



**APPROVED**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**City of Fort Lauderdale**  
**Community Services Board**  
**Department of Sustainable Development**  
**700 NW 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33311**  
**September 11, 2023 – 4:00 P.M.**

<u>MEMBERS</u>		<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Christi Rice, Chair	A	0	1
William J. Dunne, Vice Chair	P	9	2
Wismy Cius (arr. 4:34 via Zoom)	P	6	2
Latrisha Greaves	P	1	0
Gary Hensley	P	5	0
Sharon Hughes	P	1	0
Ronald Pierre	A	2	1
Amy Schimelfenyg	P	6	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**

None.

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

- **Quorum Requirement – As of September 1, 2023, there are 7 appointed members to the Board, which means 4 constitutes a quorum**

Vice Chair Dunne called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m. He noted that the quorum requirement as reflected on the Agenda has changed, as there are now eight Board members. This means five rather than four members will constitute a quorum.

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

New Board member Latrisha Greaves introduced herself at this time, and roll was called.

### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 14, 2023**

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

### **IV. CDBG FY 23-24 GRANT PERFORMANCE PRESENTATION**

- **Broward Partnership for the Homeless**

Nick Green, representing Broward Partnership for the Homeless, stated that the organization's grant runs from October 1, 2022 until September 30, 2023. The Partnership has received a total of \$48,105 toward its emergency food and shelter program, which supports the continued operation of the 230-bed Homeless Assistance Center in Fort Lauderdale. Funds are used toward the purchase of food and the provision of bus passes for adult clients who are seeking employment or attending other medical or legal appointments. Funds also go toward shelter supplies.

The Partnership's goal is to serve 700 clients using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. At present, they have served 504 clients and expect to serve 600 by the end of the grant. This shortfall is due to renovations, which has caused the Homeless Assistance Center to lower its census. Mr. Green estimated that \$28,000 is spent on food, \$10,000 for other shelter supplies, and \$10,000 for transportation.

The indicators used to measure the Partnership's success include:

- At least 80% of clients will achieve at least one case management goal: at present, 90% of clients have met this indicator
- 15% of unduplicated clients exiting the program will do so to enter stable housing: 25% of clients have met this goal
- At least 15% of Fort Lauderdale participants will receive a bus pass
- At least 15% of clients will maintain or increase their total income; 75% of clients have met this goal

Vice Chair Dunne asked if the Partnership has not served its goal of 700 clients because the CDBG funds it received were not adequate to cover expenses for that many clients. Mr. Green replied that food expenses have increased by approximately 35%; in addition, the Partnership did not have to pay for bus passes in the past.

- **Covenant House Florida**

Nelson Bogren, representing Covenant House Florida, explained that this organization's mission is to serve youth under the age of 22 who are experiencing homelessness. Their key services include providing safe shelter and supportive services for their clients. The CDBG funds are used to help with Fort Lauderdale

shelter operations, including a portion of the Independent Living Coordinator's salary. The Independent Living Program assists with educational credentialing, obtaining and maintaining employment skills, and working toward independent and stable housing.

Covenant House's indicators include:

- 80% of youth who enter their shelter completing the assessment phase within seven to twelve days: 63% of clients have met this goal
- 85% of clients obtain self-determination by completing some of the objectives on individualized treatment plans, which are developed following the assessment phase: 100% of clients have met this goal
- 45% of clients leave the shelter for stable housing: 21% of clients have met this goal thus far

Mr. Bogren advised that Covenant House Florida has experienced staffing issues throughout the grant period, which has affected the organization's ability to assess their clients as quickly as they would like to do. They have implemented changes to streamline the assessment process and expect to see progress due to these changes within the fourth quarter of the grant period. He emphasized the importance of the second indicator, pointing out that if youth can complete an individualized treatment plan, they are more likely to make progress toward the plan's goals.

Mr. Bogren addressed the third indicator as well, pointing out that during the third quarter, a high number of clients left the shelter without telling Covenant House where they were going. These exits cannot be counted as either a positive or negative outcome. The organization is considering procedural changes in order to maintain contact with clients after they leave the facility. He emphasized that Covenant House is a voluntary program, and clients can leave when they feel ready to do so.

