



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

APPROVED
Meeting Minutes
City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
City Commission Chambers, City Hall
April 10, 2023 – 4:00 P.M.

MEMBERS		PRESENT	ABSENT
Christi Rice, Chair	P	7	0
William J. Dunne, Vice Chair	P	7	1
Wismy Cius	A	0	1
Christina Disbrow	A	1	1
Gary Hensley	P	11	1
Sharon Hughes (arr. 4:15)	P	4	2
Ronald Pierre	P	5	3
Amy Schimelfenyg	P	2	0

Staff Present

Rachel Williams, Housing and Community Development Manager
Eveline Dsouza, Administrative Supervisor, Housing and Community Development
Carla Blair, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to City Commission

Motion made by Vice Chair Dunne, seconded by Ms. Hughes, to take these recommendations that we just approved to the City Commission. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

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

- **Quorum Requirement – As of April 1, 2023, there are 8 appointed members to the Board, which means 5 constitutes a quorum**

Chair Rice called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m. Roll was called and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 13, 2023

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

IV. HOPWA UPDATE

Ms. Williams recalled that at the March 13, 2023 meeting, the Board had requested that Staff contact Mount Olive Development Corporation (MODCO) for additional information on the operating costs of their proposal. MODCO had proposed to acquire a building for use in the Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) program. Following this outreach, MODCO withdrew their request and have confirmed they are no longer interested in pursuing that proposal.

Chair Rice noted that this will mean there are remaining HOPWA funds yet to be allocated, and requested that this be discussed at the May 2023 meeting. Ms. Williams confirmed this would be on the May Agenda.

V. CDBG FY 23-24 GRANT APPLICATION PRESENTATION

Chair Rice explained that each agency will have three minutes to give a presentation on their request, followed by up to seven minutes for questions from the Board. It was clarified that none of the Board members had any conflicts with the presenting agencies.

1. Covenant House Florida

Betsy Syrien, Chief Program Officer for Covenant House Florida, stated that this agency serves young people between the ages of 18 to 22. Clients are typically seeking emergency services such as food, shelter, and clothing. Once they have come to Covenant House, their needs are further assessed. They may be linked to the agency's clinical services department, provided with educational and independent living services, and/or assisted through a housing program.

Most Covenant House clients' goals are to seek stability. Through a life skills program, they can receive workforce readiness training and educational services. The agency's on-site clinic includes a registered nurse who assesses the clients' medical needs and provides appropriate services and resources so they can access care.

The agency also has a transitional living and permanent rapid re-housing program, which teaches young people the "soft skills" they need in order to succeed in their own apartments. These apartments are located throughout Broward County. Staff conducts home visits and intensive case management with their clients.

Covenant House Florida is requesting a total of \$25,000, which will help support direct programming, salary costs, and additional support services. Ms. Syrien clarified that the agency also receives funding through small grants and other sources, such as their contract with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). They also receive funding from private donors.

2. Oasis of Hope CDC

Martha Toomer, Director of Housing Programs for Oasis of Hope Community Development Corporation (CDC), showed a brief video on the agency's nonprofit housing programs, which connect residents to relevant housing resources and educational support. They assist families with low to moderate incomes who hope to achieve home ownership, are facing eviction, or hope to prevent foreclosure.

The agency's goal is to assist 133 renters, future home buyers, and/or homeowners who are facing foreclosure. Ms. Toomer described examples of the assistance Oasis of Hope has provided, noting that some clients are referred to the program by landlords, while others learn of the agency through social media or word of mouth. Their goal is to provide families with hope as well as help by providing free counseling services, sharing ways to budget, and spreading awareness that grants exist which can help clients achieve the goal of home ownership.

As rents continue to increase every year, Ms. Toomer emphasized that Oasis of Hope wants residents of Broward County to know there are options available to them. Oasis of Hope works with clients on qualification for assistance and how to transition from renting to home ownership.

Ms. Hughes asked how many of the agency's clients are from Fort Lauderdale. Ms. Toomer replied that they are currently looking to assist 400 families with low to moderate incomes. The entire funding request would be used to assist clients from Fort Lauderdale.

Ms. Hughes also asked what qualifications must be met by applicants to Oasis of Hope. Ms. Toomer replied that they must be Fort Lauderdale residents. The program offers free monthly home buyer education workshops. They also provide confidential one-on-one counseling on what families may do to meet the challenges they are facing. Their offices are open to the public and free of charge.

Vice Chair Dunne noted that the agency's fiscal year (FY) 2022-2023 goal was to serve 195 clients, and they are on track to meet this goal. Ms. Toomer advised that in 2022-2023, the agency reduced the amount of its request as well as its goal, as funds were limited.

