

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE
SEPTEMBER 11, 2013

The Board of Community Assistance of Upper Merion Township met for its regular meeting on Wednesday, September 11, 2013 in the Township Building. The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m., followed by a pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

Present were: Greg Waks, Board Liaison, David Kraynik, Township Manager; Judith A. Vicchio, Assistant Township Manager; Lydia Dan Sardinias, Chairperson; Robyn Briggs, Member; Scott Milner, Member, Mike Bowman, President and CEO, Valley Forge Casino Resort (VFCR). Ira Lubert, VFCR, was absent.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:

It was moved by Mrs. Briggs, seconded by Mr. Milner, all voting "Aye" to approve the July 10, 2013 Meeting Minutes as submitted. None opposed. Motion approved 4-0.

DISCUSSIONS – RECAP AND EVALUATION OF YEAR ONE
GRANT/SCHOLARSHIP DISTRIBUTION

Mrs. Dan Sardinias and Mr. Waks noted their receipt of appreciation letters from BCA grant recipients. Mr. Waks noted an email he received from a parent of one of the scholarship recipients.

A discussion followed sharing other feedback about the BCA grant process which was very positive, for the most part.

Mrs. Briggs made the following suggestions: (1) there should be a two-sentence line in the application about how the program would impact Upper Merion Township, (2) have a sentence included in invitation letter for August reception to make every effort to have a representative in attendance at the awards event, (3) With regard to the \$20,000 cap, in future years there might be a major project the BCA would want to consider and some thought should be given to that possibility. For example, the trail behind the Community Center. Mr. Kraynik commented in that event, a request would have to be made to the Board of Supervisors to waive or amend the policy.

In order to expedite the process with regard to scholarships, Mr. Bowman suggested tightening up the language requesting information on community service. He said an essay should be attached to the application so that it is clear what community service has been done and/or will be done in the community.

DISCUSSION OF FUTURE SCHEDULE

A discussion followed about changing the June 30 deadline for applications to an earlier date during which the following comments/suggestions were made:

- Mr. Waks: He was informed by a school official that awarding scholarships at a late date affects the student's entire financial package and could impact their college choice.
- Ms. Vicchio: Indicated there was concern about the small number of scholarship applications received.
- Mrs. Dan Sardinias: ask the high school guidance counselor to come to a BCA meeting to provide more information on scholarship deadlines for the various scholarship notices they receive.
- Mr. Milner: it would be best to have an earlier deadline for all categories to give the BCA more time to decide, particularly if some organizations would be asked to come in and make a short presentation.
- Mr. Kraynik: the ceremony will be held in August and the deadline could be moved up. As soon as changes are made to the application and a decision made on the deadline, it will be posted on the township website and promotion will begin for the 2014 BCA grant awards. When applications start coming in the BCA can resume regular meetings.
- Mr. Bowman: recommended having a relaunch strategy such as posting on the township website indicating applications are being accepted by a certain date, doing another press article, and possibly putting an ad in the local paper indicating the following people received grants last year and it is now being opened up for 2014.
- Mr. Kraynik: with more time available now there are more opportunities to market the BCA program, including the regular township mailing that will go out to all residents.
- Mr. Waks: commented when the BCA awards are aired on UMGA-TV there should be a note that scrolls below providing information that applications are being accepted for the 2014 BCA awards program.
- Mr. Milner: noted the \$17,000 currently in reserve
- Mr. Kraynik: funding available for the next 12-month period should amount to approximately \$145,000.

- Mr. Bowman raised the scenario if there was an emergency situation in the township whether the \$17,000 could be used in that case. Mr. Waks pointed out it might be necessary to change the rules of the BCA, for example an extreme weather event, and it may be something the supervisors should look at changing.
- Mr. Milner: noted everyone agreed the relaunch should occur as soon as possible and making the changes to March 1 for final applications and May 1 for decisions.
- Mr. Kraynik: commented if the application deadline is March 1, the decision making deadline can be flexible. He said with the right marketing there will be more applications and the BCA will need more time.
- Mr. Milner: most of the decision making happened at the final meeting even though there were previous meetings where the applications were discussed.
- Mrs. Dan Sardinas: the final decisions were all influenced by previous discussions.
- Mr. Bowman: there was not much disagreement on the applications and the challenge came in determining the amount each applicant should get.
- Mr. Waks: if needed, the BCA can add additional meetings between March 1 and May 1 or just have a longer meeting.

