**Meeting Minutes**
**City of Fort Lauderdale**
**Community Services Board**
**700 NW 19th Avenue**
**Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33311**
**April 14, 2025 – 4:00 P.M.**

| MEMBERS | | PRESENT | ABSENT |
|---|---|---|---|
| Christi Rice, Chair | P | 13 | 2 |
| William J. Dunne, Vice Chair | A | 9 | 5 |
| Wismy Cius | P | 10 | 0 |
| Shelly Goren | P | 2 | 0 |
| Latrinsha Greaves | P | 13 | 2 |
| Gary Hensley | P | 7 | 2 |
| Sharon Hughes | P | 12 | 3 |
| James Vanden Bosch | P | 3 | 0 |

**Staff Present**
Rachel Williams, Housing and Community Development Manager
Jonathan Rogers, Administrative Supervisor
Glen Hadwen, Sustainability Manager
Luz Ramirez, Sustainability Analyst
Laura Tooley, Urban Forester
J. Opperlee, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

**Communications to City Commission**

None.

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

- **Quorum Requirement – As of April 1st, 2025, there are 8 appointed members to the Board, which means 5 constitutes a quorum**

The meeting was called to order at 4:11 p.m. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

## II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

The City Staff members present introduced themselves at this time.

## III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 10, 2025

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

## IV. CDBG FY 25-26 GRANT APPLICATION PRESENTATION

Chair Rice noted that the Board members have completed preliminary scoring of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications using the Neighborly software system. Each applicant agency will have up to three minutes for a presentation, followed by a question-and-answer period of up to seven minutes.

Ms. Williams advised that if any Board member has a financial relationship with any of the applicant agencies, they would need to disclose the conflict at this time. That member would not be able to participate in the discussion or scoring of the agency's application.

Ms. Greaves stated that she works for YMCA of South Florida, and therefore would not participate in the discussion or scoring of that application.

### 1. Broward House

Matt Patterson, representing Broward House, explained that the organization's application is for a program called Supporting a Culture of Active Wellness. This is an extension of a project from 2023 which sought to institute more physical fitness intervention at the organization's substance abuse disorder treatment center and transitional housing facility for individuals living with HIV.

Mr. Patterson advised that following the flood of 2023, the facility's former fitness center was torn down. Broward House leveraged funding with the Community Foundation of Broward to build a new outdoor fitness center. The organization purchased equipment and facilitated a partnership with a personal trainer from a local gym.

Because one of the goals of the program is to move clients out of the facility itself and into more active wellness, a community garden is one aspect of the proposed project. They also hope to assist clients with the purchase of appropriate physical fitness clothing and supplies. Data will be collected to standardize the program's success so it can be replicated at other facilities. Quality improvement is another key aspect of the project.

Ms. Goren requested clarification of which staff members created the program. Mr. Patterson replied that he became certified by the National Exercise Science Training Association (NESTA) when he was a client of Broward House, and is working closely with the trainer who volunteers at the facility to prepare a program that can be linked to mental health outcomes as well as physical fitness.

Mr. Hensley asked how many clients were served by the previous iteration of the program, as well as the goal for the current program. Mr. Patterson recalled that the previous program served 85 different clients. Broward House's substance abuse disorder treatment program typically serves 30 to 35 clients at one time, with a tenure of roughly six months. The transitional housing facility includes 74 units and serves low-income

households through the Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) program. The goal of 85 clients includes at least 60 from the substance abuse program.

Chair Rice requested information on the project's timeline. Mr. Patterson explained that materials will be compiled into an impact booklet and used to improve mental health outcomes; however, the booklet would not be complete until the end of the first quarter. Classes are held twice a week at present.

Mr. Cius asked how previous findings informed decisions about the next funding cycle. Mr. Patterson replied that adjustments were made during the first cycle, including designation of a beginners' group that reviewed basic fitness principles as well as a more advanced group. The program now uses a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder scale rather than a Perceived Stress Scale to track improvements over the course of the program.

Mr. Patterson continued that housing was consistently demonstrated to be the greatest performance indicator for viral suppression, with participants at least 10.4% more likely to have a non-suppressed viral load if they are permanently housed.

The following Item was taken out of order on the Agenda.

### 3. Feeding South Florida

Alyssa Villalba, Senior Programs Manager at Feeding South Florida, gave a presentation on the organization's Senior Home Delivery Program. Feeding South Florida addresses food insecurities for adults, children, and seniors with low incomes. Seniors often face a number of challenges, including fixed incomes, social isolation, health concerns, and a lack of transportation. Since 2020, Feeding South Florida has delivered meals directly to individuals' homes.

The organization is requesting funds to increase their home delivery program. They provide dietitian-approved meals to homebound seniors aged 60 or older who meet income thresholds and live in Fort Lauderdale. Meals are tailored to their dietary needs, provided on a biweekly basis, and delivered using refrigerated trucks. Outcomes include tracking the number of seniors served by the program, as well as the unduplicated number of meals served and pounds of food distributed.

Feeding South Florida currently uses extra CDBG funding to provide 70 hot meals every Wednesday at Community Court. The meals for seniors would be similar to these, but flash-frozen so they can be stored.

General service numbers for Fort Lauderdale include:

- Serving over 107,000 individual residents
- 33.5% of these residents are seniors aged 60 or older
- Delivery to 41 Fort Lauderdale residents

Because budget numbers limit the organization's ability to grow the program, they are requesting CDBG funds to reach an additional 26 seniors per year on a biweekly basis, distributing close to 6700 meals. Meals are prepared in Feeding South Florida's community kitchen.

Chair Rice recalled that the organization was granted an extension to its previous funding cycle due to issues related to the estimated amount needed for service. She asked how they plan to budget appropriately for this program. Allyson Vaulx, Vice President of Philanthropy for Feeding South Florida, explained that because there are 26 biweekly pay periods in the year, deliveries would be made on a biweekly schedule. Costs will be broken down by recipient and by delivery. Deliveries will include the costs of food, transportation, drivers' salaries, and other components. The organization already has a large waiting list for its services and would be ready to roll out additional services immediately.

Ms. Villalba added that the home-delivered meals program is already robust and efficient. Their previous funding provided court-ordered meals for homeless individuals, which took some time to build, as the organization learned throughout that process. The senior program is fully aligned with their current services.

Mr. Vanden Bosch asked how Feeding South Florida avoids duplication of services with Meals on Wheels of Broward. Ms. Villalba replied that they work with Meals on Wheels for programs in Miami-Dade County. They also work with the Department of Elder Affairs, which has a platform through which clients across the state of Florida can be tracked.

Ms. Vaulx added that Feeding South Florida also offers case management services through a program which assists roughly 300 other pantry partner agencies who work with one another. The chance of duplicated services is very small.

Mr. Vanden Bosch also asked how the organization's waiting list is prioritized. Ms. Villalba replied that the list is broken down by county and administered according to longevity.

Mr. Cius asked how potential food/drug interactions are avoided. Ms. Vaulx explained that Feeding South Florida assesses their clients ahead of time to lessen the chance of allergy or interaction, but noted that drivers delivering meals do not address this aspect of the program. Ingredients are listed on labels. Participants may offer feedback on the meals as well.

**4. H.O.M.E.S. Inc.**

Linda Taylor, Chief Executive Officer of H.O.M.E.S., Inc., stated that this organization has served Broward County for 26 years. They are requesting CDBG funding to support self-sufficiency for young adults who have aged out of foster or relative care. This program is in its 16th year.

Ms. Taylor explained that H.O.M.E.S., Inc. owns 13 apartments with 21 bedrooms in Fort Lauderdale. Participants are expected to attend school and improve their skills, and are required to work. They pay $300/month for a shared apartment or $400/month for a one-bedroom apartment. If a participant has children, families are not commingled. When they leave the program, the organization seeks to ensure that they do not become homeless by working with Broward County's Continuum of Care for the transitional independent living population.

H.O.M.E.S. also works holistically with participants to ensure health, including resources such as a nutritional teaching kitchen and an office within walking distance of housing units. The organization owns a two-acre campus. Ms. Taylor emphasized that participants in the program are thriving, and there is a small waiting list which can be expedited in the case of unsheltered individuals or families who are referred by another agency.

Mr. Cius requested clarification of the program's success rate. Ms. Taylor replied that roughly 70% of young people go on to attain housing; when they leave the program, the organization typically knows where they are going. Participants are required to save 30% of their income while they live on the campus. Young people with no employment skills are offered paid internships and are assisted by job coaches who work closely with employers.

Ms. Greaves asked how participants who are pregnant or have young children are accommodated. Ms. Taylor explained that the program holds required monthly meetings that feature various speakers who offer different types of life skill education. Participants are not removed from the program for becoming pregnant, although some have transitioned to a different program for young mothers. She emphasized that all participants have life coaches who provide intensive case management.

Ms. Goren requested clarification of the average duration of a client's stay. Ms. Taylor estimated that this is typically two years. Participants are between the ages of 18 through 25. The program has a zero-tolerance policy toward cohabitation.

Mr. Vanden Bosch asked for more information on accountability for participants. Ms. Taylor replied that there is a formal "three strikes" policy; however, depending upon the severity of a violation, exceptions may be made. She emphasized that the organization works to pair roommates based on personalities, as this is an area where the most conflict occurs. There is no tolerance for violence or sale of drugs, although there are opportunities for rehabilitation from drug or alcohol abuse.

### 5. Oasis of Hope Community Development Corporation, Inc.

Jacqueline Reed-Stills, President of Oasis of Hope Community Development Corporation, Inc., explained that the organization is a nonprofit founded in 2009 which focuses on affordable housing for individuals with low to moderate incomes.

Ms. Reed-Stills emphasized the need for home ownership, which is due in part to the expense of the rental housing market. The budget for purchase of a home is roughly 30% of household income, while the budget for rent is currently at 50%. Oasis of Hope assists first-time home buyers so they can have an opportunity to become homeowners. These households may receive subsidies that help them to purchase homes, which means they may need to live in that property for at least 15 years to satisfy deed restrictions.

Tracy Parrish, also representing Oasis of Hope, explained that the organization provides a home incubator program and a foreclosure prevention program to qualified residents of Fort Lauderdale. The counseling program includes financial education, mortgage counseling, and loan modification classes. Oasis of Hope partners with title and insurance companies, property inspectors, and other industry entities at their workshops. They provide information on home maintenance and post-purchase support.

Chair Rice requested clarification of whether services are delivered virtually or in person. Ms. Parrish replied that while counseling sessions are primarily offered in a virtual format, there are occasions on which the organization works in the community and meets with clients and speakers in person.

Ms. Reed-Stills added that there are four counselors certified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) who provide services for families with low to moderate incomes. These services include one-on-one counseling, which may take place over a period of 30, 60, 90, or 120 days. They also provide post-purchase counseling services for up to three months after the family has moved into their home, including an action plan on what they need to do to avoid foreclosure. Each counseling session includes planning, budgeting, and credit assistance.

Chair Rice asked for more information on funding costs. Ms. Parrish replied that costs include partial salaries as well as administrative costs, project implementation, and quantitative and qualitative analysis of how to approach counseling. They also provide tangible reminders to clients, particularly with regard to foreclosure prevention. In FY 2022-2023, they served 227 clients and prevented 55 evictions, both of which exceeded the organization's goals.

Ms. Goren asked how clients are referred to Oasis of Hope. Ms. Parrish explained that banks reach out to the organization on a regular basis, and clients make contact through their website. Their last workshop registered over 120 attendees and was attended by 75 to 80 individuals. Clients also learn about the organization through word of mouth.

Mr. Vanden Bosch asked what had compelled Ms. Reed-Stills to create Oasis of Hope. Ms. Reed-Stills replied that when she became a homeowner, she became aware of opportunities that could assist first-time homebuyers.

**6. YMCA of South Florida**

Kaydean Brown-Townsend, representing YMCA of South Florida, reviewed the experience of a YMCA client who was connected to resources through the organization. The YMCA helped her to update her resume, connected her to GED services, and assisted her in applying for jobs. Emilia Solano, also representing the YMCA, advised that staff not only helps with job applications but attends job fairs to connect with potential employers. This helps them coach clients to obtain employment.

Ms. Solano continued that over the past three years, the YMCA has served two different populations: those who need additional services to overcome barriers to employment, and those who achieve employment. She emphasized the importance of partnerships and connections to help clients improve and advance economically.

Chair Rice asked if any YMCA staff members have had experience with CDBG or other HUD funding through other sources, such as the County. Gabe Ochoa, also representing the YMCA, replied that in 2022, they received a $30,000 grant from the City to help students work toward closing the college gap. They provided a summer camp and met all goals for the event. The YMCA has also received CDBG funds through the city of Hollywood for the last 10 to 11 years. These funds were used to assist individuals and families with low incomes.

Ms. Greaves thanked the organization for sharing the stories of its clients and how they were helped.

Mr. Vanden Bosch asked if there are long-term metrics associated with clients who receive follow-up assistance once they have secured jobs. Ms. Solano replied that he YMCA's team members come from the neighborhoods they serve and typically continue their relationships with those individuals even after direct service ends. There are ongoing programs and support both at the YMCA and in the community.

Mr. Ochoa added that the YMCA is working to expand its programming and help clients overcome barriers by navigating services with them.

**2. Broward Partnership for the Homeless, Inc.**

Mr. Vanden Bosch noted that the organization's application showed that in the first quarter of FY 2024-2025, only 14% of clients exited to stable housing, which is below the stated goal of 20%. Chair Rice observed that these percentages are intended to be cumulative goals rather than broken down by quarter.

Chair Rice asked why Broward Partnership for the Homeless, Inc. was ineligible for the CDBG program in FY 2023-2024. Ms. Williams explained that the organization was required to take one year off from applying for CDBG dollars. She added that Broward Partnership is the largest provider of services to the homeless population in Broward County; CDBG funding is typically used to provide meals and bus passes for their clients. They serve over 700 clients and partner with other agencies that receive CDBG dollars.

## V. BOARD REVIEW FINAL SCORES AND RECOMMEND ALLOCATION

1. **CDBG FY 25-26 Grant Application**
   **City Staff to assist the Board with:**
   - **Budget & Expenditure of prior year**
   - **FY25-26 Applicants' Final Score**
   - **Requested funds by each applicant**
   - **Total available funds for allocation**

Chair Rice advised that there were five applicant agencies in the Public Services funding category, while H.O.M.E.S. Inc. was the sole applicant in the Community-Based Development Organization (CBDO) category.

The Board members finalized their scores for each agency and provided the scores to Staff for tabulation and ranking of applicants.

## VI. UPDATE FOOD FOREST PROGRAM

Chair Rice recalled that information on the City's proposed Food Forest program was sent to the Board members in advance of today's meeting. Because it is an internal program based within a City Department, it is presented separately from the other CDBG applications. The program does not include a formal application and would not be scored according to the same rubric as the other applicants.

Laura Tooley, Urban Forester for the City of Fort Lauderdale, recalled that in the previous fiscal year, the Board had recommended funding for the Food Forest program, although ultimately no funding was provided in that year.

Ms. Tooley explained that the City's Comprehensive Plan is to increase Fort Lauderdale's tree canopy by 33% by 2040. Funding is available through the City's Tree Canopy Trust Fund for the purchase of trees. City Staff has been in discussions with the Housing Authority of Fort Lauderdale to consider developing a Food Forest program at some of the Housing Authority's properties. This program would be less labor-intensive and more self-sustaining than community gardens.

A Food Forest has different levels. The City would provide the canopy level by purchasing trees; however, with this purchase there would be ancillary costs of 20%, which must be spent on tree planting. Another aspect of a Food Forest is understory planting, such as tree vegetables and ground coverage. Re-planting would be required each year.

The Housing Authority is working to develop a healthy eating initiative for residents at its facilities and feels that the Food Forest program would fit well with those plans. The City would use CDBG funds for understory planting, which cannot be paid for through the Tree Canopy Trust Fund.

Ms. Tooley advised that the City had sought additional grant funding to help supplement the proposed Food Forest program; however, that grant was recently terminated.

Chair Rice asked how much CDBG funding is requested, as well as the total funding necessary for the program. Ms. Tooley replied that the City can commit $20,000 toward tree planting. $10,000 has been recommended for understory planting; however, the program would be able to work with a smaller amount.

Ms. Tooley further clarified that the following primary Housing Authority locations were recommended for the Food Forest program:

- Dixie Court
- Northwest Gardens 3
- Northwest Gardens 5
- Dr. Kennedy Homes

There is also a pocket park at 1325 NW 7th Street with a small fruit garden, which the City could supplement as well.

Ms. Hughes requested clarification of the types of trees that may be planted. Ms. Tooley replied that she would conduct community outreach to determine what residents of the locations would want. Ms. Hughes advised that some fruits, such as bananas, may take longer to cultivate, but could help to more adequately address food deserts.

Mr. Cius asked if the City has considered partnering with other programs to enhance the success of the proposed Food Forest. Ms. Tooley stated that she serves on a commercial horticultural advisory board for Broward County and could partner with that entity. Other partnership options at the County level could include Naturescape.

The Board moved on to discussion of its scores, requested funds, and funding allocations at this time. Chair Rice noted that the City does not currently know how much CDBG funding will be available for allocation; for this reason, they will use the previous year's allocation of $184,000 as a guide for FY 2025-2026. Ms. Williams further clarified that the $184,000 will apply to Public Services funding only and will not include CBDO funding.

Chair Rice emphasized the importance of following the scoring rubric, as well as the City Commission's priorities for the current fiscal year.

The applicant organizations' scores were ranked in the following descending order:

- YMCA: 92
- Oasis of Hope: 85
- Feeding South Florida: 84
- Broward Partnership/Homeless: 84
- Broward House: 82

The total requested funding by all applicants totaled just over $249,000, which includes the $10,000 requested for the Food Forest program.

Ms. Williams reminded the Board members that there is no rule that all applicant agencies must be funded at any amount. CDBG funding is based on availability as well as on how closely an organization matches the City Commission's stated priorities.

Chair Rice also pointed out that the top-ranked applicant, YMCA of South Florida, received a significantly higher score than the other agencies. It was noted that the YMCA had requested a total of $50,000.

**Motion** made by Chair Rice, seconded by Mr. Hensley, to fund the YMCA of Broward at its full funding amount.

Ms. Greaves proposed an **amendment** to the **motion**, pointing out that the second-highest scored agency, Oasis of Hope, requested $40,000. The difference between the amounts requested by the two highest-ranked agencies is $10,000, which she pointed out was the amount requested for the City's Food Forest program. Funding these three agencies at their full requested amounts would leave $84,000 to be divided between the remaining three organizations.

Chair Rice commented that this would mean three of the four agencies which received very similar scores would have their funding requests significantly reduced, while the second-ranked agency, Oasis of Hope, would be fully funded. She did not feel this was an equitable solution. It was also noted that the Food Forest program was not scored or ranked in the same manner as the agencies which had presented their applications.

Chair Rice withdrew her **motion** at this time.

Ms. Williams observed that $5000 could be taken from the proposed allocation for HOPE Fair Housing, which did not present at today's meeting but which must receive City funding by law. The Board could then reallocate another $5000 from the estimated CDBG total available to fully fund the Food Forest. Ms. Williams reiterated that the total amount of CDBG funding available to the City has not yet been confirmed, and the total of $184,000 available is an estimate.

**Motion** made by Chair Rice, seconded by Mr. Hensley, to fund the Food Forest program at the requested amount of $10,000. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

It was clarified that this allocation left a total of $179,000 for division among the remaining applicants. Chair Rice suggested allocating the YMCA their full requested amount of $50,000. With the allocation of $5000 to the Food Forest, this would leave $129,000 to be divided among the remaining four Public Services applicants, which received scores in a very close range. The proposed division would fund each of the remaining four agencies at an amount of $32,250.

It was also noted that the agencies should be asked if the lesser amount of $32,250 could be effectively used for their programming.

Ms. Greaves strongly emphasized the importance of allocating funding to the applicants based on their ranking, and did not agree with the proposal to divide $129,000 among the four remaining applicants. She recalled that in the past, applicants have gone before the City Commission to directly request amounts that differed from the Board's allocations, which the Commission had granted.

**Motion** made by Chair Rice, seconded by Mr. Hensley, to fund the top-ranked application, which is YMCA of South Florida, with a 92 score, at their full request of $50,000. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 4-2 (Mr. Cius and Ms. Greaves dissenting). (Ms. Hughes abstained. A memorandum of voting conflict is attached to these minutes.)

The Board discussed allocation of the remaining $129,000. Chair Rice recommended that Feeding South Florida and the Broward Partnership for the Homeless receive the same allocation, as those two organizations received the same score and had requested similar amounts. She also pointed out that Oasis of Hope has requested a lesser amount, and that Broward House was the lowest-ranked of the Public Services applicants. She added that Broward House's program was the least directly related to the City Commission's stated priorities.

The Board members determined that the following allocations would be recommended:

- YMCA of South Florida: $50,000
- Oasis of Hope: $34,000
- Food Forest: $10,000
- Feeding South Florida: $32,500
- Broward Partnership/Homeless: $32,500
- Broward House: $30,000

Ms. Williams noted that HOPE Fair Housing would receive an allocation of $35,000.

**Motion** made by Mr. Hensley, seconded by Ms. Goren, that following the rubric, we would like the proposed funding for Oasis at $34,000, which is a higher percentage than the next three, and [Feeding] South Florida at $32,500, Broward Partnership for the Homeless at $32,500, and lastly, Broward House at $30,000. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 5-1 (Ms. Greaves dissenting).

Chair Rice noted that H.O.M.E.S., Inc., which would be scored and allocated separately under the CBDO category, had requested $180,000. Ms. Williams advised that only $125,000 is available in CBDO funding. The Chair also clarified that H.O.M.E.S. received a score of 91.

**Motion** made by Ms. Greaves, seconded by Mr. Hensley, to give H.O.M.E.S. the full amount. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Chair Rice requested a final motion to approve the scores recorded by the Board as part of their recommendations.

**Motion** made by Mr. Hensley, seconded by Ms. Goren, to fully approve all of these scores as our recommendations. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Ms. Taylor asked how the applicants' funding would be reallocated if the City received a higher CBDO allocation than the estimated $125,000. Ms. Williams replied that if this occurred, the City would try to make the award based on what the organization had requested.

## VII. GOOD OF THE ORDER

Mr. Vanden Bosch commented that he had used Neighborly software at another municipality and had found the financial aspect easier to comprehend under that municipality's system. He added that there had also been the ability to review an applicant's governing structure, which was useful in helping to identify discrepancies, as well as how an agency's employees were paid.

Mr. Vanden Bosch also requested additional information on why applicants were asked if they had received funding in previous fiscal years. Chair Rice explained that agencies are required to take one year off if they are funded for the two previous years. This was intended to encourage new applicants to the CDBG program. She emphasized that this is a City and not a Board requirement.

Ms. Greaves observed that the applications provide greater detail on where the applicant agencies get additional funding, as well as how they sustain themselves and pay their employees.

Ms. Williams reported that on May 8, 2025, there will be a public meeting to review the City's Five-Year Consolidated Plan with the consultant that assisted in its development. The current fiscal year will become year one of that Plan. The City has already provided 30 days' notice of this meeting, and will provide an additional 30 days' notice of the Consolidated Plan's public hearing before the Commission, which will occur in June 2025.

Ms. Greaves noted that any applicant organizations that feel they did not receive an appropriate allocation of funds may go before the City Commission to request reconsideration.

## VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

## IX. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

None.

## X. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COMMISSION

None.

## XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 6:22 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.]