



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL
Committee on Housing and Community Development
Liz Breadon, Chair

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

April 26, 2024

Dear Councilors:

The Committee on Housing and Community Development was referred the following dockets for consideration:

Docket #0573, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Twenty Million Dollars (\$20,000,000.00) in the form of a grant for the Federal FY24 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), awarded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to be administered by the Mayor's Office of Housing. The grant will fund housing, economic development and social service programs. The award amount is estimated from prior years.

Docket #0574, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Seven Million Dollars (\$7,000,000.00) in the form of a grant, for the Federal FY24 Home Investment Partner, awarded by the United States Department of Housing & Urban Development to be administered by the Mayor's Office of Housing. The grant will fund the production of new and affordable housing, and also provide operating support for community development corporations. The award amount is estimated from prior years.

Docket #0575, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Four Million Dollars (\$4,000,000.00) in the form of a grant for the FY24 Housing for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA), awarded by the United States Department of Housing & Urban Development to be administered by the Mayor's Office of Housing. The grant will fund services for income-eligible individuals and families affected by AIDS. The award amount is estimated from prior years.

Docket #0576, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000.00) in the form of a grant for the Federal FY24 Emergency Solution Grant, awarded by the United States Department of Housing & Urban Development to be administered by the Mayor's Office of Housing. The grant will fund street outreach, emergency shelter, homelessness prevention, rapid re-housing assistance and shelter services. The award amount is estimated from prior years.

These matters were sponsored by Mayor Wu and referred to the Committee on March 27, 2024.

Summary of Legislation

Dockets #0573-0576 are a collection of United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grants distributed by the federal government and administered by the Mayor's Office of Housing (MOH). The grants fund a variety of housing-related activities, such as economic development and social service programs, production of new affordable rental and homeownership housing, operating support for community development organizations, services for income-eligible individuals and families affected by AIDS, street outreach, emergency shelters, homelessness prevention, and rapid re-housing assistance and shelter services.

Docket #0573 is for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), which the City will receive in an amount not to exceed \$20 million (with an estimated amount of \$17.5 million). MOH is the primary administering agency for the grant and sub-grants portions of the allocation to the Office of Fair Housing and Equity (\$340,011), the Office of Workforce Development (\$2,655,056), and the Small and Local Business Program of the Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion (\$4,203,551). The primary uses for this grant are homebuyer education, down payment assistance, housing rehabilitation, rental housing development, and job training and economic development programs. These funds must primarily be used for activities serving households with incomes up to the CDBG-defined 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) or households residing in a geographic area where at least 51 percent of the households have incomes under that threshold.

Docket #0574 is for the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) grant, which the City will receive in an amount not to exceed \$7 million (with an estimated amount of \$5.2 million). MOH administers all HOME funds for eligible activities which include housing construction and rehabilitation. The funds will support the production of new affordable rental and homeownership housing for households with incomes under 80 percent of the Boston Metropolitan Area Median Family Income. For rental housing, at least 90 percent of the units must serve households with incomes up to 60 percent of the Median Income.

Docket #0575 is for the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) grant, which the City will receive in an amount not to exceed \$4 million (with an estimated amount of \$3.8 million). MOH administers HOPWA funds for all of Norfolk, Plymouth, and Suffolk counties. Eligible activities include the construction or rehabilitation of housing for persons with AIDS; tenant-based rental assistance, supportive services, housing information services, permanent housing placement services; short-term rent, mortgage, and utility assistance (STRMU); and technical assistance. These funds will support tenant-based rental assistance, STRMU, housing information and counseling services, and permanent housing placement.

Docket #0576 is for the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), which the City will receive in an amount not to exceed \$2 million (with an estimated amount of \$1.5 million). MOH administers all ESG funds, and eligible activities must fall within one of five program components: street outreach, emergency shelter, homelessness prevention, rapid re-housing, or a homeless management information system (HMIS). Intended target populations include chronically homeless individuals and families, families with children, veterans and their families, and unaccompanied youth. These funds may only be used for persons who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless as defined by HUD. Participants seeking assistance under the homelessness prevention component must have an income below 30 percent AMI.

Information Received at Hearing

The Committee held a virtual public hearing on Dockets #0573-0576 on Thursday, April 18, 2024. In attendance were City personnel representing departments which will expend the grants:

- Mr. Daniel Lesser, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office of Housing (MOH)
- Ms. Cathy Miranda, Senior Housing Development Officer, Office of Housing Stability, MOH
- Ms. Shani Fletcher, Director, GrowBoston, MOH
- Ms. Karen Rebaza, Director, Boston Home Center, MOH
- Ms. Katie Cahill-Holloway, Senior Development Officer for Supportive Housing, MOH
- Ms. Tina Griffith, Assistant Director of Compliance, MOH
- Ms. Anna Sherr, Senior Project Manager, Office of Workforce Development (OWD)
- Ms. Tatiana Joyce, Assistant Deputy Director for Grants and Procurement, OWD
- Ms. Abby Furey, Senior Neighborhood Business Manager, Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion (OEOI)

Mr. Lesser explained that the HUD funding is a federal block grant, meaning that these are entitlement funds the City does not need to apply for. Mr. Lesser added that, given the status of the federal budget, the City can expect level-funding or a potential decrease in funding in all federal grants. He explained the purpose, uses, administration, and targeting for each of the grant programs. He also provided tangible examples of fund usage, such as community gardens, porch revitalization, and street outreach. Mr. Lesser further explained that HUD requires a consolidated plan to be submitted every five years, and that MOH is currently in the process of developing one for FY25 through FY29. He explained MOH has been conducting hearings and stakeholder meetings to receive feedback on the proposed priorities highlighted in the initial plan. He gave a timeline for the plan, which culminates with submission to HUD this upcoming June. Mr. Lesser provided Councilors with information on opportunities for public engagement, including a survey currently being conducted in twelve languages and scheduled public hearings.

Additional MOH, OWD, and OEOI representatives responded to questions posed by Councilors regarding specific programs, potential cuts in HUD funds, and potential impacts of those cuts. Councilors also discussed the process of accepting and expending these funds, and the several types of funds providing support to individuals and families who require housing after a displacement crisis. Also discussed were further funding sources to help households with Section 8 vouchers with down payment assistance, the City's Acquisition Opportunity Program (AOP), and specific examples of fund usage across Council districts. The Chair discussed the City's audit responsibilities under federal guidelines as a pass-through entity disbursing funds to sub-recipients. The Chair also posed questions regarding MOH's grant-writing capacity to pursue competitive, discretionary grounds, and raised questions regarding the potential impacts on formula funding due to the undercounting of residents in the federal decennial census.

Committee Chair Recommended Action

As Chair of the Committee on Housing and Community Development, I recommend moving the listed dockets from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At that time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that the matters **OUGHT TO PASS**.

Respectfully submitted,



Liz Breadon, Chair
Committee on Housing and Community Development