

**City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
April 14, 2014 – 4:00 P.M.
City Commission Chambers – City Hall
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301**

MEMBERS		October 2013-September 2014	
		PRESENT	ABSENT
Wendy Gonsler, Chair	P	6	1
Helen Hinton, Vice Chair	P	6	1
Benjamin Bean	P	5	2
Ann Clark	P	6	1
Mark Fillers	P	5	2
Wanda Francis	P	6	1
Andrew Jimenez	P	4	1
Jason King (arr. 4:02)	P	6	1
Chris Lovell	P	1	0
Jasmin Shirley	A	6	1

Staff Present

Mario DeSantis, Liaison and Housing Administrator
Jonathan Brown, Manager, Housing and Community Development
Marcia Gair, Administrative Aide
J. Opperlee, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to City Commission

Motion made by Mr. Fillers, seconded by Vice Chair Hinton, that at the April 21, 2014 CSB meeting, the Board will calculate and prepare their recommendation to the City Commission for the distribution of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) public service funds in the amount of \$143,027.05. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 7-1 (Mr. Lovell dissenting).

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

- **Quorum Requirement – As of April 3, 2014 there are 10 appointed members to the Board, which means 6 constitutes a quorum**

Chair Gonsler called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Roll was called and all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

New Board member Chris Lovell introduced himself at this time. He is a longtime resident of Fort Lauderdale and has had past experience working with affordable housing. The Staff members introduced themselves as well.

Mr. King arrived at 4:02 p.m.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 10, 2014

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

IV. HOPWA

- **Susan B. Anthony**

Mr. DeSantis reported that the Susan B. Anthony Recovery Center's CEO was present to answer questions from the Board concerning issues with the agency's fiscal status.

Gene Dalbert, CEO of the Susan B. Anthony Recovery Center explained that although the agency continues to serve the community, its billing is not being processed at the City level, which means there is no accurate account of the services provided. The Center is working to overcome its billing and communication issues, which Mr. Dalbert characterized as "daunting." He stated that the agency is having difficulty with the City's reporting specifications, and he hopes to find a way to remedy this issue.

The Board members requested additional information, noting that other agencies receiving Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) funding do not cite similar issues with reporting. Mr. Dalbert asserted that although the Center has received training on how to submit billing and reporting, the rules for documentation seem to keep changing, including policies, requirements, format, and procedures, which make it difficult to determine if the agency is currently up to date in its reporting.

Mr. DeSantis advised that changes to the reporting system have been minimal, and described some of the issues the Center has experienced, including a lack of consistency in reporting and invoices. He agreed that other agencies have had lower rejection rates than the Center. Its most recent submissions have been correctly documented with assistance from Staff.

Mr. Dalbert and the Board members discussed the issue of rejected claims further, including the agency's inability to submit new claims until problems with previous claims are reconciled. Mr. DeSantis explained that the Center has been asked to resubmit its invoices once issues with previous invoices have been correctly completed.

Mr. Dalbert requested that the Board find it unacceptable for the City to continue to withhold funds until its billing issues have been resolved. Mr. Brown advised that once ongoing issues with claims have been corrected, the City would process them in monthly order according to its own auditing requirements. Chair Gonsler concluded that

she hoped to see these issues resolved before the third year of the agency's contract is complete.

V. CDBG PRESENTATIONS

Heidi Alzate, Director of Operations for Jack and Jill Children's Center, described the agency as a nonprofit early education and family support center. They serve low-income working families, and are requesting funds for their scholarship program. In order to qualify for a scholarship, families must be on the current wait list, work 30 or more hours per week or go to school full-time, and participate in the Center's parenting series. The agency's mission is to assist parents in raising children to become productive citizens of the community.

In response to questions from the Board, Ms. Alzate clarified that families that comply with the parenting component of the program are eligible for financial assistance. Finance Director Susan Stanley advised that the agency currently provides funding for 60 children each year; Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds would provide scholarships for 12 to 18 of these children. Scholarship funds would assist in funding the parenting component as well as the educational component of the program.

Marcia Barry-Smith and Marilyn Gallington, representing Housing Foundation of America (HFA), explained that the agency's first home buyers' club was based in Fort Lauderdale. HFA is seeking grant funding for education so its participants can become homeowners and leave public subsidies. Their most recent meeting included 64 participants from Fort Lauderdale, and HFA hopes to add 100 new members. Approximately 60% of club members receive assistance from the Housing Authority of Fort Lauderdale.

HFA offers eight-hour homebuyer classes each month, which must currently be attended by members in person. They hope to make these classes available online, which would expand the number of members. CDBG funds would allow the agency to increase the number of workshops held in Fort Lauderdale from two to three or more. Funds would also go toward salary increases for HFA staff.

Mary Riedel, President and CEO of Women in Distress, and Delores DeFerrari, Program Planning Manager, explained that the agency is applying within the CDBG category of Emergency Food and Shelter-Related funds. The \$50,000 request would provide 531 emergency shelter nights for 50 Fort Lauderdale residents affected by domestic violence. While Women in Distress is a county-wide agency, Fort Lauderdale accounts for 20% of total shelter intake, 28% of hotline calls, and 16% of outreach services.

