



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

APPROVED
Meeting Minutes
City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
Fire Station 2 – 528 NW 2nd Street, 3rd Floor
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33311
May 8, 2023 – 4:00 P.M.

<u>MEMBERS</u>		<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Christi Rice, Chair	A	7	1
William J. Dunne, Vice Chair	P	8	1
Wismy Cius	P	1	1
Christina Disbrow	A	1	2
Gary Hensley	P	1	0
Sharon Hughes	P	5	2
Ronald Pierre	P	6	3
Amy Schimelfenyg	P	3	0

Staff Present

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

Communications to City Commission

None.

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

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

Vice Chair Dunne called the meeting to order at 4:12 p.m. Roll was called and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 10, 2023

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

IV. CDBG AVAILABLE FUND REQUEST – Step Up Inc & Oasis of Hope

Vice Chair Dunne noted that two organizations, Step Up Inc. and Oasis of Hope, have requested surplus Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds.

Joshauwa Brown, representing Step Up Inc., explained that this organization offers Second Chance, a community mentoring program for young people who have been expelled from schools. He is seeking \$17,000 in CDBG funds to build this organization. The first group to be served by this program will include 10 high school students. Step Up will work with athletic coaches, guidance counselors, and school administrators to select at-risk youth for the program.

Mr. Brown continued that he is the community liaison for the program, which is seeking to identify more mentors to work with students on an individual basis. Second Chance will work with schools to return students who have been expelled.

Mr. Pierre asked if the Second Chance program will focus on young men only. Mr. Brown replied that the program hopes to ensure young men are prepared to serve as productive citizens in their community.

Ms. Schimelfenyg asked how the success of the program will be measured. Mr. Brown explained that he is working with a company that will provide assessments of students in the program in order to measure its success rate.

Mr. Cius asked for more information on Step Up's relationship with the area schools it would serve. Mr. Brown stated that Step Up occupies a leadership role in the community and hopes to raise awareness through this program and other initiatives. He will also work with the Department of Juvenile Justice to identify prospective participants.

Vice Chair Dunne asked if mentors have already been identified for the program. Mr. Brown replied that these will be citizens who have overcome their own challenges to achieve success in the community.

Vice Chair Dunne asked if there will be any financial compensation for the mentors. Mr. Brown replied that mentors will receive a stipend for their commitment. They will be assigned to students who are experiencing challenges similar to what the mentors have experienced in the past. The intent is to remove any stigma from students who have been expelled from their schools.

Martha Toomer, representing Oasis of Hope Community Development Corporation (CDC), showed a PowerPoint presentation on the request, explaining that the organization assists future home buyers who want to transition from renting to home ownership. They also offer services to households facing eviction or seeking affordable rental units, and provide first-time home buyer workshops.

Oasis of Hope is requesting additional funds so they can bring on another full-time employee, as they receive over 100 calls per day and have only a part-time intake specialist. She added that many clients served by the organization's programs may

not be aware of the full range of opportunities available, such as the reduction of interest rates. The program works with lenders and other partners to make home ownership affordable for their clients.

Vice Chair Dunne requested clarification of the amount of funding sought by Oasis of Hope. Ms. Toomer stated that they are asking for \$17,000, part of which would be used toward the salary of a full-time intake specialist and part of which would be used toward administrative costs, including project supplies and rental of office space.

Vice Chair Dunne asked how much funding Oasis of Hope has already received through the CDBG program. Ms. Toomer replied that they were awarded \$12,226 for the year and hope to increase this to \$29,845 with the addition of the funds requested today.

The Board discussed the presentations, with Ms. Hughes suggesting that the available \$17,000 could be divided between the two applicants. It was noted that Oasis of Hope has already received funding: at the April 2023 meeting, they requested \$25,000, but these funds will not be available until the next fiscal year in October. The funding available for allocation comes from unused fiscal year (FY) 2021-2022 dollars.

Motion made by Ms. Schimelfenyg, seconded by Mr. Cius, to give the \$17,000 to Step Up.

The Board members discussed the funding further, requesting clarification that the two agencies would be able to use a lesser amount of funding than the \$17,000 requested. Jacqueline Reed-Stills, President and CEO Oasis of Hope CDC, recalled that the agency's funding was cut the previous year and had previously requested additional funds. She pointed out that Oasis of Hope administers an existing program on which work is already being done in the community.

Ms. Reed-Stills continued that adding the requested funding would help Oasis of Hope to reach more participants. She concluded that they were willing to accept a portion of the \$17,000.

Mr. Brown of Step Up indicated that he was willing to accept a lesser amount as well, emphasizing that he is seeking to build the infrastructure necessary to help the Second Chance program succeed.