Chair Rice observed that the application's performance indicators could be strengthened to show the number of clients and their results.

3. Women in Distress of Broward County

Susan Evans, Grants Manager for Women in Distress of Broward County, stated that this agency has served Fort Lauderdale residents experiencing domestic violence abuse for 48 years. This abuse represents a serious public health problem. Women in Distress of Broward County provided over 45,000 shelter nights in FY 2022, which was a significant increase over the previous year. Fort Lauderdale residents accounted for

27% of those shelter nights. In the first quarter of FY 2023, Women in Distress has provided 444 shelter nights.

Women in Distress is a state-certified and nationally accredited program. They are requesting \$50,000 to help subsidize the ongoing costs of providing emergency shelter and support services. They hope to serve a minimum of 50 residents and provide a minimum of 500 nights of safe shelter and 200 hours of advocacy. Advocates are assigned to domestic violence victims and their children when they arrive at the shelter and provide safety planning, lethality assessments, basic needs assessment, and case management. They educate clients on services that are available and connect them to these services, both within the organization and throughout the community.

Ms. Evans confirmed that the bulk of the grant would go toward salaries and benefits for staff in the agency's emergency shelter, as well as \$1100 in financial assistance that could be used toward helping clients move from the shelter into safe transitional or permanent housing. The remaining funds would go toward other costs of operating the shelter, such as staff recruitment. She emphasized the importance of maintaining a minimum required number of qualified staff. The request represents less than 3% of the approximately \$1.9 million necessary to operate the shelter.

4. Broward House Inc.

Matt Patterson, representing Broward House, Inc., provided an update on the agency's proposal, stating that they have received funding from the Community Foundation of Broward to build an outdoor fitness park at their assisted living facility. This will allow the agency to standardize and institutionalize physical fitness and education as part of their curriculum for individuals living in the transitional housing facility.

Broward House's clientele consists of individuals living with HIV/AIDS and earning low incomes who do not have insurance. Mr. Patterson characterized the agency as a mental and behavioral health services provider, and emphasized the importance of physical intervention in relieving symptoms of stress, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Mr. Patterson noted that the agency's existing fitness equipment is well-used and has been worn down.

The equipment Broward House proposes to purchase is intended to increase the perceived value of physical fitness among its clientele. The agency will create a manual for their program which can be shared with other providers. They will also conduct research by seeking feedback from clients.

Mr. Pierre asked what percentage of the funds requested would go toward the equipment. Mr. Patterson replied that the equipment has been paid for by the Community Foundation of Broward: the funding would go toward its installation and the development of the program. Most of the grant funds would directly reach the agency's beneficiaries.

5. Feeding South Florida

Hillary Gale, Director of Client Services for Feeding South Florida, explained that this agency is the largest domestic hunger relief organization in South Florida, serving 25% of the entire state's food-insecure population. There are over 210,000 food-insecure individuals served in Broward County alone.

The agency's proposal would be in partnership with Fort Lauderdale's Community Court Program, which provides an option for individuals who have committed misdemeanor crimes to move out of the criminal system, address homelessness, and access social services. Feeding South Florida believes they can make a significant impact on this population by providing access to food for these individuals. This provides a point of entry into the agency's programming for the clients. They can then access other programs such as job training, home delivery, and wraparound services that focus on housing, education, and legal issues. The goal is to build a foundation for these clients so they do not end up back in the court system.

Ms. Gale emphasized the possibility that this partnership and program can become a model that can be replicated across other communities and municipalities served by Feeding South Florida. They hope to serve 1560 Community Court Program clients, which comes to roughly 30 clients per week. The program would provide approximately 7800 "grab-and-go" meals throughout the year. The meals would be dietarily and culturally appropriate for the needs of the individual clients.

Mr. Hensley requested additional information on the meals to be provided. Ms. Gale replied that the meals would be perishable and could be consumed on-site or as the client leaves community court. She reiterated that the program is intended to be a point of entry for other programming: clients who are homeless can be connected to shelters, soup kitchens, and other partner organizations who provide ongoing access to food. The agency also partners with the Task Force for Ending Homelessness, which provides opportunities for grocery boxes to be delivered to temporary and/or rapid re-housing programs.

Ms. Hughes asked if there is an age limit on clients served through community court, noting that much of the homeless population in Fort Lauderdale is between the ages of 18 and 35. Ms. Gale replied that the program has no age restrictions. She stated that the program can provide a referral pathway for clients, or can provide an on-site cooler or freezer for meals in addition to the option of intake for services.

