



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**APPROVED**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**City of Fort Lauderdale**  
**Community Services Board**  
**City Commission Chambers, City Hall**  
**November 14, 2022 – 4:00 P.M.**

<b>MEMBERS</b>		<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
Christi Rice, Chair	P	2	0
William J. Dunne, Vice Chair	A	2	1
Wismy Cius	A	7	1
Elizabeth Cupido	A	0	2
Gary Hensley	A	7	0
Sharon Hughes	A	1	1
Ronald Pierre	A	2	2

**Staff Present**

Eveline Dsouza, Administrative Supervisor, Housing and Community Development

Jason Adams, Administrative Assistant

Jamie Opperee, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

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

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

Chair Rice called the meeting to order at 4:13 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was not present.

[It was also noted that Mr. Dunne’s and Mr. Hensley’s absences from today’s meeting were excused.]

**II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS**

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Aug 8<sup>th</sup> and October 10<sup>th</sup> meetings, 2022**

In the absence of a quorum, minutes could not be approved at this time.

**IV. CDBG FY 21-22 PERFORMANCE OUTCOME PRESENTATION**

**2. Covenant House Florida**

Betsy Syrien, representing Covenant House Florida, stated that this organization provides emergency services to youth between the ages of 18 and 22. They offer food, clothing, and shelter, as well as an assessment process that takes approximately seven days.

Covenant House Florida has an on-site medical clinic, as well as parenting and education courses. These provide an opportunity for young people to enter a transitional living or rapid re-housing program. The independent living program offers workforce education and life skills so they can transition to independence.

Chair Rice commented that while the organization's goal was to serve 170 clients, they have actually served 340 clients over the past year.

Ms. Syrien advised that as of September 15, 2022, Covenant House experienced a service change, as there have been state regulation changes that required young people over the age of 18 seeking admission to undergo background screening. As a result, Covenant House exited its agreement with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) and no longer serves the unaccompanied minor population.

### **3. Jack & Jill Children's Center**

Lauren Bernstein, representing Jack and Jill Children's Center, reported that this organization serves children aged six weeks to fifth grade. They offer an early education center and an elementary school, as well as family and health programs. At present, the early education program serves 130 children, while the elementary school serves 119 children.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding has been used to support the Center's Promising Futures program. This has helped provide scholarship funding for children to attend programs without a financial barrier. At present, only one family is served with CDBG funds, as Step Up for Students funding is also used toward the Promising Futures program.

### **4. Oasis of Hope Community Development Corporation**

Martha Toomer, representing Oasis of Hope Community Development Corporation (CDC), stated that this organization has been in operation since 2009 and assists families with low to moderate incomes by helping them avoid eviction, foreclosure. They provide resources for families and individuals who hope to achieve affordable home ownership.

Oasis of Hope began with a goal to assist 400 families with CDBG funds, which they have reached and exceeded by assisting 432 families and individuals. They also hoped to assist 50 households in avoiding foreclosure by directing them to state homeowners' assistance funds or local resources, and have met this goal as well. A third goal was to assist 100 renters by providing funds toward past due, current, or future rent by directing them to a state assistance fund.

Another goal was assistance of 250 first-time home buyers. Oasis of Hope CDC is a developer that will build new homes in partnership with the City of Fort Lauderdale. They have met this goal as well, with families who are in the process of closing on their homes as well as families that have received pre-approvals.

#### **5. South Florida Institute on Aging (SoFIA)**

Cresha Reid, representing South Florida Institute on Aging (SoFIA), advised that this agency provides several different resources by having individuals aged 55 or older provide services to elderly or infirm individuals and respite to these individuals' caregivers. Their Senior Companion Program offers these services throughout Broward County both in person and through teleservice. Over 80 volunteers serve nearly 300 clients.

The City of Fort Lauderdale specifically supports 15 volunteers who serve 35 clients. Thus far in 2022, the program has supported 13 volunteers who serve 30 clients. The organization has exceeded its performance indicators in the areas of improving the home environment, sharing information with clients, and linking clients to community resources. They have fallen slightly short of meeting their goals in other areas, but can report that volunteers are able to live independently, caregivers report a reduction in stress levels, and clients feel satisfied because of their visits from companions.