Mr. Bogren continued that Covenant House Florida's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30, which differs slightly from the CDBG grant timeline. By the end of their fiscal year on June 30, 2023, 95 young people were enrolled in on-site educational programs, which led to a total of 210 clients being enrolled in some form of school. 143 youth were enrolled in on-site employment readiness and training, which led to 137 clients obtaining employment. Clients made over 1000 visits to the organization's on-site medical clinic, and 229 youth engaged with mental health services. 40 mothers with 56 children were enrolled in the parenting education and support program. 56 youth were placed in Covenant House's transitional living and rapid re-housing programs.

Mr. Bogren concluded that while Covenant House may fall slightly short of its goals in some areas, they feel they will achieve the desired outcomes by the end of the year.

Ms. Greaves requested additional information on the changes implemented by Covenant House in light of their staffing issues. Mr. Bogren replied that while the organization has used the same assessment process for approximately 10 years, they have determined that this process should be streamlined, with duplicative information removed and a digital rather than a written process implemented. The number of assessments that need to be completed in order to move forward with plan development has also been reduced. Covenant House has seen positive trends since making these changes.

- **Habitat for Humanity of Broward, Inc.**

Thor Barraclough, representing Habitat for Humanity of Broward, Inc., stated that the organization recently broke ground on the project funded with CDBG dollars. He showed a brief video on this project, known as BBI Village, which provides a path to affordable home ownership.

Mr. Barraclough advised that Habitat's outcomes focused on increasing awareness of its home ownership program, educating prospective participants on how they could qualify for it, and developing a strategy for homeowners. Roughly 34,000 members of the community visited Habitat's website seeking pre-application information. Of the 13,000 pre-applications submitted, over 3000 passed the first stage, and approximately 1500 individuals attended a workshop on preparing for home ownership. 724 applications were submitted and 90 applicant visits were scheduled for eligible participants.

Habitat for Humanity has applied for an extension from the City with respect to the final pieces of the project, including construction of the BBI Village homes. The City Commission will vote on the project, including "horizontal and vertical" construction, at their September 19, 2023 meeting.

Ms. Hughes asked how many applications have been accepted for BBI Village. Mr. Barraclough replied that 49 families are eligible for the program, of which 20 will apply for the Fort Lauderdale project. Other eligible families will be placed in Coral Springs, Deerfield Beach, or North Lauderdale.

Ms. Greaves requested additional information on home visits. Mr. Barraclough explained that Habitat's independent reviewers assess families' ability to partner with the organization, including "sweat equity," home ownership education, and responsibility for a low-interest, zero-percent mortgage. They also assess which families have the greatest need for access to limited housing. He acknowledged that it can be difficult to make choices about which families have both the need and the ability to continue with the process. More than 50% of Habitat for Humanity's homeowners apply more than once to the organization's programs.

Vice Chair Dunne requested clarification of a statistic indicating that 94% of Broward County residents cannot afford home ownership. Mr. Barraclough stated that Broward is the most cost-burdened community in the United States. This is due to high real estate prices and comparatively low wages. The average household income in Broward is significantly below the \$650,000 typically needed for a mortgage.

- **Oasis of Hope CDC**

Martha Toomer, representing Oasis of Home Community Development Corporation (CDC), explained that this is a nonprofit organization which assists families facing financial difficulties. These may include loss of wages, increasing expenses or fees, and being priced out of affordability. Oasis of Hope seeks to educate and empower its clients and help them remain in their homes.

Ms. Toomer showed a video featuring a family helped through Oasis of Hope's programs. This assistance included improving the family's credit score, obtaining down payment and closing cost assistance, and securing an affordable home.

Ms. Toomer advised that Oasis of Hope was awarded a total of \$24,241 to assist with their programs. During the past quarter, they assisted 85 renters and helped 40 families avoid foreclosure. They also assisted 270 first-time home buyers through education.

