



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

APPROVED
Meeting Minutes
City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
City Commission Chambers, City Hall
May 9, 2022 – 4:00 P.M.

MEMBERS		PRESENT	ABSENT
Christina Disbrow, Chair	P	6	1
Christi Rice, Vice Chair	P	5	1
Pamela Aiken	P	3	0
Wismy Cius (arr. 4:07)	P	2	0
Elizabeth Cupido	A	4	3
Gary Hensley	P	2	0
Dana Somerstein	P	2	0

Staff Present

Avis Wilkinson, Assistant Housing and Community Development Manager
Eveline Dsouza, Administrative Supervisor, Housing and Community Development
Carla Blair, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communication to the City Commission

None.

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

- **Quorum Requirement – As of May 1, 2022, there are 7 appointed members to the Board, which means 4 constitutes a quorum**

Chair Disbrow called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. It was noted a quorum was present at the meeting.

II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Cius arrived at 4:07 p.m.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 11, 2022

Motion made by Ms. Somerstein, seconded by Mr. Hensley, to approve the minutes. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

**IV. HOPWA FY21-22 (6 Months) PERFORMANCE PRESENTATION:
(3 minutes for presentation and 7 minutes for Q & A per agency)**

- 1. BRHPC: Sharon Alveranga-Jones**

Sharon Alveranga-Jones, representing Broward Regional Health Planning Council (BRHPC), reported that the agency has made strides toward meeting its goals for the tenant-based rental voucher (TBRV), short-term rental, mortgage, and utility (STRMU), and permanent housing placement (PHP) programs in fiscal year (FY) 2021-2022.

Six months into the current year, many clients are still struggling to find affordable housing. Rental costs in Broward County have increased by an average of 20%. Additional barriers to PHP included job loss or insufficient income.

The STRMU target was to provide financial assistance for at least 100 unduplicated clients. BRHPC has served 64 clients within the first six months of the fiscal year and is on track to meet this target. Ms. Alveranga-Jones noted that many Fort Lauderdale landlords are requesting a significant rental increase from current tenants, which many BRHPC clients cannot afford. In most cases, this can result in eviction and increased risk of homelessness.

To assist clients facing a lack of housing, a request was made to the City to reallocate funds to the TBRV program so more clients could be brought into that program. The City reallocated \$140,000 from STRMU and PHP to the TBRV program, which requires that clients pay 30% of their income toward housing. BRHPC selected 35 clients from the new list, 18 of whom were eligible for this program. Ms. Alveranga-Jones concluded that BRHPC hopes the City Commission will approve funds that can help alleviate this housing problem.

Mr. Hensley asked how many families are in the TBRV program. Ms. Alveranga-Jones replied that there are 77 families currently participating, with 27 additional families being processed into the program using the funds reallocated from the STRMU and PHP programs.

Chair Disbrow noted that BRHPC has met many of its goals with 100% success, and asked what percentage of potential clients are ineligible for these programs. Ms. Alveranga-Jones reiterated that of the 35 clients moved into the TBRV program from the waiting list, 17 were ineligible, which left 18 clients who were served by the program. They hope to have helped at least 100 clients by the end of the fiscal year.

2. Broward House Inc.: Jamie Powers

Jamie Powers, representing Broward House, Inc., described a number of client successes that occurred during the current reporting period. She acknowledged that there were several obstacles, including increasing rental rates as well as the cost of repairs and essential services. TBRV clients have been challenged in finding new landlords who were willing to accept the voucher rate, and some current landlords have indicated they will no longer accept these vouchers, which places clients at risk of homelessness. Guidelines from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

Development (HUD) are structured in a way that prevents two potential TBRV clients from maintaining their placements due to the number of rooms they are renting, although the landlord is willing to accept the voucher.

Mr. Hensley asked how many families are in the TBRV program. It was noted that as of April 30, 2022, Broward House served 73 clients. They are working through the TBRV waiting list and have assessed 11 potential clients thus far. Two clients who did not meet the required criteria were removed from the waiting list, and another client has requested removal from the list due to the difficulty of finding placement.

