



City of Grand Island

Tuesday, May 26, 2020

Council Session

Item G-10

#2020-126 - Approving Amendment to the Citizen Participation Plan

Staff Contact: Amber Alvidrez

Council Agenda Memo

From: Amber Alvidrez, Community Development

Meeting: May 26, 2020

Subject: Citizen Participation Plan for Community Development Block Grant

Presenter(s): Amber Alvidrez, Community Development

Background

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development requires that all communities that receive Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds adopt a Citizen Participation Plan. This plan sets forth how citizens, especially lower income and/or disabled persons, are to be provided with opportunities to participate in the planning, implementation and assessment of the CDBG programs.

Discussion

On March 27th the CARES Act was signed lessening the Citizen Participation requirements due to COVID-19 pandemic for Community Development Block Grant funds. At this time HUD has encouraged many Entitlement Communities to adopt the lessened restrictions in order to aid in creating programs that offer COVID-19 relief to communities. The following exception has been added to the City's Citizen Participation Plan.

Exceptions to this plan will apply to any substantial amendments to the 2019 Annual Action Plan and to the creation of the 2020 Annual Action Plan. Change of requirements by the Housing and Urban Development through the CARES Act which was signed on March 27, 2020 allows for Entitlement Communities to allow these plans to require a 1 day notice for virtual public hearings and a 5 day public comment. The above changes are a direct result of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

As required by HUD, the City followed the current Citizen Participation Plan and left the changes open to public comment for 15 days.

Alternatives

It appears that the Council has the following alternatives concerning the issue at hand. The Council may:

1. Move to approve the Citizen Participation Plan
2. Refer the issue to a Committee
3. Postpone the issue to future date
4. Take no action on the issue

Recommendation

City Administration recommends that the Council approve the Citizen Participation Plan.

Sample Motion

Move to approve the Citizen Participation Plan and authorize the Mayor to sign all related documents.

City of Grand Island Citizen Participation Plan

Introduction

The City of Grand Island has established a Citizen Participation Plan to provide opportunities for citizen involvement in the process of developing and implementing the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program and other programs administered by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This Citizen Participation Plan outlines when, where and how citizens can access information, review and comment on major community plans, and comment on progress of funded activities under these programs. The primary planning document for any of the CDBG-assisted program is the City of Grand Island's Consolidated Plan, which is developed every three to five years to serve as a guide for strategic actions to enhance the City's housing and community development assets. Other major documents related to the Consolidated Plan and covered by this Citizen Participation Plan are the Fair Housing Plan - which describes how the City will be affirmatively furthering Fair Housing, an Annual Action Plan - which describes the specific actions and project activities the City will carry out with the funds and the Consolidated Annual Performance & Evaluation Report (CAPER) - an annual evaluation of progress in implementing program activities.

Encouraging Public Participation

The City of Grand Island welcomes and encourages the participation of all of its citizens in the development of these plans and in the review of progress in implementing plan activities. The City particularly encourages involvement by low and moderate income households, individuals residing in areas targeted for program activities, minorities and non-English speaking persons, as well as persons with disabilities. In addition, residents of public housing and other assisted housing groups are encouraged to participate. Finally, we encourage local and regional institutions and other organizations including businesses, neighborhood associations, housing developers including the Hall County Housing Authority, and community and faith-based organizations to become involved in the planning process. Opportunities for citizen involvement occur in the initial stages of developing the long range plan and the annual plan as well as during the implementation of activities.

These opportunities include:

- Participation in public hearings to discuss needs, available funds and project/program activities
- Participation in meetings with committees and focus groups involved in planning housing and community development activities
- Review and comment on proposed plans and activities such as:
 - The Fair Housing Plan
 - The Citizen Participation Plan
 - The Consolidated Plan
 - The Annual Action Plans
 - Amendments to the Plans

- Consolidated Annual Performance Reports (CAPERs)

Anyone who wishes to be informed of the time/place of meetings and opportunities, to review documents or who wishes to learn more about activities may ask to be placed on mailing and/or e-mail lists of interested citizens by contacting the City of Grand Island Community Development Division, City of Grand Island 100 E. 1st, Grand Island, NE 68801 or mailing address P.O. Box 1968, Grand Island, NE 68802. Direct communication to Community Development Division at (308) 389-0212 or sign up for emails by visiting www.grand-island.com and selecting to receive “Community Development” e-Notices

Public Hearings

During the process of developing the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan, City staff meets with community groups, organizations and persons interested in housing and community development activities to discuss community needs and to provide information on CDBG and other HUD Programs.

