

**CITY OF BUFFALO URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY
BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

REMOTE MEETING VIA WEBEX CONFERENCE CALL

MEETING DATE: October 22, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Byron Brown, BURA Chairman
Council President Darius Pridgen
Brendan R. Mehaffy, BURA Vice Chairman
Commissioner Donna Estrich
Timothy Ball, Corporation Counsel
Council Member Joseph Golombek
Council Member Christopher Scanlon

SECRETARY: Scott C. Billman

OTHERS PRESENT: Yvonne McCray, BURA Director of Housing, Jenna Bichler, BURA Director of Operations, Tracy Cooley BURA Deputy Director of FCA, Jessica Brown Director of Administration & Finance, Maria Melchiorre, Tony Chestnut, Leslie Vishwanath, Pam Walker-Jarmon, Evelyn Rodriguez, Bill Parke, Alex Carducci,

1. Mr. Mehaffy called the meeting to order at 9:45 am.
2. Commissioner Estrich made the motion to waive the reading of the minutes of the September 24, 2020 meeting, seconded by Mr. Ball and carried unanimously.
3. **Drescher & Malecki 2018-2019 Audit Presentation (Informational Only)**
Deputy Director of FCA Tracy Cooley introduced Luke Malecki and Carl Widmer from the CPA group Drescher and Malecki provided a summary of the BURA 2019-2020 Financial Audit and reported that there were no findings.

4. LEASE EXTENSION

4a. Approval for the City of Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency (“BURA”) to approve a Lease Extension with Graphic Control 450 Exchange Street, Buffalo, NY

Agency Member approved a request for an extension of the existing Lease Agreement between BURA and Graphic Controls Acquisition Corp and/or their sublessee, Hawks Mountain, LLC., for the premises commonly known as 450 Exchange Street. The existing Lease Agreement runs to November 19, 2030. The request is to do the following: (1) extend the term through November 19, 2040; and (2) permit Graphic Controls to assign its rights under the Lease to Hawks Mountain, LLC. in connection with the sale of the Facility at 400 Exchange Street to the Hawks Mountain, LLC. The proposed Lease amendment increases the number of consecutive Lease Extensions from three (3) to five (5), with the monthly fee for the remaining term of the Lease escalating as follows:

- a) From November 20, 2030 through November 19, 2035; \$3,000; and
- b) From November 20, 2035 through November 19, 2040: \$3,250.

Pursuant to Section 617.5 (c)(32) of New York State’s Environmental Quality Review Act, the renewal of a lease is a “Type II Action” and therefore not subject to review.

Motion made by Mr. Mehaffy to approve Item 4a, seconded by Commissioner Estrich and carried unanimously.

5. DEVELOPER DESIGNATION

5a. Approval of Negative Declaration, Awarding Developer Designation to Ellicott Development Company for real property located at 1127 Main Street, Buffalo, NY

Agency Members approved a request for the City of Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency (“BURA”) to award Ellicott Development Company (“Developer”) with a Designated Developer Status for the BURA owned property located at the address commonly known as 1127 Main Street, Buffalo, NY (“Property”). The Real Property consists of approximately .27 acres of commercially zoned vacant land located at the southeast corner of Main Street and Best Street adjacent to the Summer-Best metro rail station.

Ellicott Development Company (Ellicott/Developer) is the designated purchaser of the adjacent property located at 1125 Main Street. The Developer desires to acquire and develop the Property together with the adjacent property. Ellicott Development Company seeks to develop and repurpose the Property to function and operate as a mixed-use building. Ellicott Development Company will pay a non-refundable designation fee of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00) per month to BURA, payable within ten (10) days from the date of designation and due thereafter the first of every month. The non-refundable designation fee paid by Ellicott Development Company shall cover holding, administrative, and transfer costs of BURA related to the Property. Upon transfer of the Property, Ellicott Development Company will be given a credit at closing totaling the amount of the developer designation fees that have been paid to BURA.

Motion made by Mr. Ball to approve Item 5a, seconded by Council President Pridgen and carried unanimously.

6. CONSULTANT SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS (Informational Only)

6a. Limited English Proficiency/LAP Language Assistance Plan aka Language Access Plan

Mr. Parke explained that BURA is hiring Mullin & Lonergan to provide support services for the preparation of a Language Access Plan to enhance CDBG services to residents of the City that do not speak English as a first language.

