



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

APPROVED
Meeting Minutes
City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
City Commission Chambers, City Hall
August 8, 2022 – 4:00 P.M.

MEMBERS		PRESENT	ABSENT
Christi Rice, Chair (via Zoom)	P	7	1
Pamela Aiken	A	4	1
Wismy Cius	P	4	0
William Jason Dunne	P	1	0
Gary Hensley	P	4	0
Ronald Pierre	P	2	0
Dana Somerstein	A	3	2

Staff Present

Rachel Williams, Housing and Community Development Manager
Eveline Dsouza, Administrative Supervisor, 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 July 1, 2022, there are 7 appointed members to the Board, which means 4 constitutes a quorum**

Chair Rice called the meeting to order at 4:01 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

New Board member William Jason Dunne introduced himself at this time.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – July 11, 2022

It was clarified that the Board would need to vote to allow the Chair to participate remotely in today’s meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Hensley, seconded by Mr. Cius, that due to [Chair Rice] not being present, I am going to be making the motion that she participate. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

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

IV. CDBG FY21-22 PERFORMANCE REPORT PRESENTATION

- **Covenant House Florida**

Betsy Suprien and Katina Caragains, representing Covenant House, reported that this organization provides services to youth under the age of 21. Most participants are contacted through the street outreach program, which is active in the community.

Clients of Covenant House go through a battery of intake assessments and have immediate needs such as housing, food, and clothing met. They are then connected to case managers who work with them toward their plan for self-sufficiency.

Once a client has completed several of the classes they have chosen, they have the ability to apply for one of Covenant House's housing programs, such as a transitional living or permanent rapid re-housing program. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds pay for a portion of the organization's independent living coordinators' salaries, as well as the supplies required to provide services to clients.

Mr. Hensley noted that Covenant House's goal was for 80% of youth admitted to the emergency shelter to complete the assessment phase in seven to twelve days; however, at present they are at 35%. Ms. Suprien advised that when a client comes into the facility and learns about the services available, they have some time to decide whether or not they want to commit to working toward a plan. It can take a young person more than one visit to make this decision. She also noted that an increase in the spread of the COVID-19 virus limited the number of young people who could be served by the facility.

Chair Rice noted that the organization's goal was to serve 170 clients, while they have served 284 clients year-to-date. Ms. Suprien explained that the overall economy also has an impact of the number of clients Covenant House can serve. Chair Rice suggested that if discrepancies in the performance indicators occur again in the future, these circumstances be noted in the report as well as in the presentation.

- **Jack and Jill Children's Center**

Lauren Bernstein and Melissa St. John, representing Jack and Jill Children's Center, reported that the organization is an early education center focused on enabling children to grow physically, emotionally, and socially in a safe environment. They have an early education center and have added an elementary school so they can serve children from the ages of six weeks to fifth grade.

CDBG funding went toward the Promising Futures Empowerment Scholarships Fund, which is used as stopgap funding for students who are unable to obtain school readiness. Over the last two months, children have moved from this list more quickly than expected, so fewer children need these scholarships at present.

The third goal is for 85% of parents who attend a 10-week nurturing parenting series to show improvement and remain outside the at-risk range on positive parenting beliefs and expectations. Ms. Bernstein advised that this goal is currently at 50%. She added that the program has been granted funding in the next year, and more parents are on the waiting list and have the potential to earn scholarship funds.

Mr. Pierre asked how Jack and Jill plans to identify more families who could benefit from the program. Ms. Bernstein emphasized that providing this funding is a top priority for enrollment coordinators. In some cases, potential families are also receiving state funding and are moving from the waiting list more quickly than expected. She noted that this is an unusual occurrence for the organization. The goal is to serve 12 children in the next year.

- **Oasis of Hope Community Development Corporation**

Jacqueline Reed-Stills and Martha Toomer, representing Oasis of Hope Community Development Corporation (CDC), reported that this is a not-for-profit organization with the mission of assisting families with low to moderate incomes who are facing rental eviction, foreclosure, or need to be introduced to home ownership.

There is currently a housing crisis, as families are struggling to pay rental increases. Oasis of Hope has set the goal of assisting 100 renters, 50 homeowners, and 250 individuals and families seeking information about home ownership opportunities. They work with clients to help them become mortgage-ready, improve their credit, and revise their budgets. So far this year, they have assisted 346 families or individuals, 29 of whom have closed on homes, 36 of whom have avoided foreclosure, and 73 of whom have been provided with information to help them avoid eviction.

Ms. Toomer stated that Oasis of Hope is on track to reach its goals of 80% assistance for homeowners, 85% for renters, and 85% for home buyers. They are currently on track to serve 72% of homeowners, 73% of renters, and 84% of home buyers. Some CDBG funds have also been used to upgrade the organization's website and develop marketing materials and support staff salaries. Oasis of Hope's facility has reopened due to the decline in the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **South Florida Institute on Aging (SOFIA)**

Cresha Reid, representing the South Florida Institute on Aging (SOFIA), reported that this agency provides services to older adults and their families. With the CDBG funds, SOFIA has assembled 13 volunteers who provide support to 17 Fort Lauderdale

residents. Their goal was to provide these services to 35 individuals. While they have fallen short of this goal, they were able to serve an additional nine Fort Lauderdale residents with 21 volunteers, although these clients and volunteers do not fall within the specified area or did not feel comfortable providing documentation for the program, which prevents their inclusion in the outcomes.

