



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE 700 NW 19th Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33311
APPROVED
Meeting Minutes
City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
Department of Sustainable Development
October 9, 2023 – 4:00 P.M.

<u>MEMBERS</u>		<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Christi Rice, Chair	P	1	1
William J. Dunne, Vice Chair	P	10	2
Wismy Cius (arr. 4:35)	P	7	2
Latrisha Greaves (arr. 4:07)	P	2	0
Gary Hensley	P	6	0
Sharon Hughes	A	1	1
Ronald Pierre	P	3	1
Amy Schimelfenyg	P	7	0

Staff Present

Eveline Dsouza, Administrative Supervisor, Housing and Community Development

Communications to City Commission

None.

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

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

Chair Rice called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present.

II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 11, 2023

Motion made by Vice Chair Dunne, seconded by Ms. Schimelfenyg, to approve the minutes from the last meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

IV. HOPWA FY 23-24 GRANT PERFORMANCE PRESENTATION

Ms. Dsouza recommended that the agencies be permitted three minutes per program for their presentations, as some agencies administer multiple programs. The presentations will address three quarters of the current fiscal year, October 1 through June 30.

- **Broward House, Inc.**

Ali Garrison, Tamika Weaver, Nicole Burrell, and Matt Patterson, representing Broward House, provided an update on the agency's programs through June 30, 2023. Ms. Garrison reported on the facility-based housing program, stating that the week of April 13, 2023, Broward County sustained tremendous damage from multiple days of flooding. This resulted in the shutdown of the agency's assisted living facility and transitional housing program. Additional buildings were also affected by standing water, including the Housing Department and administrative offices.

Ms. Garrison continued that the agency's main focus at the time was to clear water from its assisted living facility, which housed over 60 residents. They transitioned these clients to a facility called Broward Village, which is owned by one of the agency's partners. Since that time, it was determined that the entire assisted living facility had to be gutted, including mold remediation and roof repair. The cost of this renovation is estimated at \$935,000 and is not covered by insurance.

From April 13 through the present day, facility-based housing clients continue to be unable to access the assisted living facility. The Department of Health and other entities continue to ensure that the agency is doing everything they can to provide services. Two clients have discharged from the facility-based program since this time, one to independent living and one to another state.

Ms. Garrison advised that roughly 62 staff members have been completely displaced and are sharing space or working from home. All outcomes for the third quarter have been met and clients continue to receive services.

Ms. Weaver stated that the flood emergency revealed that there is internal damage to the agency's buildings, which resulted in relocation of a great many clients. She estimated that 15 units are currently offline due to flood damage, and two buildings need roof repairs. This limited the agency's ability to house clients. She noted, however, that in the third quarter, Broward House had a high rate of successful discharge. Six clients discharged successfully from their project-based rental (PBR) property.

Ms. Weaver continued that another difficulty in the last quarter was finding good vendors and landlords who would accept tenants with housing vouchers. Broward House has amended its language, moving from the term "vouchers" to "long-term rental assistance." She characterized the progress on returning units online as slow and steady, and concluded that the agency hopes to bring all 15 units back online within the next quarter.

Chair Rice asked how Broward House is working to secure funding for repairs. Ms. Burrell replied that they have not had to use reserves, but have conducted significant fundraising and secured donations as well as matching funds. Ms. Garrison added that no staff has been laid off. They are also finding ways to supplement costs, including savings on housekeeping and cleaning costs while some facilities are shut down.

Chair Rice asked why Broward House has had their most successful quarter. Ms. Weaver replied that the agency focused on life skills components for clients, including encouragement to return to school, providing job/career advice, and working to teach budgeting. One aspect of the project-based program is ensuring clients have the tools necessary for communication with landlords. Staff also connected clients with community resources.

It was noted that Broward House is tracking significantly under budget for the third quarter. Ms. Burrell replied that the agency is now up-to-date and the full budget is being used. They have implemented a new payroll system and database, and anticipate serving more clients than the original goal. New clients are coming on to the tenant-based rental voucher (TBRV) program, as that list has recently reopened.

A question was also asked regarding the percentage of clients who would attain self-sufficiency and transition to other means of housing. Ms. Weaver explained that approximately 85% to 90% of tenant-based and project-based clients are on Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Income levels remain a factor, as there are very few opportunities for those clients to move to safe and stable housing. The tenant-based program remains the same quarter over quarter for this reason. It was recommended that the agency's goals be updated so they are more reflective of actual activity.

- **Broward Regional Health Planning Council (BRHPC)**

Ms. Dsouza advised that no representative was available to give a presentation from Broward Regional Health Planning Council (BRHPC), but the agency has provided its report for the Board. She added that BRHPC administers the permanent housing placement (PHP) short-term rent, mortgage, and utility (STRMU), tenant-based rental voucher (TBRV), and temporary hotel voucher programs. A representative of the agency can be present at the next Board meeting to answer questions if necessary.

Chair Rice stated that she would like to know whether or not BRHPC also experienced flood damage and/or financial issues related to that emergency, as it is not mentioned in their report.

Ms. Greaves asked a question the goals for BRHPC's TBRV and STRMU programs. Ms. Dsouza advised that BRHPC had some leftover funds from the previous year,

and had requested an extension of the time frame in which these funds must be used. When these funds were carried forward, the agency was able to assist more clients, which resulted in some overage of their goals for the STRMU and TBRV programs.