Ms. Hughes commented that she saw the need for both programs to serve the community, as there are families seeking housing as well as young people who may need a second chance at completing their education.

Ms. Dsouza clarified that the \$25,000 allocated to Oasis of Hope at the April 2023 meeting will not go to the agency until October 2023, when the new fiscal year begins. Any funds allocated today will go to the agency prior to that date. Step Up would require a new contract, as they have not previously received CDBG funding.

Mr. Cius **withdrew** his **second** of the **motion**, stating that he was in agreement with the proposal to divide the funds evenly between the two agencies. The **motion** died for lack of second.

Motion made by Mr. Cius, seconded by Ms. Hughes, to split 50/50 between Step Up and Oasis of Hope. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed 5-1 (Vice Chair Dunne dissenting).

It was noted that this would mean \$8500 would go to each organization.

V. CDBG PROVIDER PRESENTATION

Ms. Toomer, representing Oasis of Hope CDC, stated that from October 2022 through March 2023, the organization has assisted 198 clients. From January 2022 through December 2022, they assisted 910 clients, including families hoping to prevent foreclosure or eviction. She also showed a client testimonial video, concluding that the organization hopes to help families overcome financial challenges and reach stability.

Nick Green, representing the Broward Partnership for the Homeless, advised that this organization is the largest homeless service provider in Broward County. Their new Central Homelessness Assistance Center in Fort Lauderdale has 230 beds. The Partnership also operates 167 units of permanent supportive housing at different sites throughout Broward County. They have two outreach programs which help homeless individuals who are unsheltered, and a medical outreach program will begin on July 1, 2023, providing basic medical care. They also have a behavioral health program that works with the unsheltered population to address substance abuse and behavioral health issues.

Mr. Green stated that the Broward Partnership for the Homeless offers different types of motivational techniques to help their clients, including medical and family finance services, child care, job training and placement, and connections with other service providers. They seek to help clients overcome any obstacles that are preventing them from stable housing.

The Broward Partnership received \$48,105 in CDBG funding for FY 2022-2023. This funding assists with the purchase of bus passes that provide clients with transportation to and from their homes or shelters, medical appointments, or job interviews. The funds also help provide services at the Center, including food and supplies.

The Broward Partnership is on pace to meet its goals, as they have served 337 clients to date. They are at a 93% success rate in helping clients meet at least one case plan goal. The additional performance indicators, which address helping at least 15% of clients maintain shelter and 15% enter stable housing, are currently at 50% and 25% respectively, as it is extremely difficult to reach these goals due to the ongoing affordable housing crisis.

Susan Graves, representing Women in Distress of Broward County, advised that this organization serves Fort Lauderdale and other Broward County residents in need of domestic violence services. Their shelter is specifically designed to serve women and children fleeing domestic violence abuse, and is one of 41 centers certified by the Office of Domestic Violence through Florida's Department of Children and Families. They offer temporary emergency shelter, advocacy, and crisis intervention services to provide victims with the resources they need to live safely and free of violence.

At the minimum, a certified center must provide:

- A 24-hour crisis hotline
- Temporary emergency shelter
- Individualized safety planning
- Informational referrals, including counseling and case management services
- Non-residential outreach services
- Training for law enforcement personnel
- Needs assessments and referrals for children at residential shelters
- Educational services to the community

In addition to these services, Women in Distress also provides an on-site pet shelter, which is 100% funded and can accommodate up to 10 cats or dogs. These services are provided in partnership with the Humane Society of Broward County, and was the first partnership of its kind between a local humane society and a domestic violence center in the United States.

Women in Distress also provides legal counsel and representation to domestic violence victims who are interested in filing an injunction for protection or a restraining order. They have seven full-time attorneys who focus on these issues, and work with other legal aid providers for other services. They also offer a full range of therapeutic services for children, adults, families, and groups, and are in the process of beginning to provide basic health care screenings on-site.

Nelson Bogren, representing Covenant House Florida, stated that this is a private nonprofit organization which provides support services to youth experiencing homelessness in South Florida. Their service population includes homeless youth between the ages of 18 and 22, including mothers with children. They also serve ages 18-24 through transitional living and rapid re-housing programs.

Covenant House's Fort Lauderdale site provides shelter services, as well as community-based and outreach programs. They have an open intake process for the shelter, which means referrals or applications are not required. They provide scattered-site transitional living as well as rapid re-housing throughout Broward County, as well as on-site health clinics and a behavioral health team. They also operate a licensed Level II residential substance abuse treatment program, as well as an educational and skill-building department that provides on-site GED preparation, independent living and life skills instruction, employment readiness, workforce development, and a parenting education program.