Mr. Pierre asked what other sectors might be able to replicate this program. Ms. Gale stated that the city of Pompano Beach recently implemented a community court program. Feeding South Florida has also worked closely with other South Florida municipalities to take a localized approach to the agency's work.

Chair Rice asked if any members of Feeding South Florida's staff have experience with the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and its funding. Ms. Gale confirmed that the agency has received CDBG funding in the past, although not through the city of Fort Lauderdale.

Vice Chair Dunne observed that roughly 40% of the requested funding would go toward payment of personnel. Ms. Gale explained that most of the funding would go toward food costs: the costs associated with personnel, including cooks and drivers, are built into the costs of the meals.

6. HOMES, Inc.

Linda Taylor, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Housing Opportunities, Mortgage Assistance and Neighborhood Solutions (HOMES), Inc., stated that the agency provides self-sufficiency training on a two-acre campus. Their goal is to provide young people with safe and affordable places to live as well as the opportunity to work. They teach life skills so clients can care for themselves upon leaving the program. Clients can remain in the program from ages 18 through 25. Some of the young people participating in the program have small children.

The agency seeks to assist clients through employability and career goal planning. Ms. Taylor noted that housing costs in Broward County have risen by 32%, which makes it difficult to afford rental housing or mortgage payments. Clients of HOMES, Inc. pay \$300 to \$400 in rent each month and earn between \$13 and \$15 per hour in paid internship programs. The program has experienced a success rate of over 90%.

The agency's request of \$125,000 represents 5% of the program budget. Over the last 12 months, 27 young adults have lived at HOMES, Inc. All of these clients attended mandatory life skills training each month and are assigned a life coach.

Ms. Hughes requested clarification of the type of life skills and goal planning clients receive. Ms. Taylor explained that this planning begins with very basic skills. All clients must go to school, and all clients must work. The agency has apprenticeship programs with local organizations. Once a client has been assessed to determine their interests, they inform staff of what they would like to do and are matched with training and/or employment that meets those interests. They also offer college scholarships.

Ms. Hughes asked how clients are referred to HOMES, Inc. Ms. Taylor replied that the agency establishes a continuum of care through partnerships with agencies, such as hospitals and Broward County Schools, which provide most clients with case management services before their 18th birthday so they will know where they are going. They are open to all homeless young people, not only those aging out of foster or relative care.

Ms. Hughes asked what is required of clients coming into the program. Ms. Taylor replied that clients do not have to have anything, such as identification or birth certificates, in order to be assisted. They must be 18 years old. A client who is under 18 may only live on the agency's campus if they live with a sibling who is over 18.

Ms. Hughes asked if there are safeguards in place to ensure new clients do not come into the program with substance abuse issues. Ms. Taylor stated that not all clients can be housed on campus: they may be placed briefly in a hotel until they are assessed and an appropriate setting is found for them. The program is not an appropriate site for clients living with severe mental illness, as its focus is on independent living. There are more than 25 partner providers who can assist clients who cannot be served by HOMES, Inc.

Ms. Hughes asked if there are members of HOMES, Inc.'s staff who assist clients in learning self-sufficiency skills such as buying groceries and paying bills. Ms. Taylor confirmed this, reiterating that every client receives a life coach who assists them with keeping doctors' appointments, filling out applications for assistance, and instructing them on other skills. There is also a housing director on-site, as well as a full team focused on housing and rapid re-housing programs, administrative staff, and case managers.

VI. BOARD REVIEW FINAL SCORES AND RECOMMEND ALLOCATION

Ms. Williams explained that the Board is asked to allocate funding in two CDBG categories: Public Services and Community-Based Development Organizations (CBDOs). Only HOMES, Inc. has applied for CBDO funding, as this category requires a certification process and the agency must be located within a neighborhood revitalization strategy area.

1. CDBG FY 23-24 Grant Application Allocation Process

City Staff to assist the Board with:

- **Budget & Expenditure of prior year**

Ms. Williams continued that the Board members' scores submitted after application review would be posted. The members will have the opportunity to adjust their scores as they feel necessary. The agencies will then be ranked according to score and the Board may make funding allocation decisions.

Ms. Williams continued that \$196,207.95 is available for allocation in the Public Services category. There is a standing requirement of fair housing activity, for which the City contracts with Hope Fair Housing. The City has not yet received a formal letter stating its total allocation. She emphasized that the available dollars are a starting point

and would require adjustment if more or fewer funds are provided by HUD. The adjustment can be made by Staff or by the Board.

Chair Rice asked if a Board member who has not submitted their scores ahead of time would be permitted to vote at tonight's meeting. Ms. Williams confirmed that the member may participate in the discussion and vote as long as there is no conflict of interest. In addition, the scores submitted by a Board member who was not present at tonight's meeting would be included in the total.