Oasis of Hope is currently in the process of developing new affordable homes, four of which will be town homes and three of which will be single-family residences. She emphasized the importance of partnership with the City in carrying out the organization's work.

Ms. Greaves commented that she was pleased to see a mixture of town homes and single-family homes planned.

- **South Florida Institute on Aging, Inc. (SoFIA)**

Suze Vadrine, representing the South Florida Institute on Aging, Inc. (SoFIA), explained that this organization provides services to empower individuals as they age. The program supported by CDBG funds, SoFIA Care Services, helps aging adults to maintain independence by providing those in need with caregiving companionship and rapid response services, both person-to-person and through virtual interface.

SoFIA received CDBG funds to support 16 senior companion volunteers who provide four hours of weekly in-home visits to elderly individuals and caregivers in Fort Lauderdale. The program provides companionship, supportive respite services, and

information about community resources. It benefits both the volunteer and the recipient and caregivers.

The senior companion program received \$22,721.10 in CDBG funds. SoFIA also had access to additional funds that were carried forward. They have served 14 clients and 10 volunteers. 92% of elderly individuals reported an improvement in their home environment, nutritional condition, and feelings of well-being. 93% of the senior companions reported sharing information with their clients which linked them to community resources. 80% of clients reported feeling more satisfied with their lives due to the weekly visits from their companion, and 85% reported being more active and able to live independently in their homes due to their volunteers. 86% of caregivers reported a reduction in their levels of stress as a result of weekly respite services received from their senior companion volunteer.

SoFIA continues to offer supportive in-person and virtual services to assist elderly and disabled adults and allow them to maintain independence. To date, they have empowered nearly 600 individuals to continue living independently in their own homes. The program benefits volunteers, clients, and caregivers within the City of Fort Lauderdale. As of June 30, 2023, they have recruited 25 new volunteers, who will help expand the program's capabilities to serve more individuals and families and enhance their quality of life.

Ms. Vedrine showed a video testimonial from a member of the senior companion program and a client.

Ms. Schimelfenyg requested clarification of the age range served by the program. Ms. Vedrine replied that clients are 55 and older.

Board member Wismy Cius arrived via communications technology at this time (4:34 p.m.).

- **Women in Distress of Broward County (WID)**

Shena Kitt, representing Women in Distress of Broward County (WID), stated that the organization's mission is to stop domestic violence abuse through intervention, education, and advocacy. They are re-branding the organization in order to show that they do not assist only women. WID is the only accredited domestic violence center in Broward County and is certified through both the Council on Accreditation and the Florida Department of Children and Families.

From October 1, 2022 through August 31, 2023, WID has served 428 individuals. The CDBG grant is used to support emergency shelter operations. Over 1500 additional Fort Lauderdale residents were served through this program. There has also been an increase in hotline calls for services. The ongoing housing crisis in

Broward County has exacerbated the need for WID's programs, and has resulted in some staffing issues as well.

WID has provided 44,806 bed nights through their shelter program. Individuals may remain at the emergency shelter for up to six weeks, although Ms. Kitt noted that this limit has been exceeded in some cases due to the housing market. While the CDBG funds were intended to provide only 531 shelter nights, 12,522 nights were provided to Fort Lauderdale residents. Clients are placed in contact with various services when using the shelter, including therapy and support groups, children's services, advocacy, and other supportive services.

Many clients from the Fort Lauderdale area are high-lethality survivors, which means that firearms and/or physical harm may have been involved in their abuse. Fort Lauderdale was in the top four municipalities for the number of clients who needed restraining orders against abusers. Ms. Kitt noted that while their programmatic report shows that WID is meeting its goals, they are also experiencing staffing issues, as there is no individual currently tied to the use of grant funds. She emphasized that this does not prohibit work from happening.

Ms. Greaves requested additional information regarding re-branding. Ms. Kitt explained that the organization is shortening its name to WID Broward. This shows that the agency is here for everyone who needs services, not only women, as domestic violence can happen to anyone.

