the Volunteer Center additional funding.

Mr. Cavo made a motion to recommend the budget as presented by the Mayor with the exception of merging the funding for the YMCA and War Memorial and splitting it evenly between the two agencies.

He added that he does not think they should do anything regarding the reinstatement of the Hispanic Centers 07/08 funding and they should let the Ad hoc committee handle that issue. This motion was seconded by Mr. Seabury. Mr. Knapp asked about the Ad hoc committee and Mr. Cavo said it was formed to find out the specific objectives of agency and that information has not been provided. He added that they deserve to have that information before deciding on giving money back. Mr. Cavo said he had not heard from the Mayor on

this issue. Mr. Chianese made a motion to merge the funding for the YMCA and War Memorial, but reduce the amount they each get and use the difference for some of the other agencies including Family & Childrens Services. Mr. Cavo said he appreciates this suggestion but finds it difficult to support it. He said his suggestion about the YMCA/War Memorial situation was because they are similar agencies that do the same thing. He then said he would prefer to leave everyone flat funded as proposed by the Mayor. Mr. Seabury said he agreed with Mr. Cavo. Mr. Chianese withdrew his motion to amend Mr. Cavo's motion and it was passed with four votes.
Mr. Chianese abstained from the vote.

At 9:43 PM, Mr. Seabury made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Knapp seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Robert Riley, Chair

Joe Cavo

Jack Knapp

Gregg Seabury

Benjamin Chianese