Mrs. Dan Sardinas asked for suggestions on a relaunch date.

- Mr. Bowman: with October 15th as the relaunch drop date, the application would be completed and a plan in place.
- Mr. Milner: with the March 15 application deadline there are five full months from the relaunch to deadline.
- Mr. Waks: with regard to the deadline change, a policy change would be required.
- Mr. Kraynik indicated that is a good point, and staff would have to look at that.
- Ms. Vicchio asked if the decision deadline would be published. Mr. Milner responded it is not necessary to publish the decision deadline, although they would target May 1 as the "deadline." Mr. Kraynik advised against publicizing the decision deadline.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL CHANGE TO THE APPLICATION

- Mr. Milner: question to ask on every application is provide information on the project plan and how the BCA funds would be spent.
- Mr. Milner: applicant should be asked if they are willing to provide a year-end summary of the project accomplishments compared to the project planned.
- Mrs. Briggs: application should indicate how the project affects Upper Merion Township.
- Mr. Milner: it is up to the BCA whether to ask if the applicant would be willing to come and explain the project plan to the BCA.
- Mr. Milner: another question to ask is if the applicant previously applied for BCA funding. If yes, they should indicate if the money was awarded, if the project was completed and provide a description of the project's success.
- Mr. Milner: With regard to scholarships and the requirement for 50 community hours, change the last paragraph so that the applicant would first prepare a project plan for proposed community service and then secure letters from organizations indicating their participation and showing completion of committed hours to the plan.
- Mr. Bowman commented the applicant should be given the opportunity to indicate what they are going to do before receiving the funds.
- Mrs. Briggs said she felt many of the applicants needed to provide more explanation [of their community service].
- Mr. Milner: trying to get the applicant to be more direct about the community service requirement.
- Mr. Bowman: in order to make applicants more responsible for their community service, Mr. Bowman suggested asking for the name of the person they report to.
- Mrs. Briggs: For those who received scholarships this year, has any thought been given to how their community service commitments are being verified. Ms. Vicchio indicated she could prepare a spread sheet.
- Ms. Vicchio: the form indicates the applicant has to submit either a plan of action or a letter of recommendation from the organization confirming the project was completed. It could be reworded, but it would be necessary to

get a letter from the principal and the organization that the hours were completed. There might be more than one organization if they could not get 50 hours at once.

There was a discussion about the revised application and whether to communicate by email or meet again. It was determined that application revisions would be communicated by email with responses "reply to all." The next BCA meeting would occur once a sufficient number of applications have been received.

Mr. Kraynik noted the current policy has June 30th as the application deadline; therefore, the date change will require a policy revision. Staff will work to have it approved by the Board of Supervisors as early as October. Mr. Kraynik stated if the Board of Supervisors approves the policy change on October 17th, the launch could occur as early as October 18th.

Ms. Vicchio suggested having a generic policy which would simplify matters if the next group of BCA members would want to change it. The policy can be worded so that the application deadline would be set at the discretion of the Board of Community Assistance.

Mr. Bowman said if the launch occurs mid or late October, a November meeting would be likely.

Mrs. Dan Sardinias noted the Citizen Board Appreciation Lunch will be held on Sunday, October 20th at Maggiano's. Invitations will be sent to Board members soon.

ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved by Mr. Milner, seconded by Mr. Bowman to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 p.m. None opposed. Motion approved 4-0.



DAVID G. KRAYNIK
TOWNSHIP MANAGER

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Minutes Approved:
Minutes Entered:

