

City of Takoma Park Maryland
GRANTS REVIEW COMMITTEE
WORKSESSION MINUTES

DATE: Tuesday, March 1, 2016
TIME: 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Takoma Park Community Center-Sam Abbott Citizen's Center
Hydrangea Room, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park

Members Present: Nadine Bloch, Elizabeth Boyd, Gary Cardillo, Pamela Coffey, Jay Keller, Lesley Perry, and Jennifer Wofford

Members Absent: Akena Allen

City Staff Present: Sara Anne Daines, HCD Director

Also Attending: Norka Ruiz Bravo and T.J. Mathews

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:30 p.m. Copies of all current grant instructions, guidelines, and review procedures were distributed.

2. Welcome and Introductions

Joan Schaffer, Montgomery County Council Grants Manager, facilitated the meeting.

3. Facilitated Discussion of Grants Review Process and Funding Priorities

a. Program Guidelines and Priorities:

- Are the Council's established funding priorities clear? If not, what type of clarification is needed?

The committee agrees that the priorities are clear, but the weight of each priority is not as understood. After talking through what considerations the committee members saw as the Council's preferences, it was decided that the committee members would take time to think about their suggestions for the weight of the written priorities and submit them to the group. Based on the responses, the committee will submit their recommendations to the Council.

- Are the current three-year funding limitations and the limit on the number of grants that can be awarded to single entity in a given funding cycle appropriate?

Discussion centered on whether systemic change can happen in three years and if organizations need more time with City funding before being able to create sustainable outside funding for their projects. The current three-year requirement was based on the Community Development Block Grant's three-year limitation. The committee agreed that there could be some flexibility on the three-year guideline.

b. Grants Review Process and Procedures:

- Does the current application process work? If not, what modifications should be considered?

The committee agreed that moving to using the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers' common grant application was a wise move, both for city processing and for applicants to apply for other grants using the same framework. The committee will review the application further and submit any suggestions for improvement, especially to the cover page. The committee strives to ensure that organizations with good proposals are not cut because of technical errors.

- Does the current evaluation process work? If not, what modifications should be considered?

The committee debated the need for interviews. The current process does not include interviews and relies upon the Letter of Intent (to be changed to Letter of Inquiry) and application responses and the opportunity for the committee to ask clarifying questions. The question was posed: What problem with the current application process would introducing interviews solve? The committee decided to table discussions until the end of the year for a final decision. A straw poll indicated that the committee was in favor of continuing without interviews.

- Newly formed groups or groups the committee members are not experienced with may be at a disadvantage in the selection process. How can the process allow the committee to develop familiarity with such groups?

The majority of the committee did not see an issue with new organizations having a disadvantage.

- How should mid-year funding requests be handled by the Council?

The Council should advise applicants requesting mid-year funding to apply for

City of Takoma Park grants during their active cycles or apply for Takoma Foundation funds, since they have more than one funding cycle per year.

c. City Council Expectations for Committee Recommendations:

- What kind of direction from Council would be helpful to the committee – e.g. ranked priorities?

The committee ran out of time to thoroughly discuss this question. It was somewhat handled in our discussion of weighting priorities.

- What is the best way to present funding recommendations to the City Council?

The committee ran out of time to thoroughly discuss this question.

d. Norms for Committee's Application Review Process

- Should the committee consider adoption of rules of conduct to govern discussions?

Nadine is tailoring an example list of norms for this particular committee, using a different name than rules of conduct, focusing on the need for respect within discussions.

- Are there ways to restructure the process to systematize the decision making?

The committee ran out of time to thoroughly discuss this question. It was somewhat handled in our discussion of the grants review process.

4. Selection of Next Committee Meeting

The next meeting will be Tuesday, April 12 at 7:15 p.m. in the third floor conference room at the Community Center.

5. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
Lesley Perry, Grants Review Committee Secretary