Ms. Greaves also asked if any clients have not received full services due to the organization's staffing issues. Ms. Kitt emphasized that all clients receive complete services. If Fort Lauderdale's CDBG advocate is not available when a client comes into the emergency shelter, another individual will provide the necessary services.

Vice Chair Dunne requested clarification of the non-female population served by WID Broward. Ms. Kitt advised that while this percentage is low, there are men and non-binary individuals in the shelter. She felt the re-branding will help increase these numbers by spreading the word that WID does not serve only women. The organization's website is being updated to reflect gender-neutral services.

- **HOMES, Inc.**

Linda Taylor, representing Housing Opportunities, Mortgage Assistance and Neighborhood Solutions (HOMES), Inc., stated that the organization has served Fort Lauderdale and the greater Broward County community for 25 years. CDBG dollars are used to fund HOMES, Inc.'s youth self-sufficiency program, which targets 25 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 who have exited foster or relative care, as well as other youth from the community who find themselves homeless. HOMES, Inc. provides wraparound services for these clients.

HOMES, Inc. has a two-acre campus near Downtown Fort Lauderdale which includes 13 apartments and 21 bedrooms for their clients. They received \$86,221.41 in CDBG funds and recently submitted their final invoice. With CDBG funding, they provided intake services for 27 young people. There are eight two-bedroom apartments which are shared by roommates and rent for \$300 per person per month, while a one-bedroom apartment rents for \$400/month. The organization raises funds to cover any difference that might exist in rental expenses.

Ms. Taylor advised that a market-rate two-bedroom apartment in Fort Lauderdale may rent for \$2700 or more, which is more than their clients could afford, as many earn between \$10 and \$12 per hour. HOMES, Inc. works to expose their clients to careers that will help them increase their standard of living. All clients must both attend school and work. HOMES, Inc. offers a paid internship program with a goal of self-sufficiency.

HOMES, Inc.'s performance indicators include:

- 27 intakes
- 16 young people attending educational programming
- 24 young people who are gainfully employed

Ms. Taylor shared a success story of a former client who undertook an internship with a company that later hired him permanently. He also serves as an ambassador for HOMES, Inc.'s programs.

Ms. Taylor reported that the organization's biggest challenge at present is the fact that COVID-19 is again on the rise. This means their clients may lose jobs because they have less seniority or expertise. HOMES, Inc. raises emergency funds to meet their financial needs if this happens. She also noted that the facilities are aging and in need of improvements.

- **Prevention Central**

Latoya Robinson, representing Prevention Central, explained that this organization provides case management, a food and supply pantry, housing resources, and emergency shelter for families in crisis.

Vice Chair Dunne thanked all participating organizations for the work they have done in the community.

## **V. HOPWA UPDATES**

Ms. Dsouza recalled that at the August 14, 2023 Board meeting, there had been discussion of requests from Broward House and Mount Olive Development Corporation (MODCO) that the City allow them to change their Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) model from project-based rental

assistance. Broward House had indicated they would like to change their services to the tenant-based rental assistance model. Staff had been asked to determine if the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) would allow this transition. Staff has not yet been able to schedule a technical assistance meeting with representatives of HUD to discuss this proposal.

Ms. Dsouza continued that HUD has completed its monitoring of HOPWA agencies, and there has been verbal confirmation that there are no findings. Once monitoring has been finalized, the technical assistance meeting will be scheduled with HUD, Broward House, and MODCO to determine whether transition is possible. At present, both agencies will continue to provide project-based housing into the next fiscal year. The new HOPWA request for proposal (RFP) cycle will begin in February 2024, which may allow for the requested changes.

Ms. Dsouza advised that at the Board's October meeting, they will develop a timeline for upcoming work, which will include both HOPWA and CDBG RFPs in the next few months.

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

None.

#### **VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

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

Ms. Dsouza stated that in addition to creating a timeline for the RFPs, the Board will hear presentations from HOPWA agencies at the October meeting. She noted that HUD has provided a worksheet which HOPWA sub-recipients must complete and submit to the City.

#### **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 5:21 p.m.

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

Community Services Board  
September 11, 2023  
Page 10

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]