

Item 23-0448: Request to award the American Rescue Plan Act - Affordable Housing Project Grant to Greater Fox Cities Habitat for Humanity, Inc. for an amount of \$200,000

Common Council

Wed, May 03, 2023 7:00PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 28:46

All right, we'll take up the next item from the finance committee This is item 23-0448 request to approve the American Rescue Plan Act affordable housing project grant to greater Fox Cities Habitat for Humanity. We have a motion. Is there a second? Second from Alder Fenton we'll note for the minutes. Okay. Open up the floor for discussion. Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 29:25

Thank you chair. My father was very active in the Greater Fox Cities Habitat for Humanity and I voted for this in the finance committee. And I still love the idea that we as a city can support Habitat for Humanity. But \$200,000 can help infrastructure issues in the city. So, I'm debating how I shall vote on this in full Council for that reason only.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 29:58

I would like our, my colleagues to also think about this as well. I know you—that they all are committed to the way that these ARPA funds have been voted to be committed. But there are other things that we need to think about as well as Council members. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 30:19

Alder Jones.

Aldersperson Vaya Jones (District 10) 30:21

Thank you Chair. I have spent a lot of time as well working with greater Fox Cities area Habitat for Humanity. And I think what we fail to see a lot is well a house is very expensive, and it only serves one family. But I think a lot of people fail to understand is the amount of hours and classes and education that go into every single family that goes through this program. The family is not given a home; they are purchasing the homes. They have over 55 hours of financial literacy that they go through. So not only is this program helping families in this area from low income, poor housing that is not safe for them, but it is also making them better citizens, better engaged, better understanding of our community resources, and volunteering and being more civic minded. They also bring empty properties or blighted properties to these brand new or renovated homes that are affecting our blocks.

Aldersperson Vaya Jones (District 10) 31:19

What Habitat for Humanity does is it changes generational poverty. So yes, there's a lot of great nonprofits that give out meals, and that's a meal, but with Habitat, it breaks the cycle. And it helps make our neighborhoods better, stronger, safer. And so, yes, it's a lot of money when it doesn't look like it's happening for much. But when we step back and look at what habitat does, and what habitat has proven to do for the last 30 years, I cannot support this more than I already am. So, I encourage you to vote yes for it.

Mayor Jake Woodford 31:57

Alder Doran.

Alderman Chad Doran (District 15) 31:58

Thank you. Just a couple questions for staff. I guess, how have we worked with Habitat in the past from the city's perspective, I guess, in terms of funding projects? And, I guess, a further sort of question in the future after these ARPA dollars are gone, how would we continue to fund projects with Habitat in the future if they would come forward for that again?

Mayor Jake Woodford 32:30

Director Homan. Two?

Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 32:35

So, it's my understanding the city has historically, through our CDBG grant allocation process—so any non-city balance the CDBG allocation we get for a year then goes out to any eligible nonprofit. And historically, Habitat for Humanity has applied and received allocations. So, moving forward, they would continue to be eligible for our CDBG funding as well assuming that continues to flow down from HUD.

Alderman Chad Doran (District 15) 33:08

Okay, thank you. So, this is sort of in addition to that funding. And then I guess another question, then, for staff—I know we, staff worked with Habitat on trying to bring the sort of per unit cost or contribution, I guess, from the city down to a similar level to what we approved for the Rise Apartment project earlier this year. I guess I'm wondering now, does this does this sort of become the kind of de facto level at which we're willing to support projects with these dollars? And then, I guess, my other sort of clarification would just be do we have no other projects in the pipeline that have applied for these ARPA grants is that correct?

Mayor Jake Woodford 33:59

Director Homan.

Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 34:00

So, the two that have flowed through Council were based on an award period that was open and closed before the end of 2022. So, there aren't any more in the pipeline for that for that solicitation. We would have the ability to reopen a solicitation or find other federally compliant ways to procure a housing development or project where we could apply the remainder of the bucket which is right around 1.8 million.

Alderman Chad Doran (District 15) 34:32

Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 34:35

Alder Alfheim.

Alderman Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 34:36

Thank you, Chair. In my time on the Community Economic Development Committee, Director Homan and I had a number of conversations about the need for housing in our community and what a focus it is, and if I remember correctly, the number one type of housing that we are in desperate need of is beginner housing or basic new family homes. Am I remembering that correctly? And the reason that those basic houses are important is, one, we're keeping people in, getting them in at an affordable rate, and then they are staying in our community, adding to our community in terms of workforce and everything else that goes with that. And if we did not take advantage of these opportunities to help get these beginner homes up and running, then the latter would be left. It would end up being out of the inventory. So, all of the things that we do, coming out of CEDC dealing with

housing are meant to help the community be here, be here in our community, be positive members, be contributing in terms of retailers, the employers and everything else. Am I understanding that correctly? Thumbs up. Okay.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 35:47

So, with that in mind, this is who we are. This is who we are as a city to help our city move forward and be a welcome place for everyone to have a healthy started adding to our economic interest and the community itself. So, without question, I would support this and I hope everybody else does.

Mayor Jake Woodford 36:10

Further discussion? Hearing none, again, I'll just ask does anybody wish to vote nay?

Mayor Jake Woodford 36:23

All right, hearing none, we'll mark everybody as voting aye, and the item has been approved.