

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE
July 23, 2014

The Board of Community Assistance of Upper Merion Township met for its regular meeting on Wednesday, July 23, 2014 in the Township Building. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m., followed by a pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

Present were: Greg Waks, Board of Supervisors Liaison, Scott Milner, Chairperson; Lydia Dan Sardinas; Robin Briggs; Mike Bowman, President and CEO, Valley Forge Casino Resort (VFCR); Sally Slook, Assistant Township Manager; Angela Caramenico, Assistant to the Township Manager. Ira Lubert, VFCR, was absent.

MEETING MINUTES:

It was moved by Ms. Dan Sardinas, seconded by Mrs. Briggs, all voting "Aye" to approve the April 23, 2014 and April 29, 2014 Meeting Minutes as submitted. None opposed. Motion approved 4-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

SCHEDULE FOR REMAINING 2014 MEETINGS

Mr. Milner suggested having a meeting in October or November and the usual reorganization meeting in January. He suggested the dates of October 8th or November 12th for the last meeting of 2014 and January 14, 2015 for the reorganization meeting. Mr. Bowman suggested having the proposed dates emailed to BCA members in order to coordinate schedules.

FEEDBACK FROM AWARDS CEREMONY

Mr. Milner reported on the overall success of the awards ceremony. He noted some constructive feedback he received afterward suggesting more information be provided about the projects being undertaken by the organizations.

Mr. Waks suggested having UMGA-TV run a scrolling message announcing the awards for the various organizations, and project titles, while the ceremony video is aired. Mrs. Caramenico suggested having this information included in the booklet. Mr. Bowman indicated he has the resources to place the booklet up on the video screens and a dry run could be done before next year's ceremony.

EVALUATE BY-LAWS INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF MATCHING FUND REQUIREMENT AND LANGUAGE REGARDING COUNTY-WIDE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Waks stated a small incremental matching funding requirement was implemented this year for organizations receiving over \$5,000. Rather than requiring the organizations to raise additional funds, this was an easier way to administer the rule and should be clarified in the policy. Mr. Waks noted no negative feedback was received about this procedure. He noted another clarification is needed for more flexibility about the requirement that it needs to be an Upper Merion-based organization. Mr. Waks indicated the proposed changes to the policy could be finalized at the October meeting and placed on the agenda at the November business meeting.

Mr. Milner stated the policy indicates organizations must provide services to residents of Upper Merion Township and he did not recall a requirement that they be based in Upper Merion Township.

A discussion followed during which various BCA members provided feedback they received after the award ceremony.

Mr. Waks commented another clarification is needed regarding whether or not township departments can receive funding.

On behalf of the casino, Mr. Bowman strongly encouraged continued support for the police department, fire department, ambulance and emergency services.

In order to build awareness of the BCA, Mr. Bowman suggested placing something in the local paper in September right after Labor Day congratulating the award recipients with a notice about the upcoming grant application deadlines for next year. Mrs. Briggs suggested directing people to the Upper Merion Township website.

DETERMINE WHETHER TO MAKE MORE REVISIONS TO STREAMLINE/CLARIFY INFORMATION IN APPLICATIONS

Mr. Milner stated once revisions to the application for both organizations and scholarships are approved they can be uploaded to the website as a downloadable PDF.

A discussion followed regarding organizational applications. Highlights as follows:

- Mr. Milner stated timeline worked well, and everyone agreed to keep as is.

- Outreach included presentations at a Board of Supervisors business meetings, visits to school board meetings, and “robo” calls to residents.
- Mrs. Briggs suggested a change on page 3 indicating if the total amount requested is not awarded by the BCA ask if there is another source to obtain necessary funding to complete the project. Mr. Milner commented this should be a separate question in another paragraph to the effect that if all the funds are not provided for the proposed project is there an alternative funding source available, and if yes, please describe. A discussion followed about other ways to address this issue.

Ms. Dan Sardinas asked if the changes should be included in the motion. Mr. Milner responded just the ones he has highlighted on the draft.

BCA Action:

It was moved by Mr. Bowman, seconded by Ms. Dan Sardinas, all voting “Aye” to approve the changes as stated above. None opposed. Motion approved 4-0.

DISCUSSION REGARDING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Mr. Milner stated he made some substantial edits as a result of constructive feedback from parents and others who were confused about what they had to do or not do. He asked for comments on his changes and any additional changes BCA members would like to provide.

Ms. Dan Sardinas said she favors Mr. Milner’s change noting the proposed community service hours.

Mrs. Briggs commented the second paragraph seems like a lot of wording for high school students. Mr. Milner indicated this was in response to the question about when they are performing community service outside of Upper Merion. Mrs. Briggs said she favors having the phrase “performed outside or within Upper Merion.” Mrs. Briggs referred to the wording, “applicant will first prepare a project plan of the proposed community service,” and suggested taking out the line after that and inserting language indicating the project would be completed with an organization or by themselves.

Ms. Dan Sardinas said she felt there were two letters involved. One letter would specify the project and the second letter would indicate completion. Mrs. Briggs said she thought the applicant should first prepare a project plan for the proposed community service. Ms. Dan Sardinas suggested applicants should first prepare a project plan and secure approval [from the organization] for the proposed community service.

