

HARTFORD BUSINESS REVOLVING LOAN FUND COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

July 9th, 2020 at 8:30 a.m.

Via Zoom and by Conference Call

This meeting was conducted in compliance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law with electronic participation. The public could join the meeting from their computer, tablet or smartphone.

Members attending online/by phone: Kevin Raleigh (Chair), Crystal Pearson and Ryan Scelza

Others present online/by phone: Robert Haynes, GMEDC Executive Director, Mark Condon, GMEDC Executive Assistant, Lori Hirshfield, Town of Hartford Director of Planning and Development and Brannon Godfrey, Hartford Town Manager

With quorum met, Committee Chair Kevin Raleigh called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

Discussion and Approval of HBRLF Covid-19 grant programs

Kevin stated this was the Committee's third or fourth meeting discussing using HBRLF funds for an economic recovery grant program for Hartford businesses. At the June 24th meeting the Committee decided it would be \$2,000 grants to eligible businesses but that no official motion had been made to approve recommending the program to the Hartford Selectboard. The Committee had asked at that meeting that he, Lori Hirshfield, Bob Haynes and Mark Condon work on the program details and the application form. Kevin asked if the Committee members had reviewed the draft of the program and form that had been submitted. They had. He asked if it all made sense and if there was anything they would like to add.

Ryan Scelza said that it didn't list how this program would be communicated out to make sure all Hartford businesses hear about it.

Bob Haynes gave a quick synopsis that businesses had to demonstrate they are registered with the state, the town or the feds and that they have a physical presence in Hartford. He said that a dollar allocation from the fund had to be decided and that \$50K and \$70K had both been mentioned. He suggested that maybe it be split into two rounds, 50% of the funds for each round.

The Committee went through the submitted draft and over each place that there was a decision still to be made.

It had to be decided how much to allocate to the program. Kevin noted that Frank Klymn, who was not currently on the call, had been clear before that he wanted enough money left in the account to make a regular loan, at least until the Town received the CDBG funds for the Village

at White River project to replenish the fund. Kevin was recommending \$50K to be allocated now for the grants.

Lori said since the last Committee meeting, she had corresponded with Ann Kroll regarding the Village at White River funds. There just was a little bit of paperwork left to do and the Town should have the funds in the next few weeks.

It was agreed that \$50K would be allocated now and that a second round to the program could be considered once the Town receives the coming funds from the CDBG.

It was discussed if this would be a first come, first serve program or have an application deadline with a lottery. The state grant program had been first come, first served with information going out just prior the July 4th holiday and the application portal opening Monday morning at 8am after the holiday weekend. A lot of businesses didn't have time to hear about it or apply prior to the funds running out. The Committee decided that a two-week deadline from the time the applications become available was fair and then a lottery would take place if there were more applicants than available funds.

Eligible grant uses were discussed including COVID alterations. It was asked if the application should have a place where the business would specify what the funds would be used for. Mark Condon said he would be concerned that would cause a lot of back and forth negotiations with applicants of what we considered acceptable. That could take a lot of time for 25+ applications. Given the small size of the grants, it was decided not to include that question on the application and just allow the business to self-certify the funds would be used for a proper business expenses related to COVID.

The Committee went over the list of Not-Eligible entities. It was decided that non-profits would remain on the Not-Eligible list. Home Businesses were removed from the draft list of Not-Eligible as there are some that have Town zoning permits as a home business that should be eligible.

It was asked if businesses that already have a HBRLF loan should be eligible for the grant. The Committee saw no reason they should not be eligible.

The draft program had that no-more than 40% of the grants should go to any one business district in Town. This had been suggested to make sure the program was equitable to the entire town and not just benefit downtown businesses who may be quicker to hear of the program and apply. The Committee decided to drop this program detail given the two-week application deadline and lottery already made it equitable to the entire town.

Motion: Ryan Scelza made a **motion** for the HBRLF Committee to recommend to the Hartford Selectboard the Hartford Business Economic Recovery Grants program be made available to Hartford businesses based of the draft submitted to the Committee with the following amendments: \$50,000 allocated for the first round, not requiring the applicant to specify what the funds will be used for, not allowing non-profits to be eligible, administering the program through a lottery after a two-week application deadline from the date the program is announced, that we

expect a second-round will be available shortly thereafter, that we will be communicating the program's availability through a number of methods and that we look forward to supporting local businesses. **Crystal Pearson seconded the motion.** Kevin asked if there was any further discussion. There was none. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Brannon Godfrey said it would go to the Selectboard for their July 14th meeting. Lori said she would do the write-up to submit to the Board and asked if any of the Committee would be able to attend. Kevin was not sure if he'd be able to make it. Ryan said he would attend the meeting whether Kevin could or not.

Adjournment

Ryan Scelza made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Kevin Raleigh seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 a.m.

DRAFT