

## CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

### Neighborhood Grants Funding Panel April 26, 2006

The Neighborhood Grants Funding Panel met in their inaugural session Wednesday, April 26, 2006, at 9:00 a.m. in the de Aviles Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Paul Williamson, Director of Public Affairs, and the following were present:

#### **Roll Call:**

John Danahy  
Becky Greenberg  
Erica Jones  
Rai Schwecke  
Beth Upchurch

William B. Harriss, City Manager  
James P. Wilson, City Attorney  
Paul K. Williamson, Director, Public Affairs  
Cathy DuPont, Public Affairs  
Wanda Bray, Public Affairs

#### **2. SELECTION OF PANEL CHAIR**

Beth Upchurch was nominated as chair of the Neighborhood Grants Funding Panel by Becky Greenberg. There were no additional nominations. Ms. Upchurch will serve as chair of the panel.

#### **3. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

##### **3.A/ Review of Procedures by City Attorney**

James P. Wilson, City Attorney, made all panel members aware that both the Sunshine Law and Public Records Act apply to all of them even though they will meet only the one time. Mr. Wilson stated that every document related to this panel, every email received, even on personal computers, is a public record document. Panel members were instructed to forward all such documents to Cathy DuPont who will forward them to the City Clerk. Regarding the Sunshine Law, panel members were cautioned about speaking with their fellow members about items that are or may be coming before the panel.

William B. Harriss, City Manager, thanked the panel members for their volunteer service to the City of St. Augustine and the City Commission.

##### **3.B/ Review of Panel's Task by Public Affairs Staff**

Paul K. Williamson, Director of Public Affairs, outlined the purpose for the panel. Each panel member was appointed by a City Commissioner and it is the panel's task to review the neighborhood grant applications and make a recommendation to the City Commission regarding the eligibility and funding level for each application. Since this is the first such panel the group has no precedents to follow, in fact, they are pioneers, setting their own precedents with each vote. The job before the panel is to determine two things regarding each application: 1) Does the project meet eligibility requirements, and 2) if so, at what level should the project be funded.

The Commission is scheduled to address the panel's recommendations at their May 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. Staff is prepared to begin work with the neighborhoods immediately following

Commission action on the applications with the anticipated completion of all projects by September 30, 2006.

#### **4. PRESENTATIONS BY APPLICANTS**

##### **4.A/ Old Town Association Leslee Keys, Elizabeth Holiday**

Leslee Keys, immediate past president of the Old Town Association, addressed the panel while Elizabeth Holiday, current president, distributed photographs of the Old Town Park located on the NE corner of Aviles Street and Bravo Lane. The association is requesting funds for the installation of an arbor for the park. The arbor would provide much needed shade and allow for greater use of the park.

##### **4.B/ St. Augustine North Davis Shores Jeanette Berk**

Jeanette Berk, president of the St. Augustine North Davis Shores (SANDS) Association, spoke to the group regarding their proposed project. The association is requesting funds to produce a 10 minute DVD titled "Davis Shores Comes Back to Life." Ms. Berk stressed to the panel the importance of recording the oral history of the Davis Shores residents who have lived there for 50 years or longer. Five copies of the DVD would be developed with the grant funds and distributed to St. Augustine North Davis Shores Neighborhood Association, South Davis Shores Advocacy Group, The St. Augustine Historical Society, The Citizens for the Preservation of St. Augustine and The Neighborhood Council Library. Additional copies can be made since the DVD will be the property of the St. Augustine North Davis Shores Association.

##### **4.C/ Magnolia Neighborhood Association Craig Marlowe**

Craig Marlow, steering committee member, with the Magnolia Neighborhood Association began his presentation with a brief overview of the importance of the tree-lined street and the association's efforts last year to ensure the continued health of their trees. The association is requesting funds to install

markers which would illustrate the history of the neighborhood and, in particular, Magnolia Avenue.

##### **4.D/ Nelmar Neighborhood Association Tom Tibbitts**

President of Nelmar Neighborhood Association, Tom Tibbitts, noted that his association's grant request follows up on a request last year regarding the same location and project. The association proposes to clean-up an end-of-the-road drainage easement on Nelmar Avenue which would include removal of asphalt, replacing signs, adding sod and other landscaping resulting in the creation of a greenspace scenic vista similar to the original design of Nelmar Terrace according to a 1912 plat map Mr. Tibbitts shared with panel members. Mr. Tibbitts told the panel that both surrounding property owners had been approached and were in favor of the proposed project.

