

February 27, 2019

Members of the Duluth City Council:

We are reaching out as regards the recent decision of the City Council to change a recommendation from the Community Development Committee, specifically to defund the Seeds of Success Program and reallocate \$5,000 to the Tenant Landlord Connection program.

While we fully recognize the Council's prerogative to modify Committee recommendations, we want to provide feedback about the Council's process in making the modification.

Members of the Community Development Committee were first made aware of the Council's concern with the Committee's recommendation from a January 24 article in the Duluth News Tribune. The entire Committee discussed this at our recent meeting on February 5, in particular expressing our frustration that no one from the City Council reached out to the Committee to better understand our deliberations and ultimate rationale for the recommendations forwarded to the Council, specifically for the Tenant Landlord Connection and Seeds for Success programs.

The Public Services category presents the greatest challenge for the Committee in our deliberations. There are many meaningful programs and only so much funding that can be granted. Both Tenant Landlord Connection and Seeds of Success fall into this category. For the record, and with no expectation for the Council to reverse its decision, we do want to share with you the main points of our rationale for recommendation to provide \$20,000 to the Tenant Landlord Connection and \$5,000 to Seeds of Success.

Rationale for providing \$5,000 to Seeds of Success

- Received a score of 92
- Promotes fresh, healthy foods
- Addresses a food desert in Duluth
- Supports a growing program
- Accepts SNAP and EBT

Rationale for providing \$20,000 to Tenant Landlord Connection (reduced from \$29,000)

- Received a score of 85.7
- Lack of meaningful landlord participation (especially in contributing to the funding of the program)
- Perceived instability of funding from year to year
- Concern about granting TLC a greater percentage funding over other programs that scored much higher

The citizen volunteers who comprise the Community Development Committee collectively spend more than 400 hours a year working through the process which results in recommendations for how the City might grant the funding it receives from HUD. That process includes review and scoring of more than 60 grant submissions annually, participation in public hearings to better understand community needs, making decisions about funding in each category of HUD funding, and working with City staff throughout the year to develop and monitor the Consolidated Plan. Our time also includes presentation of our recommendations to the City Council, providing opportunity for the Council to ask questions and better understand the rationale supporting Committee recommendations.

We are confident the Council values the volunteer commitment of Community Development Committee members and the significant volunteer hours we expend on behalf of the City of Duluth. In turn we also appreciate the difficult work of the Council to make decisions that best support the City's goals for its citizens.

We believe it is in the best interests of the City and our citizens for the Council and the Committee to work more collaboratively, with enhanced communication to ensure we are in lock step on decisions made for the disbursement of the HUD funding critical for the support of our community. In this way we can move forward together for the benefit of all.

In Cooperation,

Community Development Committee



Randy Brody, Chair
Hamilton Smith, Vice Chair
Nolan Makowsky, Second Vice Chair
Mark Osthus
Daris Norby
Ashley Northey
Patricia Sterner