7. THE FRAMEWORK - CITY’S RESPONSE TO COVID: CARES ACT RFP AND RFQ UPDATES

7a. RENTAL ASSISTANCE AND CARE CONNECT SYSTEM/ 211 SUPPORT (INFORMATIONAL ONLY)

The foundation of the City’s CARES program will be an improved process for helping residents access needed services. A new Central Intake System will be established to direct residents to the services that best meet their needs. This will be accomplished by partnering with 211 WNY, which already provides free and confidential links to health and human services 24-hours a day, 365-days a year. Both tenants and homeowners facing a housing crisis will benefit from this single point of entry. The Central Intake System will answer and field calls from residents, assess needs and program eligibility, and make referrals to the appropriate service providers. Households in crisis should not have to shop around for services or the “best deal” during a pandemic when required to physically distance. This system will provide households facing eviction, foreclosure, or other supportive services with an easy-to-remember phone number accessible Seven days a week.

7b. MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE/COUNSELING/ FORECLOSURE PREVENTION

Agency Members approved a request to enter into a one-year contract with Belmont Housing Resources for Western New York and the Buffalo Urban League. BURA issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for qualified HUD certified Housing Counseling Agencies to provide counseling service for mortgage delinquency and default resolution on behalf of homeowners and landlords impacted by the Covid-19 crisis. BURA received three responses to the RFP and it is recommended that two organizations advance to the negotiation round of the RFP process. The amount of the budgets will be finalized and work plans will be modified based on the Common Council approval of pending funds from the Community Development Block Grant-CV grant. The two contracts together will not exceed \$195,000, per year. BURA will have the ability to extend the contracts for one additional one-year period. An amended BURA item providing finalized budget amounts and work plans will be presented later to the BURA board as an informational item.

Motion made by Mr. Mehaffy to approve Item 7b, seconded by Mr. Ball and carried unanimously.

7c. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS INITIATIVE CPI

Agency Members approved a request to enter into a one year contract with four organizations: Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Inc., Old First Ward Community Association, Inc., Polish Community Center (Lt. Col. Matt Urban) and University District Community Development Association from November 1, 2020 and continue through October 31, 2021 . Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds in the amount of \$202,000 have been identified to fund the first phase of these contracts. BURA issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for experienced housing groups to participate in the Community Partnerships Initiative (CPI) for the City of Buffalo. BURA received seven responses to the RFP and it is recommended that four organizations advance to the negotiation round of the RFP process. Additional pending CDBG-CV funds not to exceed \$247,000 have also been identified to fund additional COVID related responses to community needs, based on the final CDBG-CV budget which will be approved by the Common Council. The final amount of the budgets will be adjusted, and work plans will be modified based on the Common Council approval of funds received from the Community Development Block Grant-CV and HUD Lead Hazard Reduction grants. An amended BURA item providing finalized budget amounts and work plans will presented later to the BURA board as an informational item. BURA will have the ability to extend the contracts for two additional one-year periods. The start-up of the new contracts will allow programs and services to be administered without interruption as additional program funds are received and work plans are modified.

Motion made by Council President Pridgen to approve Item 7c, seconded by Commissioner Estrich and carried unanimously.

7d. FAIR HOUSING

Agency Members approved a request to enter into a request a one-year contract with two organizations: Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) and Neighborhood Legal Services. The amount of the budgets will be finalized and work plans will be modified based on the Common Council approval of pending funds from the Community Development Block Grant-CV grant, with the two contracts not to exceed \$149,198.30 combined. An amended BURA item providing the budget amount and work plan negotiated with the partners will presented later to the BURA board as an informational item. The Fair Housing agreements will be for a one-year period and will commence on a date to be determined. BURA will have the ability to extend the contracts for one additional one-year period. BURA issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for qualified Community Based Organizations to offer Fair Housing Education and Counseling Services. BURA received two responses to the RFP and it is recommended that these organizations advance to the negotiation round of the RFP process. The goal of these contracts will be to help residents maintain housing stability, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This will be accomplished by offering counseling services and increasing communication and disseminating fair housing and outreach materials to areas and residents with the greatest needs. These efforts will help to establish a more informed and knowledgeable community by counseling residents of their rights, responsibilities, options and available resources in order to address problems and issues associated with fair housing. An amended BURA item providing finalized budget amounts and work plans will presented later to the BURA board as an informational item.