3. MODCO: Dr. Osgood

Dr. Rosalind Osgood, representing Mount Olive Development Corporation (MODCO), reported that the agency's Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) program currently houses 25 eligible individuals and 21 family members. Of the 25 eligible individuals, 11 are aged 51 or over, 9 are aged 31 to 50, and 5 are between the ages of 18 and 30. The agency has 11 one-bedroom units and 10 two-bedroom units. They are on track to meet all outcomes.

Dr. Osgood continued that when clients leave the program, MODCO seeks to track their next steps. The agency is concerned with the current state of the housing market, in which many properties are being sold. As these properties are purchased by developers and private investors, they will become unavailable to the agency's clients. Rental prices have risen so much that the new costs do not work within MODCO's business model. Dr. Osgood concluded that clients are transitioning from project-based rental housing at a slower rate, as MODCO does not want to send clients out into an existing housing crisis.

Chair Disbrow asked if Staff was aware of whether or not more funding will become available for housing stock acquisition. Ms. Dsouza replied that this will be addressed when HUD updates are available.

Mr. Hensley asked how many project-based units are available through MODCO. Dr. Osgood replied that there are 25 such units, and funds have been budgeted for 32 units; however, they have had difficulty securing agreements from landlords who are willing to work within the HOPWA model. She recalled that they had previously explored shared housing, but ultimately this model was not successful.

4. Care Resource: Francisco Gomez & Maryfer Lacruz

Maryfer Lacruz and Francisco Gomez, representing Care Resource, stated that from October 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022, this agency has served 457 clients, which exceeds their contract goal of 372 clients. 100% of these clients achieved initial housing plan goals and have received assistance in completing a monthly budget. 155 clients were assisted in seeking employment, and 100% of these clients achieved this goal.

128 clients were discharged from the program after meeting all their goals. Through the second quarter, 164 applications were submitted to the PHP and STRMU programs.

One significant barrier to assistance is the lack of availability of rental properties across Broward County and the state of Florida. The increase in rental costs created a deficiency between incomes and market values in comparison with HUD standards and existing HOPWA FY 2021-2022 fair market rates. Rental amounts in Broward County have increased significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of Care Resource's clients have low monthly fixed incomes, and in some cases may have criminal backgrounds, both of which affect their ability to pay rents that are higher than their incomes.

Mr. Gomez advised that Care Resource also works with its clients to help maintain their health, monitoring their viral load upon intake and following up on medication compliance.

5. SunServe: Tiffany Arieagus

Tiffany Arieagus, representing SunServe, stated that since January 2013, SunServe has served 1629 unduplicated clients. They are currently providing housing case management services in four languages. Their present revenue does not cover the entire cost of the case management program; however, they have made up this difference through private funding. 94% of funding goes directly to case management services.

For the contract year beginning October 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022, SunServe has served 413 unduplicated clients. This includes 300 unduplicated STRMU clients who were assisted with an authorized amount of \$40,448.89. PHP has served 10 unduplicated clients with an amount of \$7226. The agency is on pace to spend its entire allocation.

The issues SunServe is seeing include client stress, which affects clients' mental health. Many of the agency's senior citizen clients are unable to find jobs due to their age or medical condition. To help them find housing, SunServe has created a list of former landlords who have worked with the program, and Ms. Arieagus is reaching out to them directly to determine if they are willing to lower rents for senior citizens. One landlord has agreed to this request.

The agency seeks to help all its clients through education, seeking jobs, and providing mental health services. Clinicians are available at the agency, and a collective of clinicians work with clients.

Chair Disbrow noted that SunServe has served 82% of their goal of 505 clients thus far. Ms. Arieagus confirmed that the agency expects to meet 100% of their goal by the end of the fiscal year.

6. Legal Aid: Edwin Cordova

Edwin Cordova, representing Legal Aid, stated that the agency has served 104 HOPWA clients. They have spent over \$36,000 in private funds in addition to HOPWA dollars. Approximately 36% of clients are female and 63% are male. 51% are Black and 48% are white. Roughly 94% are U.S. citizens. 62.5% of clients are in their 40s or 50s, which is a concern, because this is an age at which many individuals are financially stable.