Purpose of the Public Hearings

A minimum of two Public Hearings will be held during the year to obtain the comments of citizens and representatives of public agencies, non-profit organizations and other interested parties. The Hearings provide opportunities to obtain the views of citizens on housing and community development needs, provide information on the amount of funds available (and the purpose for which they can be used), discuss proposed activities and review program performance over the previous year.

All oral and written comments received at the Hearings will be considered in decisions on the HUD-assisted programs and their planning documents. A summary of the City’s response to comments made in the Consolidated Planning process will be provided in the Appendix of the Plan submitted to HUD. At least one of the Hearings will be held prior to publishing the draft plan for public comment.

Location of Hearings

The location and timing of the Hearings will ensure maximum opportunities for citizens to participate. Hearings will be conducted in buildings that are accessible to persons with physical disabilities. Location of the hearings will be provided in all announcements and advertisements. Entrance to the Hearings is accessible to persons with physical disabilities.

Expanding Opportunities for All to Participate at Hearings

The City encourages all citizens to attend and participate in the hearings. A special effort will be made to ensure that low and moderate income persons, households in areas assisted by program activities and persons special needs have opportunities to participate. The City will provide translators for Non-English speaking persons who request assistance at least 3 days prior to the Hearing or other meetings in the planning process. Persons who need auxiliary aids or other

assistance to be able to fully participate may request assistance at least 3 days in advance of the Hearing or meeting. Persons seeking all such assistance should contact the City Clerk at (308) 385-5444, Ext. 111 to make arrangements.

Notification of Hearing Dates and Locations

Notices of the location and timing of the hearings will be placed in The Grand Island Independent newspaper in English, with directions for translation in Spanish, at least 14 days prior to the Hearing. Notice will also be sent to interested citizens via the email list generated by the “Community Development” E –Notice list.

Public Comment on Proposed Plans and Reports

Outside of the Public Hearing Process, opportunities to comment on proposed plans and other documents are available to the general public and other persons affected by the activities of the programs. A notice will be published in The Grand Island Independent in English, with directions for translation in Spanish, providing 30 calendar days for the public to comment on the Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Plan Amendments and the Consolidated Annual Performance & Evaluation Report. Comments may be sent in writing to the Community Development Division, City of Grand Island PO Box 1968, Grand Island, NE 68802 or by direct communication to Community Development Division at (308) 389-0288. A summary of comments received on the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, CAPERs and any Amendments will be considered by the City and attached to the document (along with City comments responding to the views) when submitted to HUD.

These documents available for public comment are briefly described as follows:

Citizen Participation Plan

The City of Grand Island Citizen Participation Plan outlines the steps the City will take to provide citizens with opportunities for input into the development of plans and to comment on performance of assisted activities.

Consolidated Plan

The City of Grand Island Consolidated Plan is a long-range strategic plan that assesses community needs, establishes priority objectives and outlines strategies the City will pursue over a 3 to 5 year period to improve the City’s housing and community development assets principally benefiting low and moderate income persons.

Annual Action Plans

Each year, the City is required to prepare an Annual Action Plan for submission to HUD that outlines the programs and activities the City will undertake in the coming year to implement the strategies of the Consolidated Plan. The Annual Plans also describe how the CDBG funds will be used over the course of the year.

Consolidated Annual Performance & Evaluation Reports (CAPERs)

Each year, the City prepares a description of how the CDBG funds were used over the prior program year and describes progress on other non-funded activities of the Consolidated Plan.

Amendments

From time to time, amendments to the plans will be necessary as conditions change. Amendments of a minor nature will be made as needed throughout the year. However, the public will be invited to review and comment on substantial amendments to adopted plans. The City will consider all comments received in writing or orally at the Public Hearings and will provide a summary of the comments and the City's response (and, if applicable, the reasons the comment was not accepted) to HUD with their request for a substantial amendment. The definition of a "substantial amendment" to the Consolidated and Annual Action Plans is defined as:

Change in budget

- Project Budgets of more than \$25,000
 - An increase or decrease in the budget of more than 25% (unless the decrease is caused by a budget under run).
- Project Budgets of less than \$25,000
 - An increase or decrease of 50% of the budgeted amount (unless the decrease is caused by a budget under run).

