


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 14, 2011

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF ALLOCATION OF FUNDS FOR REBUILDING TOGETHER ALEXANDRIA

ISSUE: Consideration of a request from Rebuilding Together Alexandria (RTA) for \$35,000 in Housing Trust Fund (HTF) monies for RTA activities in FY 2011.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve a grant of \$35,000 in Housing Trust Fund monies to Rebuilding Together Alexandria (RTA) to fund its activities in FY 2011; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents and agreements.

BACKGROUND: Rebuilding Together Alexandria, (RTA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that renovates and repairs the homes of elderly, disabled and low-income homeowners who reside in the City of Alexandria to help them maintain safety, security and independence. RTA also helps repair non-profit facilities which serve Alexandria residents in need. RTA is predominantly a volunteer-supported organization. This request is consistent with how RTA's request has been handled in prior years, as Council typically considers applications for Housing Trust Fund (HTF) monies during the course of the fiscal year out of appropriations set aside for HTF purposes.

National Rebuilding Day is an annual one-day repair and renovation program that uses volunteer labor to provide no-cost home repair/renovation services for income-eligible City owner-occupants and no-cost facilities repair/renovation for City non-profits. This program is supported by donations of time and labor from volunteers (including skilled laborers) and by donations of supplies and grant money from local businesses, churches and other sponsors. Applicants are screened on the basis of need and on the work that can be accomplished by RTA volunteers in one day. While National Rebuilding Day is the major focus for RTA, the organization now provides these services throughout the year. RTA also has a weatherization program which includes an energy audit along with corrective actions such as weather stripping, programmable thermostats, low-flow shower heads and fluorescent light bulbs.

DISCUSSION: RTA is requesting a total of \$35,000 in grant funding from the Housing Trust Fund (HTF) for its FY 2011 program. At least 75% of the grant amount would go toward the purchase of supplies and materials, and up to 25% would be allocated for professional labor, as needed. The RTA program now includes a weatherization program in the fall along with the home repair and modification program. The estimated average cost to purchase supplies and complete repairs and renovations at any given Alexandria address will be from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per household. RTA plans to assist over 95 Alexandria homeowners with home repairs, as well as several non-profit agencies.

Over the past several years, RTA has received \$35,000 annually from the HTF. During FY 2010, RTA's \$35,000 in HTF expenditures repaired and revitalized 87 homes, including two Neighborhood Stabilization Program properties as well as non-profit facilities including a homeless shelter, transitional housing apartments, a group home for women and children affected by domestic violence, and others. The average income of the households assisted was \$21,762, the average homeowner age was 73, and 55% were female-headed households. In addition, more than 1,000 volunteers donated \$302,039 in manual labor and materials to carry out the repairs.

The gap of \$35,000 to be filled by the HTF will constitute 7% of RTA's FY 2011 budget and is consistent with the prior year's HTF percent of budget allocations. Receiving full funding will enhance RTA's ability to address an increasing number of applications and help the organization provide a broader scope of work, as needed, at any given home. RTA proposes to leverage \$6.00 in community donations and volunteer labor for every \$1 in HTF grant funds. In keeping with past practice and to promote the City's strategic objective to "promote a continuum of affordable housing opportunities for all residents, particularly those most in need," staff recommends that the allocation of \$35,000 be granted to RTA. This grant would allow RTA to assist the City and continue its mission of preserving and revitalizing homes and communities, assuring that more Alexandria's low-income homeowners live in warmth with safety and independence.

On February 3, 2011, the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) considered and approved a staff recommendation to allocate \$35,000 to RTA. The City's approved budget for FY 2011 does not include a specific allocation for RTA, based on the principle that any organization seeking funding must submit an application for consideration during the year. However, based on annual applications received in the past from RTA, staff and AHAC anticipated another funding allocation of \$35,000 to that organization.

FISCAL IMPACT: Approval of this request will result in the expenditure of \$35,000 in grant monies from the City's Housing Trust Fund.

STAFF:

Mildrilyn Stephens Davis, Director, Office of Housing
Eric Keeler, Division Chief, Office of Housing