Mr. Cordova advised that he shared the earlier presenters' concerns with finding rental units, noting that there is a misconception in the community related to the passage of an Ordinance by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners. The Ordinance requires 60 days' advance notice when rents will increase by more than 5% or when a month-to-month tenant's lease is to be terminated. The issue is that the Ordinance is currently not applicable to any of Legal Aid's clients, as it applies only to residents who began paying rent on (or after) May 1, 2022. The Ordinance also does not apply to the renewal of present leases. He emphasized that a number of current clients have already reached out to Legal Aid for assistance with this issue, only to learn that the Ordinance does not apply to their circumstances.

Chair Disbrow asked if Legal Aid has reached out to Broward County about this issue. Mr. Cordova replied that he spoke with Commissioner Nan Rich, who pointed out that it is difficult for Commission action to affect present leases. He clarified that his concern was for clients' perception, as many believed they could benefit from the Ordinance.

Ms. Somerstein noted that although Legal Aid had referred to the use of private funds, they still have significant HOPWA grant funds that have not yet been spent. She asked if Mr. Cordova felt the agency would be able to expend all of these funds. Mr. Cordova replied that the agency has had difficulty hiring and retaining attorneys. Due to the funds provided through HOPWA, they were able to obtain three grants that allowed the agency to hire 2.5 attorneys. He concluded that Legal Aid may be at risk of being unable to continue assisting HOPWA clients in the future.

V. HUD Updates: Potential Special CSB Meeting on May 24th, 2022

Ms. Dsouza explained that the City has not yet received its FY 2022-2023 allocations from HUD. Notice of these allocations is expected to be released on May 13, 2022. For this reason, a potential Board meeting may be scheduled for Tuesday, May 24 in the event there is a substantial difference between the estimated and actual allocations that must be discussed further. If the allocation is within 10% of the estimate, an additional meeting will not be necessary. This percentage was agreed upon at the April 11, 2022 meeting.

Ms. Aiken stated that she had felt disappointed at the April 11, 2022 meeting, and recommended that the Board members remain mindful of how they speak to representatives of presenting agencies.

VI. GOOD OF THE ORDER

Ms. Somerstein asked if there is anything the Board can do to assist its partner organizations in addressing the concerns they raised during the HOPWA update. She asked if there are any specific concerns the agencies might wish the Board to express on their behalf.

Ms. Arieagus suggested that older buildings could be renovated so they are suitable for housing, as newer buildings are typically not affordable. Dr. Osgood added that many church groups that are struggling financially are seeking to sell assets so they can maintain church operations. If these buildings are sold to private investors, it will result in the loss of housing stock, potentially affecting tenants who currently live in the building and would be unable to afford a non-subsidized rental rate.

Ms. Powers noted that City officials could advocate for a better HUD structure, citing the example of tenants who are forced to move out of stable housing because their unit has been determined to have one extra bedroom. Mr. Gomez stated that the fair market rate (FMR) is also a concern for HOPWA clients. Ms. Alveranga-Jones also expressed concern with FMR, over which the agencies have no control.

Mr. Cordova commented that the current system does not take into consideration the change in investments in the United States beginning in the late 1980s, which led to the acquisition of properties that could be rented at affordable rates. These properties are now in the current market and investors are purchasing them and increasing rents to cover the cost of their investment. This contributes significantly to the current affordable housing crisis.

Ms. Dsouza advised that City Staff have met with HUD representatives to discuss FMR and the eligible TBRV clients who are unable to find housing. The funding for this program is available, but agencies are unable to find affordable housing for the clients. HUD is working to revise the HOPWA program. A webinar is scheduled for June 6, 2022, to discuss this revision, as well as further discussion of FMR.

Dr. Osgood pointed out that there is discrimination related to ZIP codes: for example, agencies located within the 33311 ZIP code may charge no more than \$1200/month for a two-bedroom unit, while other locations may charge up to \$1500, irrespective of the quality of the units. She suggested that it may become necessary to challenge the government in court to seek a more equitable change.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

VIII. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Ms. Dsouza noted that this would be determined when the City receives notice of its HUD allocation.

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 5:09 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.]