- **Mount Olive Development Corporation (MODCO)**

Jacqueline Selders, representing Mount Olive Development Corporation (MODCO), reported that all goals were met and some exceeded in the third quarter, including achievement of housing plans, preparation of and adherence to a realistic monthly budget, progress toward self-sufficiency, maintenance of regular appointments with primary care physicians, demonstration of improvement in vulnerability, and demonstration of improvement in self-sufficiency by discharged clients. The agency has discharged only six clients, which accounts for 27% of their 22 clients overall.

Ms. Selders concluded that the agency's spending for the current year exceeds the previous year. They are almost at full capacity, with new clients expected later this month. MODCO did not have to make any repairs to units after the flooding.

Ms. Greaves addressed MODCO's third performance indicator, which reflects a 23% instead of the goal of 25% of clients year-to-date. She asked if the agency anticipates meeting this goal. Ms. Selders replied that the percentage will increase as more clients move toward self-sufficiency.

Ms. Selders further clarified that the agency has not yet been able to spend the full award amount, noting that the award has been reduced by \$100,000 in the new budget. There is no way to spend all the funds with the program services provided by MODCO.

Ms. Dsouza recalled that at a previous meeting, MODCO's award amount was reduced by \$100,000, which was redistributed to the TBRV program.

- **Careresource**

No representative from Careresource was available to present to the Board. It was noted that some agencies have closed in observance of a federal holiday.

- **Sunserve**

Brenda Rentas and Alex Spriggs, representing Sunserve, reported that the agency has served 531 unduplicated clients throughout the current fiscal year. They continue to exceed contractual obligations, serving 177 unduplicated STRMU applications, 40 unduplicated applications for PHP, and 9 unduplicated applications for hotel vouchers. They are on pace to expend all allocated funds for the contract year 2023-2024. The agency has met all goals at 100%.

It was asked if the agency expects to continue exceeding its goals throughout the fourth quarter. Ms. Rentas stated that the agency sees clients as they come in, and continues to assist them despite having already met their goals.

Chair Rice noted that Sunserve's written report refers to increased mental health challenges for their clients, asking if there are new trends the agency is observing. Ms. Rentas replied that since the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in rent increases, clients have begun experiencing more mental health issues because they have additional concerns and little time to prepare to meet them. This results in greater anxiety and depression. Sunserve refers clients to mental health services, which are provided in-house at no charge.

Ms. Greaves requested information on Sunserve's plan to identify affordable housing and rent solutions. Ms. Rentas stated that the agency is working with community partners and landlords, advocating on their clients' behalf by requesting additional time for clients to meet new rent levels. Landlords often agree to lower the amount in the short term. The agency also continues to search for other affordable housing that will allow clients to pay what they can afford.

- **Legal Aid Service of Broward County**

Edwin Cordova, representing Legal Aid Service of Broward County, stated that the agency's goal was to assist 105 unduplicated clients. They have opened 281 cases, as some clients need more than one type of assistance. He also noted that while a client's achievement of a Section 8 voucher is considered a move toward self-sufficiency, many clients are unable to secure affordable housing although they are working.

Mr. Cordova provided a breakdown of clients by gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age. He also reviewed housing costs in Fort Lauderdale and Broward County, pointing out that these costs ideally represent 30% of a household's income. A client making \$20/hour is making less than \$25,000, which is a significant disparity when compared to housing costs.

Ms. Greaves requested clarification of the agency's reporting. Mr. Cordova replied that reporting on a client is complete when their file is closed. Ms. Greaves recommended including a reference in the written report clarifying that open cases are not included in final numbers.

V. GOOD OF THE ORDER

Ms. Dsouza provided the Board members with a list of meeting dates in the next fiscal year, requesting that these be approved. Chair Rice further clarified that the Board meets on the second Monday of each month, and recommended that any

dates on which federal holidays require the City or clients' offices be closed be amended.

Ms. Dsouza also noted that the Board's governing Ordinance establishes that they will hold a minimum of 10 meetings in a year. 13 meeting dates are on the list, as there is the possibility of a second meeting date in the month of April.

Chair Rice asked if the City provides options for the Board to change their meeting date in October or November 2024, as these dates are affected by federal holidays. Ms. Dsouza replied that Staff will determine if there are other meetings held on a prospective rescheduled date; if there is no place or time to meet, the Board meeting(s) would be cancelled. It was noted that any motion to approve the meeting dates would be made with the understanding that the City would look at alternate dates for October and November 2024.

Motion made by Mr. Hensley, seconded by Mr. Pierre, to approve the dates as set forth for 2024. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

VII. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Ms. Dsouza reported that the City received its official monitoring response from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA). The City has also made a technical request on behalf of Broward House to transition its project-based housing to a tenant-based program, but has not yet received a response. It has been requested that this response be provided before the next HOPWA RFP, as the RFP will depend upon what programs will be available to agencies.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS TO CITY COMMISSION

Chair Rice commented that she still plans to draft a communication for the Committee regarding a reduction in the minimum number of meetings required per year. Ms. Dsouza recalled that previous discussion had determined the Board would request a reduction from 10 meetings to eight.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

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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.]