



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

DRAFT
Meeting Minutes
City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
April 12, 2021 – 4:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

October 2020-September 2021

MEMBERS		PRESENT	ABSENT
April Kirk, Chair	P	6	0
Marisol Simon, Vice Chair	P	5	1
Pamela Aiken	P	4	1
Elizabeth Cupido	P	6	0
Christina Disbrow	P	6	0
Mary Kinirons	A	5	1
Christi Rice	P	6	0
Shackera Scott	P	4	1
Terra Sickler	P	5	1
Dana Somerstein	P	3	3

Staff Present

Rachel Williams, Housing and Community Development Manager
Eveline Dsouza, Senior Administrative Assistant, Housing and Community Development
Simone Flores, CDBG Grants Administrator
Mauricio Baquero, City Moderator
Jamie Opperlee, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communication to the City Commission

None.

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- **Quorum Requirement – As of April 7, 2021, there are 10 appointed members to the Board, which means 6 constitutes a quorum**

Chair Kirk called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. Roll was called and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Kirk briefly explained the process of today’s meeting, including presentations, question-and-answer periods, and transitions. Board members will meet again at 4 p.m. on April 13 to review applicants, announce scores, and recommend allocations.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 8, 2021

It was noted that the header date of the March 8, 2021 minutes should be corrected.

Motion made by Vice Chair Simon, seconded by Ms. Disbrow, to approve [as amended]. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

IV. CDBG FY 21-22 GRANT APPLICATION PRESENTATION

1. Broward Partnership for the Homeless

Richard McDuffe, representing the Broward Partnership for the Homeless, stated that the agency's request is for \$50,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to provide emergency shelter services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Broward County. The majority of these residents are expected to come from Fort Lauderdale, where the Partnership is located.

Emergency shelter services include food, emergency preparedness items, personal hygiene supplies, and transportation. Most funding goes toward food and supplies. Individuals at the shelter receive a number of services, including workforce development, medical/dental care, behavioral health care, and case management.

This year the agency is requesting less funding for transportation, as Broward County Transit (BCT) has made its transportation available at no cost due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 461 unduplicated clients from Fort Lauderdale have used the Partnership's services thus far in 2021. By the end of the current contract period, this number is expected to have doubled.

Vice Chair Simon noted that the Applicant's statement of need refers to an Exhibit A, which was not included in the documentation. Mr. McDuffe advised that this exhibit referred to a 2020 point-in-time (PIT) count of homeless individuals within a given area per year.

2. Oasis of Hope Community Development Corporation

Martha Toomor, representing Oasis of Hope Community Development Corporation, stated that this agency was founded in 2009 with the mission of assisting first-time homeowners, as well as individuals facing eviction or foreclosure. They offer counseling and educational workshops for individuals and families in low- to moderate income brackets at little or no charge. They also provide services throughout the home-buying process and foster positive relationships with the finance industry.

Some of the services provided by Oasis in counseling sessions include helping clients establish a foundation strong enough to sustain their home. They offer free first-time homebuyers' educational workshops in a group setting. They also review specific steps that clients can take to help them become mortgage-ready. After this workshop, Oasis

offers one-on-one pre-purchase counseling sessions on topics including foreclosure prevention and home equity conversion. They also provide rental assistance and financial budget counseling.

The goal of Oasis for this fiscal year is to assist 500 workshop participants and reach 100 potential home buyers with counseling services, as well as 200 renters and at least 50 homeowners facing foreclosure or needing a reverse mortgage. They hope to increase knowledge about home ownership and increase the number of homebuyers in the community, while also decreasing the number of rental evictions and the number of people falling into foreclosure.

Ms. Rice noted that the agency is based in Pompano Beach and serves clients throughout Broward County. She asked if the 825 clients to be served by the program will be residents of Fort Lauderdale. Ms. Toomor confirmed that Oasis is specifically targeting Fort Lauderdale. The full program reaches over 2000 participants per year. Clients are recruited through event marketing, social media, radio, and referrals from churches, loan officers, and word-of-mouth.

Ms. Rice asked if the agency has provided any past outcomes to show how these goals have been met in the past. Ms. Toomor replied that Oasis reports to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as well as to other partners who provide matching funds. In the last quarter, they reached 325 renters and assisted them with counseling and referrals to services. They also reached 1129 first-time homebuyers through workshops. She noted that attendance at these workshops increased despite the pandemic. They also reached over 125 homeowners with counseling services.

Ms. Toomor explained that a 2020 audit document is being finalized at this time and is expected to be complete in May. She offered to provide additional information on the 2017 audit attached for the Board's review.

Ms. Disbrow continued that the application states Oasis has sufficient financial stability to manage staff and operations for six months. She asked what would happen after that time if the agency does not receive CDBG funding. Ms. Toomor replied that the goal is to continue to reach out to partner agencies and foundations, noting that matching funds from HUD are available as well.

3. Delta Education and Life Development Foundation

Deetra Durham and Deidre E. Johnson, representing Delta Education and Life Development Foundation, stated that the agency's purpose is to provide educational and mentoring programs to youth between the ages of 11 and 18. They offer three programs:

- Delta G.E.M.S. (Growing and Empowering Myself Successfully), for grades 9 through 12
- Embody, for grades 5 through 9

- Delta Academy, for grades 6 through 8

Through these programs, a variety of areas of focus are addressed through national curricula associated with Delta Sigma Theta sorority. Students practice academic, social, and leadership skill development. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these skills extend into mental health components as well. Participants take part in international projects, learn public speaking skills, and bring in a Science, Technology, Math, and Engineering (STEM) component. They also offer training in maintenance, grooming, and social etiquette.

Delta offers parent meetings to keep parents apprised of what students are learning and offers additional information to them as well, including financial literacy. While most programs were conducted face-to-face in the past, they now offer a virtual setting that has been successful. A hybrid setting is anticipated once the pandemic has passed.

At present, Delta serves roughly 75 students and hopes to extend this number to 120. Students are encouraged to remain active throughout the program as they get older.

Ms. Rice noted that the audit included in the agency's application did not provide the necessary information on Delta's financial stability. She asked if the correct information could be provided. Ms. Durham advised that Delta goes through an audit each year and stated that she would provide the correct information to Staff immediately.

Ms. Aiken asked for more information on the agency's hours of operation. Ms. Johnson replied that Delta staff meets monthly with their program participants. They have advisors and chairpersons who serve particular organizations and provide information on where they can be reached if necessary.

Ms. Aiken also requested information on recruitment. Ms. Johnson stated that G.E.M.S. has approximately 40 young women who participate virtually. The Academy program has roughly 15 to 20 participants, and the Embody group has 15 young men who participate.

Ms. Disbrow asked how many participants are Fort Lauderdale residents, and requested clarification of how many of these attend every month. Ms. Johnson replied that the agency's service area extends throughout Broward County; however, the majority of students come from the 33311 ZIP code area. She estimated that 90% of students attend every month and move through the programs' age groups. The recruitment process continues every year to bring new students into the programs.

4. Jack & Jill Children's Center

Lauren Bernstein, representing Jack and Jill Children's Center, explained that the agency was established with a mission of providing high-quality education and family strengthening services. They typically provide services for 140 children between the

ages of 6 weeks and 5 years from low-income families in their infant, toddler, and preschool kindergarten program.

In March 2020, Jack and Jill closed their physical center and changed to a virtual learning model offering education and family programming services; however, many family members were essential workers in need of daily in-person child care in order to attend work or school. The agency reopened in June with limited hours and capacity. They are currently serving just over 100 children in their educational program and 80 children in elementary school.

Ms. Bernstein emphasized that Jack and Jill focuses on both the child and the family in a two-generation model. Family strengthening programs help children and families develop the tools they need for success. The family program provides case management, emergency funding, a food and clothing pantry, and adult education. The funds requested today would support the Promising Futures Empowerment Scholarship and Early Education programs.

Roughly 62% of families served by Jack and Jill live and work in Fort Lauderdale. Funding for the Promising Futures program supports children and families by providing a high-quality education. During the next school year, Jack and Jill expects close to 30 children to be eligible for the scholarships that would be provided with CDBG funding. These children range in age from infancy to three years old.

Ms. Cupido asked how many families typically apply for the Promising Futures scholarships. Ms. Bernstein replied that the agency determines eligibility and works with families to enroll them in the program. She estimated that in the past there have been 12 to 20 families receiving scholarships funded by CDBG money. These numbers decreased slightly during the COVID-19 pandemic, although the agency hopes to serve 12 to 20 students again in the next year.

Ms. Cupido asked how the agency reaches out to the public to let them know the scholarship programs exist. Maria Meyer, also representing Jack and Jill, advised that the agency hopes to work with individual City Commissioners in fall 2021 to make families aware of their services through the Commissioners' newsletters. They also receive many referrals through other nonprofit entities as well as through word-of-mouth and social media.

Ms. Rice asked for clarification of the term "scholarships," noting that this does not reflect hard costs. Ms. Meyer advised that most of the agency's budget goes toward early education staffing. The scholarships provide an opportunity for a child to enroll in the early education program so parents can continue working. Susan Stanley, also representing Jack and Jill, further clarified that 80% of costs are for personnel. Scholarships also provide assistance for families that are on waiting lists for government assistance. Parents pay some portion of the fee, with the difference between their payment and the tuition rate charged as a scholarship.

5. South Florida Institute on Aging

Victoria Ruiz, representing the South Florida Institute on Aging, explained that the agency is seeking funding for their Senior Companion Program. This program serves the City's low- to moderate income residents and isolated older adults, including older adults with disabilities and their caregivers. Their mission is to improve social and economic insights that empower individuals as they age.

The funding request is for a hybrid model of the Senior Companion Program, which is part of the AmeriCorps Seniors program. Federal funding requires a 10% local match, which would be provided by CDBG funding. The hybrid model provides volunteer opportunities for adults aged 55 years or older to reach out to isolated older adults and adults with disabilities, enabling them to live more independently while providing resources through technology and telehealth, social engagement, and cognitive stimulation.

The services provide a dual benefit to both the volunteer and the individuals with whom they connect on a weekly basis. Services reduce social isolation, improve mental health and quality of life, and enable both volunteers and clients to live independently for as long as possible. In 2020, the program supported 118 Senior Companion volunteers, of whom 37 (34%) were residents of Fort Lauderdale. The program served 289 clients, of whom 70 (24%) were from Fort Lauderdale.

The current client wait list for the Senior Companion program has 75 individuals. CDBG funding would allow the Institute to expedite services to Fort Lauderdale clients on the wait list as well as supporting current clients. The funding request would support the following:

- \$18,000 tax-free stipend for 15 Senior Companion volunteers for the year
- \$5795 for volunteer travel reimbursement at a cost of 40 cents per mile
- \$8400 to provide access to WiFi-enabled devices for 35 participants
- \$17,805 to cover 26% of the program director's salary and benefits

Clients have reported feeling less lonely, with overall improvements to their feelings of well-being. Caregivers reported that they experienced short-term relief. Senior Companion volunteers reported being more active and that volunteering made a positive impact on their ability to live independently.

Vice Chair Simon asked if the reimbursement rate of \$3/hour and 40 cents per mile for volunteers is part of the Institute's policy, or if it is dictated by an outside entity. Ms. Ruize replied that these rates are established by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), from whom the Institute receives funding.

6. Turnstone Development Corporation

William Schneider, representing Turnstone Development Corporation, advised that the agency has requested CDBG funds for the past two years as well. They are requesting \$25,000 to serve a minimum of 35 clients. Funds will be leveraged 100%, including \$26,000 in matching funds. Turnstone provides overhead, supplies, rent, and staffing.

The agency's facility, Wisdom Village Crossing, is a family building with over 249 residents. A full-time social worker is on-site. All residents earn 60% or less of the area median income (AMI). At present, 30 residents are currently unemployed. The program's goal is to reduce systematic barriers and improve the lives of these households.

Turnstone provides employment, computer, job search placement, budgeting, banking, and credit programming skills. These are tailored from HUD's self-sufficiency program. Independent living facilities help eligible families gain the skills necessary to leave subsidized housing programs.

Valentina Gomez, also representing Turnstone, advised that she is the Family Support Coordinator and works with the community to provide workshops on financial literacy. She connects the community with various resources, including Family Success of Broward, which offers employment assistance. Financial and computer training classes are held every week. Webinars are made available for first-time homebuyers and consolidated credit agencies.

Ms. Disbrow asked if Turnstone has received funds in a previous year for a different program. Mr. Schneider replied that this is the agency's third application for CDBG funding.

Ms. Disbrow continued that \$25,000 for 35 clients is a significant investment, and asked if Turnstone collaborates with other agencies. Mr. Schneider stated that they have worked with Family Success of Broward, the Florida Housing Finance Corporation, the Urban League, and HOMES, Inc., among others. Ms. Disbrow recommended that these partnerships be clarified on the agency's application, noting that there is minimal local involvement in the management of the program.

Vice Chair Simon noted that Turnstone has been active in the Fort Lauderdale community for approximately three years, and recommended that they cite some examples of client success and positive outcomes as a result of funding. Mr. Schneider commented that the previous year, the agency assisted many clients with employability, as well as with the rental assistance provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. They also assisted clients through rental and utility assistance.

7. HOMES, Inc.

Linda Taylor, representing Housing Opportunities, Mortgage Assistance, and Effective Solutions (HOMES), Inc., stated that funds are requested for the agency's Youth Supportive Housing and Self-Sufficiency program. This program has been in operation since 2009. Young people pay \$300 to \$400 per month for rent and are provided with quality apartments, job coaching, paid internships, financial capability classes, and emergency assistance.

Since 2009, more than 200 young people have participated in the program. The agency has experienced challenges in 2020 related to mental health and unemployment challenges. HOMES seeks to help young people gain self-sufficiency through a partnership with two title companies. To date, 25 individuals have been hired at a rate of \$16 per hour.

Throughout 2020, the program has provided young people with internet access and computer hardware, installed security cameras, and raised money to cover rent, food, and personal protective equipment (PPE). Only three clients contracted COVID-19.

Ms. Rice noted that the agency proposes to serve 18 clients, and asked if these are in addition to the 25 clients currently served or served throughout the previous year. Ms. Taylor explained that HOMES expects another 18 clients in 2021.

8. Covenant House Florida

Betsy Syrien, representing Covenant House Florida, stated that this organization was founded in 1972 and has been in Fort Lauderdale since 1985. They are a safe haven for young people between the ages of 11 and 21 who are at-risk, runaway, or experiencing homelessness. They offer transitional and permanent housing programs for youth up to 24 years old.

Covenant House is a 24-hour, seven-day shelter. They provide meals, clean clothes, and a safe place to sleep, as well as comprehensive services including medical attention, substance abuse treatment, and counseling and therapeutic services. They offer an on-site GED program, as well as an independent living program that emphasizes workforce and life skills development. The goal is to either reunify clients with their families or move them into permanent housing placement. The funding request is for \$25,000 to support direct program costs.

Chair Kirk advised that she would like to see stronger evaluation methods than the ones listed in the application, as some of these could be more accurately described as outcomes rather than evaluation tools. She asked if Covenant House hears feedback from their clients. Ms. Syrien replied that there is a youth advisory council in which residents are involved. All young people are assigned a case manager with whom they develop weekly action plans. The agency has received CDBG grant funds from other Broward municipalities in the past.

Chair Kirk reiterated that Board members have until noon on April 13 to make any adjustments to their scores before the meeting at 4 p.m. She encouraged representatives to participate in tomorrow's meeting as well, as the Board will discuss allocations at that time. The Board's recommendations will go to the City Commission in summer 2021. She thanked all who participated in the process.

V. HOPWA FY 21-22 GRANT APPLICATION PRESENTATION & FY 19-20 PERFORMANCE REPORT

1. BRHPC

Rhode Rock, representing Broward Regional Health Planning Council (BRHPC), stated that this organization has worked with clients in need of housing for 38 years, and has not experienced a finding in relation to their Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) in 15 years.

Sharon Alveranga-Jones, also representing BRHPC, reported that from October 2019 to September 2020, the agency has met and exceeded its contractual agreement with the City. They remained open throughout the pandemic. Reviewing leases before clients sign them has prevented clients from entering into agreements they could not sustain.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, clients' loss of jobs increased significantly, and for many it was more challenging to secure housing. BRHPC housed these clients in hotels while they sought new employment. The short-term rent, mortgage, and utilities (STRMU) program helped most clients remain in their homes and avoid eviction. BRHPC assisted 55 more clients through funds reallocated to this program.

The tenant-based rental voucher (TBRV) program assisted clients who applied for Section 8 or other subsidized housing. Other supportive services include training on budgeting, employment, and insurance benefits.

2. Broward House

Stacy Hyde, representing Broward House, advised that the agency offers project-based, facility-based, and tenant-based voucher programs for supportive housing. They work with clients to overcome distrust and/or anxiety regarding the housing process and address the challenges they may be facing. Over time, they also help clients gain skills and confidence with budgeting, employment, GED work, and other goals.

The facility-based housing program includes substance abuse treatment, as roughly 80% of clients served have a history of this condition. Broward House maintained these services throughout the pandemic. As clients are moved from facility-based housing into project- or tenant-based housing, they continue to receive support services and case management.

3. MODCO

Dr. Rosalind Osgood, representing Mount Olive Development Corporation (MODCO), explained that this agency is the community development arm of the New Mount Olive Baptist Church. They have worked with Fort Lauderdale for 17 years to fulfill HUD's national effort of affordable and safe housing for persons with HIV/AIDS. They have maintained this relationship with the City, leveraged funding, and provided supportive services for their clients.

Dr. Osgood emphasized that housing helps provide community for clients. The agency operates a project-based housing program in which they own and operate 23 units, which house 23 heads of household living with HIV/AIDS as well as 20 of their children. The property includes one efficiency unit, 11 one-bedroom units, 10 2-bedroom units, and one four-bedroom house. Many clients have very low incomes. Most clients are 51 years of age or older.

Because all MODCO clients live below the poverty level, the agency also deals with food insecurity, offers supportive services that teach life skills, and provides volunteer opportunities within the community. They assist clients with finding jobs. Housing plans are very helpful.

Dr. Osgood continued that MODCO has met or is on target to meet all of its performance outcome indicators from the second quarter. Clients work with members of New Mount Olive Baptist Church who may provide additional supportive services. They are requesting the same amount that they are currently receiving to continue the agency's work.

4. Careresource

Rafael Jimenez, representing Careresource, stated that this agency has assisted the Fort Lauderdale community with housing services since 2009. Over 7000 individuals have been assisted and the agency has had no findings in 12 years. They also refer clients to other programs that provide services they may need, including voucher programs, transportation, substance abuse, mental health, and primary medical services.

In fiscal year (FY) 2019-2020, Careresource assisted 615 unduplicated clients, which was twice the amount they had expected to serve. They remained open during the pandemic and instituted COVID-19 protocols for individuals entering buildings.

Careresource is requesting an additional \$100,000 for the current fiscal year over the previous year's amount, raising the request to \$362,000. This amount will cover several programmatic aspects, including supplies, salaries, equipment, and other necessities. They have also increased the number of clients they hope to serve from 300 to a minimum of 500.

Indicators for housing case management reflect that 100% of clients are assisted with housing plans, and a minimum of 80% will achieve their goals within a six-month period. At least 80% of clients will complete realistic monthly budgets, and 90% of clients will seek assistive housing services, employment services, and readiness skills. 85% of clients will see improvement when assessed upon discharge.

Ms. Scott requested clarification of the use of the additional \$100,000. Mr. Jimenez replied that Careresource will add 66% more clients than the previous year. These funds will also address the allocation of staffing, as there was insufficient funding to support staff in previous years.

5. SunServe

Terry Dyer, representing SunServe, advised that this agency is the largest and oldest LGBTQ+ social service agency in South Florida. They have existed since 2002 and focus on mental health needs. Their commitment includes youth services, mental health therapy, case management, substance abuse support, medication management, and senior services.

SunServe has addressed the needs of the HIV-positive community since its founding. They have a main office in Wilton Manors as well as a south campus in Fort Lauderdale which houses youth and senior services. The team is comprised of 50% people of color, 50% female, and a significant presence of HIV-positive employees.

Performance indicators for FY 2019-2020 established goals of over 80%. They served 341 clients against a goal of 400. Narratives for this fiscal year note that one factor in falling short of the goal was most likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as there were three months in which the agency could only serve 79 unduplicated clients.

SunServe's HOPWA case management team helps clients reach their housing goals with no need for startup funds. The requested funding links clients to other programs, such as Legal Aid, which can provide a specific type of assistance. The agency also provides groups and classes on budgeting, domestic violence, and getting to work.

Ms. Sickler asked why there was a time period of 120 days between checks on clients. Gary Hensley, also representing SunServe, explained that when clients decline additional services during an inactive period, the agency is supposed to close them out and reopen, if necessary, as part of the PROVIDE system. SunServe actually contacts their clients more often than this measurement indicates.

6. Legal Aid

Edwin Cordova, representing Legal Aid Services of Broward County, stated that the agency has developed strong ties with similar organizations, including Careresource,

SunServe, and BRHPC. The requested funds would allow them to bring in a full-time paralegal, a full-time attorney, and an administrative assistant.

Like other agencies, Legal Aid and its clients experienced challenges due to the pandemic. Mr. Cordova asserted that they are committed to the program funded with HOPWA dollars. Of the 300 cases opened in the past year, 234 served unduplicated clients. He emphasized that the agency serves the entire community.

Legal Aid and its partner agencies have a 95% success rate. Issues addressed include eviction litigation, landlord issues, foreclosures, non-renewal of visas, and issues related to housing conditions. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of complaints related to unit habitability, which may be related to the pandemic and fears of losing housing.

Chair Kirk asked if Legal Aid plans to continue a hybrid setting for client meetings rather than resume in-person services. Mr. Cordova acknowledged that the hybrid system is convenient for most people; in addition, if the building is reopened, there would be a significant number of individuals waiting in the lobby, which contributes to health concerns. Many clients also have limited access to transportation.

Ms. Somerstein asked how Legal Aid plans to address a possible influx of foreclosures and evictions now that moratoriums on these practices are being lifted. Mr. Cordova replied that it is not yet known whether or not the Biden administration plans to continue these moratoriums. He also noted that some clients were experiencing difficulty paying mortgages or rents on time prior to the pandemic, while the moratorium only applies to tenants who were in danger of being evicted due to nonpayment that is specifically related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

VI. GOOD OF THE ORDER

Chair Kirk advised that members may make changes to their application scores based on what they learned at today's meeting. She also asked how the applicants will be able to see the comments made by members using the Submittable system. It was clarified that members may send messages directly to applicants using this system.

Ms. Williams stated that CDBG applications are divided into two categories: Public Services and Community-Based Development Organizations (CDBOs).

It was noted that representatives of Oasis and Delta have emailed the requested information to Staff. Chair Kirk reiterated that it is important for representatives of all agencies to attend the April 13 meeting in case the Board has additional questions for them. Ms. Dsouza confirmed that the amount of funding will be clarified by tomorrow's meeting as well.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

VIII. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

The Board will meet to review and discuss scores at their April 13, 2021 meeting.

IX. COMMUNICATIONS TO CITY COMMISSION

None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]