

**City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
October 14, 2013 – 4:00 P.M.
City Commission Chambers – City Hall
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301**

MEMBERS		October 2013-September 2014	
		PRESENT	ABSENT
Richard Whipple, Chair	A	0	1
Wendy Gonsler, Vice Chair	P	1	0
Benjamin Bean	A	0	1
Margaret Birch (dep. 5:24 p.m.)	P	1	0
Ann Clark	P	1	0
Mark Fillers	A	0	1
Wanda Francis	P	1	0
Helen Hinton	P	1	0
Jason King (arr. 4:11 p.m.)	P	1	0
Jasmin Shirley	P	1	0

Staff Present

Mario DeSantis, Liaison and Housing Administrator
 Marcia Gair, Administrative Aide
 J. Opperee, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communication to City Commission

None.

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

- **Quorum Requirement: As of October 1, 2013, there are 10 appointed members to the Board, which means 6 constitutes a quorum.**

Vice Chair Gonsler called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m. Roll was called and all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

The Staff members introduced themselves at this time. Mr. DeSantis introduced new member Wanda Francis, and advised that new member Jason King was also expected at today's meeting.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 8, 2013

Motion made by Ms. Shirley, seconded by Ms. Francis, for approval of the July minutes. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

IV. CDBG PUBLIC SERVICE SCORECARDS

Mr. DeSantis stated that scorecards for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs were included in the members' information packets. Most of the data extends through the end of April 2013, which means the agencies have approximately four to five months remaining in which to complete their work. It was decided that the Board would review these scorecards on an individual basis at today's meeting.

Vice Chair Gonsler recalled that the first of these agencies, Luz Del Mundo, had planned to purchase vision testing equipment, and asked if this purchase had been made. She noted that the agency's original grant application had not listed the purchase of this equipment as one of their goals.

New Board member Jason King arrived at 4:11 p.m. Mr. King introduced himself to the Board at this time. He works for the AIDS Health Care Foundation and was appointed to the Board by City Commissioner Dean Trantalis.

Ms. Shirley asserted that the City discourages spending CDBG funds to purchase equipment; if such a purchase is made, the City must ensure that its lifelong use is within appropriate Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines. She recalled that there had also been discussion of whether or not the equipment would be used on every patient. Mr. DeSantis advised that once the equipment is purchased with CDBG funds, the agency must follow a process to ensure its appropriate disposition.

Vice Chair Gonsler noted that the vision testing equipment was not listed on Luz Del Mundo's expenditures, which must be reconciled. She recalled that the Board had been informed City Staff was working with the agency to modify their budget plan in order to make it simpler to monitor. She commented that the Board should also review future applications to ensure this issue is addressed and does not recur. Mr. DeSantis said he would follow up on the Board's questions with Luz Del Mundo.

The Board moved on to the Broward Performing Arts Foundation. Vice Chair Gonsler noted that this agency had informed the Board there would be different groups of participants in its program throughout the year; however, its scorecard stated that performance outcomes would be available at the conclusion of the program rather than at intervals throughout the year. She asserted that the Board had not given any agency permission to present outcomes only at the end of the grant year. Mr. DeSantis said he would review each agency's contract to determine the promised reporting frequency.

Ms. Francis observed that one goal stated in the Broward Performing Arts Foundation's contract was to have students attend at least two performances. She stated that this information should be included in the agency's report.

Mr. King requested information on the agency's principal function. Vice Chair Gonsler explained that the Broward Performing Arts Foundation is the educational wing of the Broward Performing Arts Theater the CDBG grant supports literacy activities at Title I or Head Start schools in partnership with both the School Board and the theater. Children may attend up to two performances and one workshop.

The Board discussed Hope South Florida Shepherd's Way. Mr. DeSantis clarified that agencies are asked to fill out approximately 90% of the comments, after which Staff adds any concerns they might have regarding compliance. He advised that this information is shared with the agency so they can make any necessary corrections.

The Board moved on to Jack and Jill Children's Center. Vice Chair Gonsler declared that this agency provided very good program comments, listing specific, measurable achievements that reflect the status of their program. Mr. DeSantis advised that he would pass this comment on to Housing and Community Development Manager Jonathan Brown so the scorecards might be re-tooled before the next cycle to encourage this type of self-reporting.

Ms. Shirley requested clarification that fiscal comments are provided by Staff rather than the agency. Mr. DeSantis said he would follow up with Mr. Brown to ensure this is the case.

V. CDBG PUBLIC SERVICE ACTIVITY EXAMPLES

Vice Chair Gonsler requested clarification of this category. Mr. DeSantis explained that the documents provided to the Board members list examples of eligible public service activities that can be funded with CDBG dollars. The documents can be used to determine which public service activities the Board would like to fund for the following year. He advised that the Board will be asked to discuss these further at the next meeting, as Mr. Brown would like to review the requirements, rules, and regulations that accompany the activities.

Vice Chair Gonsler commented that while the documents list the activities that could be funded through CDBG funds, they do not provide a list of the City's priorities. Some of the activities could be eliminated based upon the City Commission's Annual Action Plan. She added that the Board has discussed reviewing the CDBG categories for the following year, as there was a perception

among members that some agencies may have applied under categories because those categories offered the least competition.

Ms. Hinton requested that copies of the City Commission's Annual Action Plan be re-sent to the Board members.

VI. CDBG PUBLIC SERVICE DRAFT APPLICATION FOR 2014-2015

Mr. DeSantis stated that the applications were sent to the members for review and discussion. He added that Mr. Brown had requested no final decisions be made at this time, as he wished to further discuss the regulatory requirements in order to ensure all final decisions are within the rules and regulations.

Ms. Shirley recalled that the Board had previously expressed a desire for the application to include guidance on items that were "fatal flaws," such as failing to submit the application in an appropriate binding, submitting applications within the stated timelines, including the proper assurances, and others. Vice Chair Gonsler suggested that if this language were stronger, City Commissioners would find it easier to support the rules regarding submission guidelines.

Mr. DeSantis noted that there had also been discussion of including a checklist that agencies could use to verify that their applications met all necessary criteria and did not include any fatal flaws. Vice Chair Gonsler pointed out that there is already such a checklist, but it does not include formatting requirements.

The members discussed prospective changes that might be made to the application, including the use of bold print in listing formatting and submission requirements, clarification of categories so they identify the target populations to be served by a given program, and more clearly defining the categories under which agencies apply.

Mr. DeSantis reviewed the prospective changes recommended by the Board, including:

- stronger language regarding what are considered to be fatal flaws;
- use of the word "must" instead of the word "should" to emphasize this language; and
- measurable outcomes instead of output.

Vice Chair Gonsler noted that although no agencies had applied under the category for neighborhood or grassroots programs during the previous year, she felt the application should continue to offer this category, which could apply to smaller organizations and projects, such as community gardens. These applicants could include homeowners' or neighborhood organizations which might not otherwise be able to compete for funds with larger agencies. She recalled that previous discussion of this category had included the stipulation that

these be “one time only” projects, and could establish a lower funding limit than the categories under which larger agencies might apply.

Ms. Birch stated that if the grassroots category continues to be offered, the Board would need to devise a separate rating sheet for these applicants, as most of them would not meet all the criteria included in the regular application. Vice Chair Gonsler recalled that there had been previous discussion of encouraging these organizations to partner with larger agencies within the community, as some of the criteria that smaller agencies might not meet are required by HUD. They briefly discussed some of the disadvantages of such a partnership, deciding that this would be addressed further with Mr. Brown at the November meeting.

Vice Chair Gonsler continued that the applications could be clearer in requiring agencies to describe how funding would be used, such as having agencies explain how CDBG funds would free up monies within the organizations that could be used to support the agencies' goals. She noted that other municipalities' applications clearly state that agencies may not use CDBG funds toward general operating expenses, such as rent and utilities, but must be project- or program-specific.

Vice Chair Gonsler continued that the Board's position is that they would rather fund a new agency with an increased capacity of service than an agency that is continuing a program funded with CDBG dollars in the past. For this reason, the application process offers additional points for agencies that have not been funded in the past. This increases the availability of funds for new and innovative programs offering new services to the community. It also encourages agencies to build up their financial bases so they can grow on their own rather than relying on grant funds in the future.

Ms. Francis observed that other counties' applications place an emphasis on the experience of the agencies administering their programs, and noted that there have been recent changes in staff by many of the agencies that have applied in Fort Lauderdale. She suggested that experience could be a consideration in the application process. She also asked if environmental review, such as determining whether or not housing lies within a flood zone, was necessary for certain programs. Mr. DeSantis said he would look into whether or not environmental review was applicable to the CDBG process.

Vice Chair Gonsler concluded that the final piece of application information to be considered was the overview of potential performance indicators and benchmarks. She requested that the Board members review the performance indicator concepts from the previous year to determine if they should remain applicable for 2014-15. She also noted that several performance indicators ask only for numbers, such as the number of participants, and recommended that

these be replaced with indicators that more directly reflect the success of a program.

VII. HOPWA UPDATE

Mr. DeSantis stated that he would provide the finalized HOPWA scorecards, including information and comments from the various agencies, at the November Board meeting. He is currently monitoring the agencies, and will present a summary of any findings and concerns for each agency at the next meeting.

He reported that funding for the Short-Term Rent, Mortgage, and Utilities (STRMU) program will be cut by approximately \$500,000 the following year. This funding cut means the program could run out of money by April 2014. He is working with the agencies to arrive at options that will allow them to stretch their funding through September 2014. They will then present these options to the community for further feedback, and bring final options back to the Board. He concluded that he hoped to present the Board with these options by June 2014 and apprise their clients of any changes in the coming year.

Pablo Calvo, representing the Broward Regional Health Planning Council (BRHPC), provided more detail on the changes to the STRMU program, explaining that this program typically applies to past due rent, mortgage, and/or utilities. When the program was taken over from the City in 2008, the measurement of its units of service was based on the calendar year, even though the contract year runs from October through September. A number of clients, particularly those who were under- or unemployed due to the recent recession, have returned to the program year after year to request assistance. There is a five-month limit on assistance within each calendar year. He advised that case managers work closely with clients to ensure that they are genuinely seeking stable independent housing, although this can be difficult due to the volume of clients generated by the recession.

Ms. Birch left the meeting at 5:24 p.m.

Ms. Shirley asked how STRMU clients are counseled with regard to mortgage assistance. Mr. Calvo replied that BRHPC has seen a reduction in the number of applications for mortgage assistance, but strives to keep families in their homes. This includes reaching out to banks on behalf of their clients, and counseling individuals or families to consider renting out parts of their homes when applicable in order to help defray costs.

Vice Chair Gonsler stated that while the Board will want to hear community input on how to best address this budget shortfall, she also felt there should be research on the outcomes for clients. This could show whether it is more beneficial to assist a larger number of clients for a shorter period of time, or a

smaller number of clients for a longer period. Mr. Calvo confirmed that these types of outcomes are being investigated and graphed to determine which type of assistance is more useful. He noted that this will depend to a great extent on the individual clients' circumstances and needs.

Vice Chair Gonsler added that she would also like the Board to see data on the length of time for which service is provided and whether the benefits of assistance began to decline over the five-month period in which it is available.

Ms. Francis said she would also like to know whether or not families with children tend to require more assistance and therefore remain in the STRMU program for a longer time period. Mr. Calvo replied that this depends upon the age of the children, as well as whether or not more than one parent in the household is working. Ms. Shirley requested that the Board be advised of the average median rent, as well as the limits of rental assistance, in Broward County, dependent upon the size of a given unit.

Mr. DeSantis continued that he is working on a HOPWA housing plan for Fort Lauderdale. He is reviewing similar models from other cities, and is focusing on the creation of a road to independence for participants in the program once they have achieved stable housing. In the next 18 months, the goal is to have this model in place before the next HOPWA RFP goes out. He is also working on a policies and procedures manual for HOPWA, which will hopefully be completed within one year and added to the HOPWA contracts.

Mr. DeSantis stated that the City of Fort Lauderdale Housing Authority has initially entered into an agreement that would turn HOPWA housing back over to the City. While he did not have details on this agreement, he informed the Board that he has spoken with the three HOPWA agencies that oversee project-based rental assistance, which are considering sending out a reacquisition proposal. He stated that these agencies need to know what would be helpful for the Board members in reviewing, selecting, or recommending which of the agencies would best serve the target population. He advised that this may be difficult, as the Housing Authority did not provide support services or charge any salaries. A financial analysis would need to be conducted to determine this information.

Vice Chair Gonsler requested more information on this issue. Mr. DeSantis explained that the Housing Authority is electing to no longer serve their target population, which means their properties revert back to the City per a restrictive covenant. One of the other three agencies providing project-based housing will then receive these properties as a result of the upcoming transfer. The Board will ultimately need to make a recommendation on which agency should take over the properties and clients.

Ms. Shirley asked if the properties in question would need to be re-inspected to ensure they have been properly maintained. Mr. DeSantis said he could make sure that this was done. Ms. Shirley added that she would also like to know how many clients are currently residing in each unit under the program.

Vice Chair Gonsler stated that the Board would need to know the status of the current Housing Authority clients, the housing cost per person, and the amount of money spent. Mr. DeSantis noted that it could be difficult to determine the cost per person, as some clients may pay a larger share of their subsidy than others. He advised that he could provide the average unit cost, as well as the average client portion of payment and the average subsidy. Mr. King said he would also like to know the clients' level of satisfaction with their housing.

Ms. Shirley asked if there were any unresolved issues between the Housing Authority and the City. Mr. DeSantis said the lack of support services provided to clients by the Housing Authority has been an issue. Any vacant units will be filled by the agency that takes over the contract, based on the subsidy and operational costs.

Mr. DeSantis recalled that the Board had asked for an update on the status of Broward House in relation to a grant. Stacy Hyde of Broward House advised that the agency had received findings from a 2007 HUD grant, which resulted in monitoring in 2011. She stated that she has provided Broward House's initial and final responses, and has been in contact with HUD. There has not yet been a resolution from this Department following the final response.

Ms. Hyde explained that she has been Broward House's permanent CEO for approximately six months. She pointed out that the monitoring report reflects 100% programmatic delivery by the agency, and the issue is being addressed to HUD's satisfaction. Fiscal concerns are also being addressed: because the grant in question was a fixed-unit grant, Broward House is now treating each contract as if it was a cost-reimbursement contract. She concluded that she would share HUD's final response with the Board once they have been provided to the agency.

Mr. DeSantis added that he will be reviewing this monitoring to ensure it is in place, and asserted that Broward House has cooperated with the City and provided a plan to address the findings.

Vice Chair Gonsler stated that Chair Whipple may have additional questions on this issue at the next meeting. Ms. Hyde said she would plan to be present at the November meeting. She added that she would send documents relating to the HUD grant to Mr. DeSantis for dissemination to the Board members.

VIII. GOOD OF THE ORDER / PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. King requested information regarding the size of the Board. Vice Chair Gonsler advised that there are currently 10 members, with two to four vacancies yet to be filled.

Michael Rainer, member of the public, explained that he has concerns regarding the HOPWA program and inspection of properties for safety. He asked if there is a mandatory mold and mildew test for these properties. He added that he also had questions about the termination of clients, and whether or not these individuals have sufficient resources to fight their termination if they considered it to be wrongful.

He continued that many individuals living with HIV/AIDS are not aware of the programs and resources available to them, particularly in times of crisis. Mr. Rainer asserted that there is no message to these individuals that would guide them toward services to assure their financial stability. He pointed out that although HOPWA is a County-wide program, the Board does not typically hear input from individuals who reside outside Fort Lauderdale, and these individuals may not be aware that HOPWA and similar programs exist.

Mr. Rainer concluded that he did not feel HOPWA providers communicated these programs effectively unless they were conducting a needs assessment for a prospective client, as there is no literature available on the programs. He suggested that the Board ask questions about providers' communication or marketing strategies when reviewing prospective HOPWA providers, and that listening sessions be held throughout the County to hear feedback from the public, or a survey could be sent to service providers for their clients.

Vice Chair Gonsler explained that HOPWA is a relatively new responsibility for the Board. Mr. Rainer proposed that the Board might raise the issues he had described at a future meeting, particularly a discussion of consumer representatives for HOPWA recipients. Mr. DeSantis clarified that while the HOPWA program is County-wide, the language written for the Board is limited to Fort Lauderdale.

Vice Chair Gonsler continued that Board membership is limited to persons who live, work or own a business within the City, as they have other responsibilities in addition to HOPWA. The Board's consumer positions are appointed by consensus of the City Commissioners rather than by individual Commissioners alone. She agreed that membership could be discussed further on a future Agenda.

Mr. Calvo clarified that all HOPWA programs are registered with 211 Broward, which serves as a "front door" for all social services within the County and refers individuals to the appropriate programs. He also noted that HOPWA includes five

to six separate programs, each with its own type of requirements, services, and assistance. With regard to client termination, he added that agencies accept a client's explanation until such time as a judge or the Unemployment Board states otherwise; however, agencies also review whether or not a client was terminated for demonstrable cause.

IX. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

a. November Meeting Date

Mr. DeSantis advised that because the regular meeting date for November falls on a City holiday, there are three available dates and times at which it might be rescheduled: November 18 or November 25 at 4 p.m., or November 20 at 10 a.m. The members expressed consensus on the November 18 date. Mr. DeSantis said this would be communicated to the other Board members as well in order to ensure a quorum would be present.

X. COMMUNICATIONS TO CITY COMMISSION

None.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

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