SoFIA has not spent all of its funds in 2022 due to the impacts of COVID-19, and it has been difficult transitioning back to in-person visits. The organization anticipates seeing more volunteers go back to these visits in the future. Chair Rice acknowledged that the population served by SoFIA is more vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic and may be slower to return to an in-person model.

#### **6. Broward Partnership for the Homeless**

Ryon Coote, representing Broward Partnership for the Homeless, explained that this is the largest comprehensive provider of services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the Fort Lauderdale community. During their 23 years, they have served over 31,000 people by providing food, emergency shelter, and health care to help clients transition effectively to stable housing.

The primary purpose of the funds received by the Partnership was for the continued support of their 230-bed facility in Fort Lauderdale. These funds went toward food services, bus passes, hygiene products, and other necessities. The organization has surpassed most of its benchmarks but fell short of a few, having served 587 clients instead of the goal of 800. This is related to the current client population, who can be more difficult to place in housing due to the ongoing affordable housing crisis in the community.

The Partnership has provided 48.1% of their clients with bus passes against a goal of 50%. Mr. Coote noted that the current demographic served by the organization is less mobile. He was confident that these goals will be met and surpassed over the coming year.

Chair Rice asked how the difficulty of finding affordable housing has increased the average length of stay at the Partnership's facility. Mr. Coote replied that families remain for approximately 90 to 120 days, while individuals often stay for 60 to 80 days; however, at present, some clients remain for a year or more because they cannot afford housing in the current market, even with rental assistance. Clients are required to pay one-third of their housing costs.

Mr. Coote added that the Partnership is currently building its own housing, which will provide 72 units in a mixed-use property. 36 units will go to formerly homeless persons and the remaining 36 will provide affordable housing for the Fort Lauderdale community. He concluded, however, that the community is in need of significantly more affordable housing.

## **7. HOMES, Inc.**

RaShani Boynton, representing HOMES, Inc., stated that this organization provides a holistic approach to affordable housing and wraparound services for young adults between the ages of 18 and 24. 30 young people have completed the organization's intake process and have been housed at HOMES, Inc. 22 young people have attended vocational and secondary educational programming, 26 have acquired gainful employment, and 16 have attended monthly program meetings. Many of the youth served by HOMES, Inc. have expanded their education and entrepreneurial endeavors while exploring both vocational and traditional education.

## **V. HOPWA FY 21-22 PERFORMANCE OUTCOME PRESENTATION**

### **1. Broward Regional Health Planning Council, Inc.**

Sharon Alveranga-Jones, representing Broward Regional Health Planning Council (BRHPC), stated that the organization's team has worked to assist clients by preventing homelessness. The housing assistance program helped 237 unduplicated clients over the fiscal year (FY) lasting from October 2021 through September 2022. 321 applications were reviewed during this period.

BRHPC continues to refer its clients to financial literacy workshops so they can learn the importance of budgeting and money management skills. They also refer clients to Care Resource for job training so they can seek additional income. Tenant-based rental voucher (TBRV) clients have needed assistance securing apartments due to the cost of renting. An increase in funding to the agency has helped them to support these clients.

Since the increase in funding was announced, five clients who were struggling to find housing have been able to secure apartments and are in the final stages of processing. The organization has space to assist another 15 new clients.

## **2. Broward House, Inc.**

Alexandra Garrison and Tamika Weaver, representing Broward House, Inc., reported that the organization has been in place for over 30 years and assists individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Their facility-based housing program helps individuals who have had chronic substance abuse as well as chronic histories of homelessness and incarceration. They have served 130 clients through this program over the past year.

Ms. Garrison advised that inflation has had a serious effect on all clients. The facility-based housing program has had difficulty paying for day-to-day needs, including utilities. They hope to serve and sustain more clients through this program.