Motion made by M. Mehaffy to approve Item 7d, seconded by Mr. Ball and carried unanimously.

7e. WEATHERIZATION (INFORMATIONAL ONLY)

Weatherization funding will reduce housing cost burdens by reducing utility carrying costs and this helps to Create increased financial independence. It also has non-energy benefits for vulnerable at-risk populations since Weatherization has been shown to have negating effects on respiratory illnesses and disorders, like Covid-19.

7f. HOUSING REHAB PROGRAM- PROGRAM DELIVERY AND ADMIN

Agency Members approved a request for CDBG funding in the amount of \$446,805.66 for a one year contract extension (1/1/21-12/31/21), to be awarded to Belmont Housing Resources of Western New York for the administration of various Housing Rehab Programs. Additional pending CDBG-CV funds not to exceed \$281,975.00 have also been identified to fund additional COVID related responses to community needs, based on the final CDBG-CV budget which will be approved by the Common Council. The final amount of the budgets will be adjusted, and work plans will be modified based on the Common Council approval of

funds received from the Community Development Block Grant-CV and HUD Lead Hazard Reduction grants. An amended BURA item providing finalized budget amounts and work plans will be presented later to the BURA board as an informational item. These funds will support the BURA housing rehab program for the administration of approximately 155 additional loans. Belmont Housing Resources of Western New York was selected through an RFP process in 2017. The existing contract language provides the option to extend or renew the agreement for a maximum of three (3) additional one (1) year terms. This contract extension (1/1/21-12/31/21) would be the third contract extension to the original 2018 contract. This program works together with the CPI program to build and sustain healthy neighborhoods through the creation of affordable housing rehabilitation opportunities.

Motion made by Commissioner Estrich to approve Item 7f, seconded by Council President Pridgen and carried unanimously.

7g. MICROENTERPRISE ASSISTANCE DELIVERY AND ADMINISTRATION CONTRACT

Agency Members approved a request to enter into a contract with Westminster Economic Development Initiative (“WEDI”) to deliver and administer microenterprise assistance in the form of grants. WEDI has been deemed a qualified firm and they will provide program delivery and administrative services in conjunction with BURA’s Microenterprise Assistance Program. The program design includes business grants and training to qualified microenterprise businesses. The program will be utilized to assist businesses during difficult and challenging times related to economic downturns associated with the COVID-19 crisis. The program will be available to for-profit businesses located within the City of Buffalo and operating in a commercial facility. It is intended that funding under the program can be for working capital uses, including but not limited to: rent, mortgage, payroll, insurance, personal protective equipment, utility expenses, inventory, reconfiguration improvements (including improvements which are required by the State of New York as necessary in order to reopen and operate). Applicant technical assistance will be required for every grant award. Pending CDBG-CV funds, not to exceed \$1,600,000, have been identified to fund this economic development COVID response. The final amount of the budgets will be adjusted, and work plans will be modified based on the Common Council approval of funds received from the Community Development Block Grant-CV. An amended BURA item providing finalized budget amounts and work plans will be presented later to the BURA board as an informational item.

Motion made by Mr. Ball approve Item 7g, seconded by Council President Pridgen and carried unanimously.

7h. Motion made by Commissioner Estrich to consider item 7h as a late file, seconded by Council President Pridgen and carried unanimously.

INTERNET CONNECTIVITY AND BROADBAND ASSESSMENT PLAN

Agency Members approved a request to enter into a contract with ECC Technologies to produce an internet connectivity and broadband assessment plan. The plan must provide data and analysis about the availability, differentiation, and lack of adoption of internet connectivity within the entire City of Buffalo. Additionally, the plan should describe the current status of internet connectivity, activity and physical infrastructure including definitions of terms, metrics and standards ordinarily used by government and industry. Finally, the plan must present solutions to close the “digital divide” within the City under different time horizons, e.g.: short-term or immediate solutions, medium-term, and long-term solutions. This contract will not exceed \$67,695.00, to be paid out of pending CDBG-CV funding, pending Common Council approval of final CDBG-CV Budget.

Motion made by Council President Pridgen to approve Item 7h, seconded by Mr. Mehaffy and carried unanimously.

8. There being no further business to discuss, Council President Pridgen made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Mehaffy and carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 am.