Covenant House has requested \$25,000 to support its emergency shelter program, which provides safe housing to 200 youth aged 18 to 22 who are experiencing homelessness from the City of Fort Lauderdale. Funding also supports a portion of the independent living coordinator's salary and emergency shelter operational costs, including supplies.

Guy Kempe, representing Housing Opportunities, Mortgage Assistance and Neighborhood Solutions (HOMES), Inc., played two video testimonials from the organization's clients.

Sandra Tobon, representing Consolidated Credit, stated that this organization assists clients with housing and financial costs through credit counseling, debt management services, and housing counseling. They have provided services to the community for more than 30 years.

Consolidated Credit provides seminars, workshops, webinars, and educational videos for free financial education, as well as one-on-one financial counseling. They offer first-time home buyer education, including monthly online sessions, in-person workshops, and free one-on-one counseling based upon the client's needs.

Ms. Tobon emphasized that Consolidated Credit will participate in a housing summit scheduled for Saturday, May 20, 2023, in partnership with Nova Southeastern University. The summit will share information about down payment assistance, home ownership insurance, credit, and renting, and will be open to the public and will last from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Consolidated Credit offers personal financial coaching, including goal-setting, an action plan, and credit improvement.

VI. HOPWA PROVIDER PRESENTATION

Sharon Alveranga-Jones, representing Broward Regional Health Planning Council (BRHPC), introduced BRHPC client Vernon McDonald, who provided a testimonial on the services provided through the organization using Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) funding.

Ms. Alveranga-Jones stated that BRHPC provides direct services through partnership with Healthy Family Broward and Nurse-Family Partnership Broward. These help to increase families' self-sufficiency by improving parents' communication and support. They offer centralized intake for clients, which is a core function of the agency, and provide information and referrals to clients seeking medical and supportive services. BRHPC provides health insurance co-pays for clients with HIV/AIDS.

Stacy Hyde, representing Broward House, introduced Matt Patterson, who is currently the Director of Contract Management for the organization and is also a former client. He provided a testimonial on how Broward House had helped him as a client.

Ms. Hyde stated that Broward House allows clients a place to be safe and develop structure, noting that in addition to housing, they provide services such as case management. They use other funding sources, including federal, state, and community dollars, which are combined to ensure that clients can get everything they need in a single location. They also provide substance abuse and mental health services, and allow clients a space in which they can openly talk about living with HIV/AIDS.

Broward House also offers prevention and testing, including over 3000 tests per year. Ms. Hyde noted that their assisted living facility was affected by the recent flooding and is undergoing construction at present, which required clients to be moved to a different location. She estimated that they are approximately three months from returning to the assisted living facility, behavioral health center, and administrative offices

Maryfer Lacruz, representing Careresource, introduced client Rolando Morales, who provided a testimonial on the organization's services. Ms. Lacruz added that Careresource offers many services in addition to housing, with offices located in four South Florida municipalities, including Fort Lauderdale. Their mission is to improve the health and quality of life for their clients. They provide medical services including vision, immunization, medication, mental health services, and preventive services.

Soloman Williams, representing Mount Olive Development Corporation (MODCO), stated that this organization is the community arm of the historic Mount Olive Baptist Church. They provide services for clients who are HIV/AIDS positive, including housing, as well as property management. MODCO helps its clients transition to a more stable life through a 36-month case management program. Mr. Williams also provided testimony from his own experience as a MODCO client. He concluded that he is now in a position to help others in need.

Brenda Rentas, representing SunServe, introduced a client who provided a testimonial for the organization. Ms. Rentas explained that SunServe provides more

than rental and moving assistance: they also assist clients in finding other resources they need, even if they are not eligible for HOPWA.

Alex Spriggs, also representing SunServe, reviewed the organization's core programming, which includes group therapy, mental health and substance abuse assistance, and services for transgender clients.

Edwin Cordova, representing Legal Aid Service of Broward, stated that this organization focuses on clients' rights, including landlord/tenant issues, housing quality, and housing conditions.

Vice Chair Dunne thanked the agency representatives for their attendance, and clients for sharing their experiences.

VII. HOPWA FY23-24 FUNDING

This Item was deferred to the next meeting.

VIII. GOOD OF THE ORDER

None.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

X. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Ms. Dsouza advised that HOPWA funding for FY 2023-2024 will be discussed at the next meeting. She also noted that Board Chair Christi Rice will not be able to attend the next two meetings.

XI. COMMUNICATIONS TO CITY COMMISSION

None.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

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