SOFIA has spent 61% of the CDBG funding received thus far. This is due in part to the ongoing spread of COVID-19, as older adults are a vulnerable population and many did not feel comfortable participating in programs at the time. They now offer a hybrid model in which volunteers may serve either in person or via telecommunication services. New volunteers are recruited to ensure clients' needs are met.

Chair Rice requested more information on volunteer recruitment. Ms. Reid explained that partners go into the community to seek participants for the program. The minimum requirements for volunteers include:

- Aged 55 or older
- Income requirements for volunteers who will receive stipends
- Level II background check

SOFIA provides 20 hours of in-person or virtual training. Volunteers are also asked to shadow other volunteers before they are assigned to clients.

- **Broward Partnership for the Homeless**

Ryon Coote and Nick Green, representing Broward Partnership for the Homeless (BPH), reported that this organization has served the Broward community for over 50 years, helping 30,000 men, women, and children experiencing homelessness. They provide comprehensive services to homeless persons, including health and dental care, case management, workforce development, and other forms of assistance.

Mr. Coote advised that the CDBG funding is used toward essential services, including three meals per day and emergency services related to weather events. They also provide personal hygiene items for clients. Food and supply costs have increased by nearly 44% in recent months. The organization is slightly below its goal in providing bus passes to clients, although more than 100 clients have received them.

Mr. Coote advised that the agency is also serving fewer clients than anticipated: against a goal of 800, they have assisted 387. This is because higher housing costs have caused clients to stay with BPH for longer terms, as it is difficult to find housing units for clients. They are working closely with landlords to identify places where clients can live. They are still operating under a reduced census model and taking precautions to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Mr. Cius asked if there is a time limit on how long clients may stay with BPH. Mr. Coote replied that there is no such time frame: clients may stay as long as they need if they

are working toward their housing plan. The factors that prevent them from reaching this goal are usually outside a client's control.

- **HOMES, Inc.**

RaShani Boynton and Ronit Amir-Campos, representing HOMES, Inc., reported that by June 30, 2022, the organization had expenses totaling \$101,310 against their CDBG amount of \$125,000. This is 81% of the total grant. They expect to use the remaining funds by the end of August.

Ms. Boynton provided an update on program indicators, stating that 27 youth have completed the housing and intake process and have been housed during the current program year. 21 young people have attended vocational and secondary educational programming against a target of 16, and 25 are gainfully employed through internship and/or a full- or part-time position. 14 youth attend monthly program meetings. If they cannot attend meetings, notes and video are made available to them. Ms. Boynton shared some of the success stories of program graduates.

- **Delta Education and Life**

Ms. Dsouza advised that Delta Education and Life was not able to fulfill the CDBG program requirements and have forfeited their fiscal year (FY) 2021-2022 funding, which was \$21,344. This funding will come back to the City for redistribution.

Ms. Williams stated that two other organizations expressed interest in the CDBG program after the application cycle ended. Their applications were retained by Staff. If the Board wishes to consider redistributing the returned funds, these applications can be provided to the members. The two entities are Habitat for Humanity and Feeding South Florida, both of which have specific programs for which the funds would be used.

Chair Rice asked when the Board would need to make a decision on the returned funds. Ms. Williams recommended that this be considered further at the next meeting, so Staff would have time to put together requests from these applicants as well as any current agencies that may be short on funding.

V. NOMINATE / ELECT CSB VICE CHAIR

It was determined that this Item would be postponed until the next meeting.

VI. GOOD OF THE ORDER

None.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Williams stated that Fort Lauderdale has received Home Investment Partnership Program funds through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Over the next two months, the City will issue a request for proposal (RFP) for different types of services, ranging from non-congregate shelter development to supportive services, tenant-based rental vouchers, and nonprofit operations. She encouraged any agencies interested in applying these funds to visit the City's website and register with the appropriate entity so they will receive bid notification.

The total pool of funding is approximately \$2.5 million, which will be divided between the categories listed above. The nonprofit operations category will not go out for RFP, but will be awarded to the entities that are successful in the supportive services and tenant-based rental voucher categories.

Ms. Williams continued that a City board and committee workshop is scheduled for Thursday, August 11, 2022 at 6 p.m. Notice has been sent to all Board members. She strongly encouraged participation in this workshop either in person or via Zoom.

VIII. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Ms. Williams advised that Staff is in the process of gathering data to submit a request to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to change the Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) rent standard. She requested that this be placed on the next Agenda for further discussion. The process is long overdue in light of the increases in rent. The proposal would move away from HUD's fair market rent and instead provide a percentage of rent, which would make it easier for HOPWA clients to find housing more quickly.

Other items for the next Agenda included reallocation of returned CDBG funds, the Vice Chair position, and discussion of Board meeting dates for FY 2023.

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 5:00 p.m.

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