#### **5. REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS & FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Chairman Upchurch asked Mr. Williamson what their budget requirements were. Mr. Williamson replied that the total amount budgeted for the grant program was \$10,000.00 and the maximum amount for any single award was \$2,500.00. Mr. Danahy asked Mr. Williamson what type of vote was required. Mr. Williamson replied that a simple majority was all that was required.

The first application addressed was that of the Magnolia Neighborhood Association for \$2,500.00 for historical type markers for the neighborhood.

Mr. Danahy asked for clarification regarding the status of the Magnolia Neighborhood Association's 2005 Grant. Mr. Williamson stated that the association was still involved in the "tree study" and that they were moving toward completion. Mr. Danahy asked if the 2005 grant monies were part of the 2006 project. Mr. Williamson replied that they were two separate projects.

There was a discussion by panel members regarding their concern as to the content of the proposed signs and that the specific information to be noted on the signs had not been included. There were also questions regarding the specific type of sign, the style, the size and the lack of an itemized list of expenditures.

The question was raised regarding going back to the applicant and asking for clarification on certain issues, but because of the specific task and time frame of this panel that was not possible.

#### **MOTION**

**Mr. Danahy moved that the grant application for the Magnolia Neighborhood Association not be approved. Ms. Schwecke seconded the motion.**

It was restated that panel members were uncomfortable giving a blanket approval for historical type markers without any specific details regarding size, design & placement. Staff was asked to notify the applicant that although the concept was applauded, the application was not specific enough. It did not contain an itemized list of expenditures, the sign design and content was too vague and the placement and number of signs was not well defined.

**By unanimous voice vote the motion carried.**

The Nelmar Neighborhood Association's grant request was for \$2,500.00 for the establishment of a Scenic Vista/Green Space Park located at the end of Nelmar Avenue. Mr. Danahy asked if the City was vacating the property to allow the establishment of this park. Mr. Williamson replied that the City was not vacating the area because of the continued need to access the underground utility connections.

#### **MOTION**

**Ms. Greenberg moved that the application be approved and funded as requested. Ms. Jones seconded the motion.**

General discussion was held regarding the necessity of removing the asphalt and how it would affect the green space/park.

**By a voice vote of 4 to 1, the motion carried, with Mr. Danahy dissenting.**

The Old Town Association, Inc. has requested a \$2,500.00 grant for the construction of an arbor in the Old Town Park.

#### **MOTION**

**Ms. Greenberg moved that the application be approved and funded as requested. Ms. Schwecke seconded the motion.**

Mr. Danahy asked about the perceived liability of this public park. Mr. Williamson answered that the property is actually owned by the state, under the care of the city and liability issues would be governed just as they are with, for example, the Spanish Quarter Museum.

**By unanimous voice vote, the motion carried.**

The last application to be reviewed by the panel was for \$2,500.00 for St. Augustine North Davis Shores. Staff had made the observation that the project, a DVD of the history of the neighborhood, does not meet the current guidelines as outlined by the City Commission.

#### **MOTION**

**Ms. Greenberg made a motion to approve and to fund the project as requested. The motion died for lack of a second.**

After a general discussion regarding the great value of and need for such projects Chairman Upchurch questioned the distribution of the completed DVD and voiced her concern that the project would be completed and then

forgotten about. Ms. Schwecke mentioned the question of the application's eligibility status.

Chairman Upchurch asked Mr. Williamson what procedure should the panel follow if they wanted to recommend that the City Commission expand grant eligibility requirements. Mr. Williamson replied that the panel could entertain a motion with recommended changes and the motion, if approved, would be forwarded to the Commission.

#### **MOTION**

**Ms. Greenberg made the motion to approve and fund the St. Augustine North Davis Shores Association's project request. Ms. Jones seconded the motion.**

**The motion carried 4 to 1 by voice vote with Ms. Schwecke dissenting.**

#### **MOTION**

**Mr. Danahy made the motion to recommend to the City Commission they consider expanding the specifications of eligibility beyond bricks and mortar for grants to include projects such as the one submitted by St. Augustine North Davis Shores Association. Ms. Greenberg seconded the motion.**

**By unanimous voice vote the motion carried.**

#### **6. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30am