Change in Use

- If there is a change to a goal or objective in the Consolidated Plan.
- If funds change from one eligible activity to another in the Annual Action Plan.

Change in Beneficiaries

- An increase or decrease in the low-to-moderate income beneficiaries of more than 25% for all projects

Access to Information and Availability of Plan Documents

The City will provide citizens, public agencies and other interested parties reasonable and timely access to information and records on the adopted Fair Housing Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Citizen Participation Plan and CAPER as well as any amendments to those documents. In addition, reasonable accommodation will be made for non-English speaking persons and persons with disabilities who need assistance with documents or program information. These adopted documents and information on the use of funds and other program information will be available at the Community Development Division; City of Grand Island 100 E. 1st Street, Grand Island, NE 68801, an appointment for picking up documents to view can be made by contacting the Community Development Division at (308) 389-0288. A reasonable number of free copies of these documents are available upon request at City Hall through the Community Development Division's office. All of these documents will also be available on the City of Grand Island's website, under the Community Development Division section. All materials discussed above will be kept on record in the Community Development Division office and displayed on the City of Grand Island's website for 5 years after adoption.

Technical Assistance

The City will provide technical assistance to groups representing low- and moderate income persons to assist them in understanding the requirements for developing proposals for funding assistance under CDBG. Technical assistance may include referral to information sources, providing information on programs and activities, and one-on-one project reviews.

In addition to the translation efforts listed above related to Public Hearings and Public Notices, the City of Grand Island also offers free translation of all of their website information in 104 languages. The Community Development Division also makes CDBG all public notices available in Spanish on their website. All postings of the public notices include directions in Spanish on where to view the translation.

Complaints and Grievances

Complaints concerning the Fair Housing Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Plan or CAPER may be submitted in writing to the Community Development Division, City of Grand Island PO Box 1968, Grand Island, NE 68802 or direct communication to Community Development Division at (308) 389-0288. Phone communication is allowed; however, all complaints must be eventually submitted in writing and will be responded to in writing within 15 working days of receiving the complaint in writing. Persons not satisfied with the response may write an appeal of the decision and request a review of the complaint by the City of Grand Island's Regional Planning Department Director at the above address. A written response from the City conveying the results of the review to the complainant will be made in writing within 15 working days. All decisions will be final.

Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan

The City has an Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan to minimize the displacement of persons as a result of program activities and to assist any persons actually displaced. The policy is to discourage displacement unless it is clearly necessary to achieve the Plan's objectives and to minimize the adverse impacts of the displacement. In the event that displacement is unavoidable, displaced persons will receive the full benefits and assistance provided for under the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended and HUD regulations. Additional information on the services available to individuals displaced by the City of Grand Island is available by contacting the Community Development Division, City of Grand Island PO Box 1968, Grand Island, NE 68802 or direct communication to Community Development Division at (308) 389-0288.

Exceptions to this plan will apply to any substantial amendments to the 2019 Annual Action Plan and to the creation of the 2020 Annual Action Plan. Change of requirements by the Housing and Urban Development through the CARES Act which was signed on March 27, 2020 allows for Entitlement Communities to allow these plans to require a 1 day notice for

virtual public hearings and a 5 day public comment. The above changes are a direct result of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

RESOLUTION 2020-126

WHEREAS, on March 25, 2014, the City of Grand Island approved and adopted the existing Citizen Participation Plan to comply with the citizen participation requirements of the Community Development Block Grant program as per the State of Nebraska's requirements; and

WHEREAS, on August 25, 2015, the City of Grand Island became an Entitlement Community; and

WHEREAS, on March 27th the CARES Act was signed lessening the Citizen Participation requirements due to COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the Community Development Department amends the Citizen Participation Plan to serve under the Entitlement Program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA that the City of Grand Island, Nebraska is hereby approves and adopts the revised Citizen Participation Plan; and the Mayor is hereby authorized and such plan on behalf of the City of Grand Island.

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Adopted by the City Council of the City of Grand Island, Nebraska, May 26, 2020.

Roger G. Steele, Mayor

Attest:

RaNae Edwards, City Clerk

Approved as to Form	☒ _____
May 22, 2020	☒ City Attorney