Ms. Weaver added that the project-based voucher program has served approximately 76 individuals throughout the fiscal year, which is slightly short of the organization's goal. Most of their Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) funding went toward ensuring their buildings are in good shape. The tenant-based voucher program has served 104 clients. A number of landlords have left this program because they could not receive the rental increase they wanted to see. The organization is working to identify landlords who are willing to accept vouchers toward housing units for HOPWA clients.

## **3. Mount Olive Development Corporation**

Dr. Rosalind Osgood, representing Mount Olive Development Corporation (MODCO), advised that the organization has met its goals and performance indicators for the year. They have maintained stability throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and work aggressively with their clients to ensure a transformational impact.

One issue that MODCO has faced is the challenge of inflation. Another is related to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations: when an organization owns its facility and offers project-based rental housing, they do not receive funds for rent. She strongly emphasized that providers should have the opportunity to address HUD directly about this need, as she felt they are being punished for owning their own facilities.

## **4. Care Resource**

Maria Perez, representing Care Resource, stated that this is a health center that has operated in the Fort Lauderdale community for over 25 years. It serves individuals with and without HIV/AIDS. Care Resource provides medical, dental, mental health, food, and pharmacy vouchers and services.

Care Resource's housing department offers rapid re-housing and permanent placement for HOPWA clients. They also provide bus passes and other services. They were awarded \$324,000 for the current fiscal year to serve 372 clients and have spent \$312,000 and served 591 clients.

Care Resource's goals included:

- Serving 80% of clients in meeting their initial housing plan goals by a target date
- Providing 80% of clients with assistance in completing a realistic monthly budget
- Providing 90% of clients with assistance in seeking employment by developing and reviewing job readiness with case managers and reporting job search activities
- Having 85% of discharged clients demonstrate improvement in a self-sufficiency matrix

Care Resource has helped 100% of their clients meet the above goals, exceeding their targets.

Issues and difficulties experienced during the past quarter include a lack of access to computers when trying to access online services. Another significant barrier is the lack of availability of rental properties in Broward County. Most clients have low incomes and credit scores and, in some cases, criminal backgrounds which affect their chances of approval. Some rental requirements ask tenants to demonstrate that their monthly income is two to three times their monthly rent value.

## **5. SunServe**

Tiffany Arieagus, representing SunServe, stated that this agency has served HOPWA clients through housing case management since 2013. At present, HOPWA case management revenue does not cover the entire cost of this program; however, the organization has made up this difference through private fundraising.

For the contractual year of October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022, SunServe has assisted 560 unduplicated clients through housing case management. This exceeded their goal of 502 unduplicated clients. They assisted 84 unduplicated clients with an authorized expenditure of \$144,938.34. All the funds allotted to the organization have been spent.

Ms. Arieagus noted that the affordable housing crisis has been exacerbated by the raising of rents by landlords. There has been a spike in homelessness among the senior community, as these clients were unable to work and earn money for additional rent. SunServe is working with Legal Aid Services, a partner agency, in trying to secure rental deposits for their clients. They are reaching out to landlords familiar with their programs in an effort to secure lower rents, and are building relationships with churches, other agencies, and landlords to find affordable units for senior citizens and other clients.

## **6. Legal Aid Service of Broward County, Inc.**

Edwin Cordova, representing Legal Aid Service of Broward County, Inc., reported that this organization has exceeded the number of clients they had expected to serve, opening 291 files and serving 181 unduplicated clients. Legal Aid collaborates with SunServe, Care Resource, and other agencies to help address clients' problems.

Mr. Cordova explained that when clients come to Legal Aid, it is because they are experiencing a problem, such as being behind on rent or facing eviction or foreclosure. Legal Aid tries to evaluate what clients need and address these issues. They also try to help clients with private funds when possible.

Mr. Cordova advised that while all HOPWA entities are trying to help as many clients as they can, 11% of Broward County residents, approximately 210,000 individuals, live below the poverty line. He emphasized the importance of a common effort to reach these clients and changing the way in which affordable housing is addressed.

### **VI. GOOD OF THE ORDER**

None.

### **VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

### **VIII. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA**

None.

### **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 5:08 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.]