Mr. Milner commented the first paragraph is intended to have the applicant prepare a project plan. The second paragraph is intended to determine if the project was inside or outside of Upper Merion Township and does the organization know the applicant is going to show up and volunteer.

Mr. Bowman suggested having a "BCA Golden Scholarship" for compelling cases.

Mr. Bowman pointed out the continued challenge on scholarship applications is community service. Mrs. Briggs thought the language was too complicated and suggested language that the applicant first prepares a project plan for the proposed community service whether completed with an organization or by themselves and submit a project plan and leave it at that. Ms. Dan Sardinas felt some acknowledgement from an organization was necessary to recognize the proposed work to be done.

Mr. Milner commented there is actually an acknowledgment letter submitted with the application from the organization. Mr. Bowman said it should be on the organization's letterhead.

Mr. Waks commented it does preclude someone from coming up with their own project. Mrs. Briggs said that is why she said the letter should be from the organization or the applicant themselves.

Ms. Dan Sardinas suggested having the applicant take photos. Mr. Bowman suggested even sending a video.

Mr. Milner suggested it should say something to the effect that if your proposed plan contemplates working with an organization, attach a letter from that organization acknowledging their plan otherwise the applicant is agreeing to submit a summary of the proposed plan themselves.

BCA Action:

It was moved by Ms. Dan Sardinas, seconded by Mr. Bowman, all voting "Aye" to approve the draft changes as described during the discussion. None opposed. Motion approved 4-0.

DRAFT LETTER TO AWARD RECIPIENTS TO BE SENT IN DECEMBER TO REMIND THEM OF COMMITMENT AND EXPECTATIONS.....

Mr. Milner stated the reminder letter to award recipients about their service commitment can go out either December 1 or after Thanksgiving.

Mr. Waks pointed out there is a requirement that a certain percentage of awardees are supposed to be audited every year. The letters that went out this year asked organizations to retain their receipts for possible audit.

Mr. Bowman suggested having the awardees attend a BCA meeting for an in-person audit. Mr. Milner suggested the BCA randomly select four awardees between now and October for the audit. They have until December 31st to complete their projects and early next year they can come before the BCA and present what they have accomplished with the funds.

Ms. Dan Sardinias said it could be a simple procedure by submitting a photo of the completed work or possibly such documentation as engineering plans.

Mr. Milner commented the letter Mr. Waks read from one of the scholarship winners was one of the more powerful moments at the awards ceremony. He said maybe a quote from that letter might go into the article (suggested by Mr. Bowman) as part of the BCA success story. Mr. Waks stated this could also be done at a business meeting sometime later this year or early next year.

Mr. Milner stated the action item is to have the BCA members select one organization for audit that can be taken to the next meeting for discussion. Selections should be sent to Mrs. Caramenico.

Mrs. Briggs asked if receipts are still necessary. Mr. Milner responded receipts can also be brought to the meeting as per the letter.

Mr. Bowman stated this should also help some of the organizations in obtaining more money if the BCA is impressed with their work if they return with another application.

Mr. Milner indicated the consensus is to keep the letter as is and select a date for the organizations to make their presentations.

MARKETING EFFORTS FOR 2014/2015 (WHAT WORKED WELL, WHAT ELSE CAN BE DONE INCLUDING GETTING A LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS TOGETHER TO PERFORM DIRECT OUTREACH)

Mr. Milner commented Mrs. Briggs had a good idea about not just sending out letters to past people who applied, but coming up with a list of organizations and possibly enclose a printed application.

Mr. Waks said the School District did a very good job getting the word out with their blast email which went to every high school senior and their parents.

Mr. Bowman commented the most effective marketing tool is social media.

Mr. Milner stated the BCA should keep on doing what it did before because it worked very well. Mr. Bowman said his assistant responds to requests for funding and refers them to the township website.

SET TIMELINE FOR 2015 AWARD (WHEN APPLICATION RELEASED, DEADLINES, ETC.)

Mr. Milner stated the previous timeline worked very well. November 15th is the roll out, applications are due by March 15, and award announcements are made in June with the award ceremony scheduled for July.

Ms. Dan Sardinas indicated she received comments that the BCA scholarships were not announced on Ivy Day.

Mrs. Caramenico mentioned the Township's scholarship awardees are provided for the Ivy Day ceremony. A form is submitted listing the names, amount of award and the college. A similar procedure could be followed for the BCA.

CONFIRMING PERFORMANCE OF VOLUNTEER WORK

Mr. Milner indicated this was covered earlier at this meeting.

Mrs. Caramenico indicated Mr. Hiriak prepared a financial summary. Mr. Milner noted there is \$6,177 in coffers and for the remainder of 2014 it is anticipated there will be \$73,000 coming with at least two more payments bringing the total to a little over \$150,000.

ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved by Ms. Dan Sardinas, seconded by Mrs. Briggs to adjourn the meeting at 7:41 p.m. None opposed. Motion approved 4-0.


DAVID G. KRAYNIK
TOWNSHIP MANAGER

rap
Minutes Approved:
Minutes Entered: