



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

APPROVED
Meeting Minutes
City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
May 10, 2021 – 4:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

October 2020-September 2021

MEMBERS		PRESENT	ABSENT
April Kirk, Chair	P	7	0
Marisol Simon, Vice Chair	P	6	1
Pamela Aiken	P	5	1
Elizabeth Cupido	P	7	0
Christina Disbrow	A	6	1
Christi Rice	P	7	0
Shackera Scott	A	4	2
Terra Sickler (arr. 4:06)	P	6	1
Dana Somerstein (arr. 4:12)	P	4	3

Staff Present

Rachel Williams, Housing and Community Development Manager
Eveline Dsouza, Senior Administrative Assistant, Housing and Community Development
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 May 10, 2021, there are 9 appointed members to the Board, which means 5 constitutes a quorum**

Chair Kirk called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. Roll was called and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Kirk noted that Mary Kinirons has resigned from the Board.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – APRIL 12, 2021 & APRIL 13, 2021

Motion made by Vice Chair Simon, seconded by Ms. Cupido, to accept the minutes for the April 12th and 13th meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Ms. Sickler arrived at 4:06 p.m.

IV. FEEDBACK & SUGGESTIONS ON SUBMITTABLE GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

Ms. Dsouza advised that she had invited a representative from Submittable, the online platform used for grant applications, to attend today's meeting and hear feedback; however, the representative was unable to attend. She would share the information provided at today's meeting with the representative at a later date.

Vice Chair Simon stated that she found the Submittable process to be a great improvement over the previous method. Chair Kirk agreed, adding that having all the materials in one place made it easier to ensure no information was missing. Ms. Rice noted, however, that while the online format provided a more organized process, it was more difficult to revise some scores after the April 12 meeting in this format, as all information had to be re-entered even if no changes were made.

Chair Kirk observed that this may have been an internal issue, as re-entry was necessary for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) scores but not for Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) scores. She agreed that this could be improved in the future. She also noted that the items on which Board members were dependent upon scores from Staff, such as items that addressed federal criteria for applicants, could be entered prior to the Board members' scores to avoid confusion.

Ms. Somerstein arrived at 4:12 p.m.

Chair Kirk continued that when filling in HOPWA information, there was the potential for scorecards to total more than 100 points, and suggested that this might be separated so only the criteria for application review are present. Ms. Dsouza explained that although different HOPWA categories were intended to be deliberated and scored separately, they were all combined in the Submittable platform under the grant application process, although Staff had tried to find a way to separate them.

Chair Kirk asked if applicants were provided access to the Board members' comments related to their scoring. Ms. Dsouza confirmed that these comments were emailed to each applicant. Chair Kirk recommended that the applicants review these comments before the next cycle of grant funding.

Vice Chair Simon recommended that the Board determine how to reconcile the applications with the factors, scoring sheets, and software used to rate applications. If the platform was in the same order as the applications, his would make it easier for the members to move back and forth in the document. Ms. Somerstein agreed, noting that this would be especially useful when scoring the items that are specific to some types of grants but not others.

Vice Chair Simon continued that the spreadsheet of the applicants' histories provided to the Board members was very helpful, and recommended that in the future, this information be provided in advance of the meeting at which applicants made their presentations. Ms. Cupido agreed that having the spreadsheet in advance would allow members to focus on the bigger picture as well as on individual scores. Chair Kirk recommended that the spreadsheet be provided two days in advance of the applicants' presentations. Ms. Dsouza confirmed that this could be provided in advance in the future.

At this time the Board requested feedback on the Submittable platform and submission process from the applicant agencies.

Michele Rosiere, representing the Broward Regional Health Planning Council (BRHPC), advised that the Submittable format does not allow "cut and paste" for text, nor does it allow for the formatting of text, diagrams, or some bullet points. It can be difficult to write an entire grant application directly into the spaces provided. Chair Kirk agreed that this should be allowed. She noted, however, that the size limitation on paper documents was useful in some cases to ensure that all applications would fit within the same format. Ms. Rosiere concluded that another option could be permitting applicants to upload their entire documents into the application platform as an addition.

Gillian Cross Hogg, representing Broward House, agreed with BRHPC's comments regarding formatting, as this was a particular challenge when the agency submitted applications for multiple program services. She explained that while some questions were the same across different program areas, the agency's responses were different, and it could be difficult to distinguish which sections were relevant to which program areas. She suggested that a future consideration could be providing the agencies with a PDF of the application in advance so they could see the questions to be answered and formulate different responses.

Dr. Rosalind Osgood, representing Mount Olive Development Corporation (MODCO), agreed with the previous comments regarding the ability to cut and paste responses. She added that it was also difficult to review the entire application before it was submitted, and requested that the agencies be apprised in advance of the character limit for responses.

Cameron Gray, representing Careresource, agreed with the previous comments, and suggested that it could be helpful in the future for the request for proposal (RFP) to include a number of the questions from the application. He also felt the feedback provided by the Board members was useful to the agency. Francisco Gomez, also representing Careresource, thanked Ms. Dsouza and Ms. Williams for their assistance with the application process.

Tori Bertran, representing SunServe, advised that the electronic submission process is much easier than the previous processes. She pointed out that over the past four years,

the time frame for submission of applications continues to shrink: the average turnaround time from RFP to due date in 2017 was six weeks, while some grants in 2021 permit only three weeks for an application. She felt this could be burdensome for smaller agencies in particular, particularly if they do not have full-time grant writers.

Ms. Bertran continued that she had never received communication from Fort Lauderdale that the RFP process had opened for HOPWA applicants. The RFP was available on the City's website, but the link provided resulted in an error message referring the agency to Submittable, which did not respond.

Ms. Bertran agreed with previous comments regarding the Submittable system's formatting, adding that in addition to concerns expressed by other agencies, there were some non-numbered or inconsistently numbered questions as well as inconsistent listing of document requirements. Different sources also listed two different due dates of March 15 and March 16 for the application.

Chair Kirk advised that Staff worked within a compressed time frame in which the application information was entered into the Submittable format; in addition, there were a number of challenges with the grant provider system. Ms. Dsouza confirmed this, noting that the new platform limited how well the application could be presented. Staff was unable to download a PDF version of the application, although they had created it.

Edwin Cordova, representing Legal Aid, stated that he agreed with the previous comments made by other agencies indicating some of the challenges they had faced with the Submittable platform. He noted that Legal Aid had lost its dedicated grant department, which may have made the online process more difficult for them. He suggested that an instructional video on the system could be helpful in the future.

V. GOOD OF THE ORDER

None.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Williams advised that Staff would share today's feedback with representatives of Submittable to provide a better process next time.

VII. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Ms. Dsouza stated that Staff would provide the Board members of notice when a City Commission date has been confirmed for the presentation of the Board's recommendations. This is currently projected to take place at the first meeting in June. She recommended that Board members attend this meeting if possible.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS TO CITY COMMISSION

None.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 4:57 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.]