

At its December meeting the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) committee directed staff to draft a memo that would discuss the merging of the CDBG and Community Services Committee (CSC) into one committee and bring it to the January meeting. The CSC followed with asking that I bring the same memo to its January meeting.

Historically there was a CDBG Office that had a close working relationship with the CDBG committee and an Office of Community Services that had the same with the CSC. For decades, great work was produced by dedicated staff that funneled directly into these committees. Veteran staff report that this worked as long as the issue was clearly confined to the domain of one of the offices and corresponding committee. What was problematic was when there was a debate over where an issue belonged, which approach to solving it was most appropriate and who would decide funding related to solving that issue. This was more of an issue when it was time for the two-year funding cycle. In addition to there not being an obvious way to resolve this ongoing friction, there were unintended consequences that developed which included: difficulty in coming together over city issues that related to both offices, a tendency to develop offices/staff that worked in isolation from each other and a lack of staff cohesiveness.

In 2008 the two offices (Community Services and Community Development Block Grant) were combined with the Senior Center to form the Community Development Division. In effect, the city bureaucratic organization changed and the committee structure remained the same. The Division continues to staff 6 committees and there is an effort to keep all committees informed of what the other committees are working on. Over the years there have been internal staff discussions as well as conversations among some policy makers as to whether there should be a merger of the CSC and CDBG committees to form a Community Development Committee. In the 2010 two year funding cycle, an ad hoc Conference Committee was formed (made up of members of both committees) as a work around to decide funding around program topics that resided in both committees (neighborhoods and workforce).

Advantages of merging the CSC and CDBG committees:

- Alignment of committee structure to match the Division organization.
- Better coordination of decision-making as it relates to the Community Development Division. One committee with Division oversight.
- Coordinated funding decisions.
- Enhanced ability to act in a coordinated manner on city issues.
- Strong message of working together.
- Less staff time spent on committees and duplicating work.

Issues:

- Unintended message of lack of appreciation of citizen committee members.
- Potential loss of expertise that currently exists on the committees.
- Identifying a viable process to make the change.

Recommendation:

- Propose to combine the two committees to form the Community Development Committee (CDC).
- Take the proposal to both the CSC and CDBG for approval.
- If approved, allow current members of both the CDBG and CSC to remain on the CDC at least until their current term is up. This retains needed expertise as we approach a funding cycle and sends a message of appreciation.
- Over time shrink the size of the committee as terms expire to a viable size.
- Create the CDC in April in time for the funding cycle.