Chair Rice made the following changes to her scores:

- Oasis of Hope: change to 87
- Feeding South Florida: change to 90

Mr. Hensley made the following changes to his scores:

- Oasis of Hope: change to 89
- Feeding South Florida: change to 92
- HOMES, Inc.: change to 94

Mr. Pierre made the following changes to his scores:

- Oasis of Hope: change to 93

There were no other changes to the members' scores.

- **FY 23-24 Applicants Final Score**

Ms. Dsouza reviewed the final ranking of the agencies, noting that Hope Fair Housing has already been allocated their funding. With this allocation used, there is still \$196,207.95 remaining.

- **Requested funds by each applicant**

It was noted that the total CDBG allocation would fall \$3792 short of being able to fully fund all the agencies.

- **Total available funds for allocation**

The Board members discussed their options in funding the agencies, with Mr. Hensley suggesting that the \$3792 deficit could be deducted from the lowest-ranked agency. Chair Rice stated that this was one possibility, but pointed out that not all agencies made the same funding requests: some are significantly higher than others, and changing these allocations could also be considered.

Motion made by Mr. Hensley that we fully fund numbers one through four and then we deduct the \$3792.05 from number five.

Ms. Dsouza noted that this would mean the lowest-ranked agency would receive an allocation of \$21,207.95.

Mr. Pierre asked if HOMES, Inc. is included in the allocation of funding in the Public Services category. Ms. Dsouza explained that HOMES, Inc. has requested \$125,000 and is not included under Public Services. There is \$125,000 available in the CBDO category.

Ms. Hughes suggested that another option would be to fund Oasis of Hope for their full amount requested and take the \$3792.05 from Broward House, which had received funding from the Community Foundation of Broward. It was also proposed that the \$3792.05 shortage could be divided among the five agencies and deducted from all the requests. Chair Rice stated that she felt the latter suggestion was a good solution.

[The **motion** died for lack of second.]

Motion made by Mr. Hensley, seconded by Ms. Hughes, to take the \$3700, divide it by five, and take the amount off of each of the program applicants. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Motion made by Mr. Hensley, seconded by Ms. Hughes, to fund HOMES, Inc. \$125,000. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Motion made by Vice Chair Dunne, seconded by Ms. Hughes, to take these recommendations that we just approved to the City Commission. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Chair Rice thanked all the CDBG applicants for their presentations.

VII. GOOD OF THE ORDER

It was noted that there was no need to meet on Tuesday, April 11, 2023 for further discussion of funding allocations.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Joshuawa Brown, representing Step Up, a community advocacy organization in Fort Lauderdale's 33311 and 33312 ZIP codes, requested information on how smaller grassroots or "mom-and-pop" organizations can find information about and apply for various types of funding. He explained that these agencies serve a vital role in the community and have clients who need their advocacy and services.

Chair Rice emphasized that smaller organizations can apply for CDBG funding, and noted that the CDBG application process follows the same timeline each year. She also

encouraged grassroots organizations to consider different funding sources as well, such as the Community Foundation of Broward.

Ms. Williams recalled that the Community Services Board has always sought to include grassroots organizations in their funding processes, and encouraged these groups to participate. While Step Up may not have sufficient experience to successfully apply for the CDBG program, she suggested that Mr. Brown put together a proposal in case there are any forfeited funds from other agencies. The minimum award that can be made in the Public Services category is \$5000.

Chair Rice further explained that the CDBG process includes stringent reporting requirements, which can make it difficult for some smaller agencies. She agreed that the Board may be able to consider a proposal for a small amount.

Ms. Taylor, representing HOMES, Inc., offered to mentor Mr. Brown through this process. She noted that he was recently recognized by City Commission Proclamation for his work in the community.

Jacqueline Reed-Stills, representing Oasis of Hope, thanked the Board for the opportunity to receive CDBG funding.

Motion made by Chair Rice, seconded by Ms. Hughes, that [Mr. Brown] can bring a proposal to us. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

IX. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

It was determined that the proposal for Step Up would be brought forward at the May 2023 meeting.

Ms. Williams noted that agencies would provide performance reports at the next meeting as well.

Ms. Dsouza advised that Broward House wished to provide a presentation on the services they provide in addition to HOPWA. There would also be an opportunity for clients of their programs to provide testimonials. She encouraged other agencies interested in providing similar presentations and testimonials to contact Staff and discuss a timeline.

X. COMMUNICATIONS TO CITY COMMISSION

Chair Rice noted that this was made as part of the CDBG funding allocation discussion.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

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There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:26 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.]