Ms. Riedel concluded that there are six satellite locations throughout Fort Lauderdale, with transportation services provided through partnerships with Broward County Transit, Yellow Cab, and other agencies. The average stay for residents in emergency shelters

is 70-80 days. Women in Distress also offers referral to other services, including counseling.

Marjorie Evans, CEO of Broward Children's Center, stated that the agency provides nonprofit services for special needs children. Their Therapeutic Respite and Recreation program would allow them to serve 10 low- to moderate-income children of up to 21 years of age in Fort Lauderdale. The program offers parents the opportunity to take a break while a child with chronic or life-threatening disabilities is safely cared for. Transportation and in-home services are offered to families in need who cannot participate at the agency's center.

Staffing is based upon the level of the children's needs, with a maximum ratio of one staff member to three children. One-on-one staffing is provided if a child requires it, and parents choose the activities their children attend. It was clarified that the Center proposes to serve 10 families on an annual basis.

Patrice Paldino, supervising attorney for the Housing Unit at Legal Aid Service of Broward County, Inc., advised that the application requests a renewal of the agency's first year of CDBG grant funds, which assist children in Fort Lauderdale who are aging out of the foster care system. The program teaches these children basic skills as well as their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Ms. Paldino clarified that the program does not always start at the age of emancipation, but can serve children under the age of 18 who receive independent living services through the foster care system. The program's purpose is to educate children so they are prepared for release from the system when they turn 18. She noted that the program's goal is for the children's case managers to advise them of the services available. She encouraged the Board to maintain the agency's CDBG funding, as word of the services offered is beginning to spread.

It was noted that an agency cannot be granted a larger allocation than the previous year unless it plans to add more clients or expand the services provided. Ms. Paldino clarified that if Legal Aid received the requested amount of \$50,000, they would increase these figures accordingly.

VI. GOOD OF THE ORDER

- **Member scores due to HCD by noon on April 18**

Chair Gonsler advised that the Board members should review the agencies' materials and determine scores on their own time before sending them to Mr. Brown's office by 12 noon on April 18. Mr. Brown would compile these scores and return the results to the members by the following Monday, April 21. The highest-scoring agency in each category would be funded unless it did not receive a minimum score of 75. The Board will meet again on April 21 to determine their recommendations and allocations.

Mr. Brown reported that there is \$93,027.05 available for the program this year. He explained that the City provides \$50,000 to Broward County Family Success for Homeless Prevention, and has also opted to set aside \$50,000 for Parks and Recreation programming. These allocations will be included in the Annual Action Plan, which will be submitted in draft form to the City Commission on May 20. The final Annual Action Plan will be presented to the Commission for approval on July 1.

The Board members expressed concern and frustration with this lesser amount, noting that while the City Commission has the authority to remove an additional \$50,000 in funding from the CDBG program, this would leave very little funding available to the agencies that have requested it from the Board. Mr. Brown noted that the Board has the option of making recommendations totaling more than \$93,027.05 if they wished; however, the final disposition of funds would be at the Commission's discretion.

Motion made by Chair Gonsler that the Board allocate the funding that they have traditionally had the authority to make recommendations. [The **motion** died for lack of second.]

The Board members discussed the City Commission's decision to set aside \$50,000 for Parks and Recreation programs, recalling that this action had also been taken by the Commission the previous year. Mr. Brown recalled that the Board had allocated \$139,000 among six agencies for the current year. He also confirmed that the overall funding available from Federal sources had decreased.

It was clarified that Staff had requested that an application be submitted by the Parks and Recreation Department in order to ensure that their project complied with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirements. The application had not come before the Board, however, as a decision had been made to set aside a portion of public service funds for the project.

Motion made by Mr. Fillers, seconded by Ms. Francis, [to send] a communication to the City Commission [to] thank them for their support and belief in the Board's efforts, but the Board asks that they consider treating all applicants for Community Development Block Grants [for] public services in the same process, with no special treatment for parties who are receiving it, other than those that are legally required to be addressed.

The Board discussed Mr. Fillers' **motion**, noting that more information may be necessary to determine why funds were set aside for Parks and Recreation. Mr. Fillers asserted that the Board's Charter charges them with specific responsibilities, with no mention of preemption by other parties within City government. Mr. Brown confirmed that the City Manager oversees the City's day-to-day operations, including the City's budget. Mr. Jimenez pointed out that the Board has less authority than the City Manager, which means they may not have recourse in the future if CDBG public service funds are appropriated for other uses.

The members discussed their responsibility for the allocation of funds, asserting that no applicant should receive special or exceptional treatment. Mr. Lovell pointed out that this requirement could have been met through Staff's request that the Parks and Recreation Department submit an application, even if it did not go before the Board. He suggested that the Board could request that the application be brought before them.

Chair Gonsler asserted that the City Commission has appointed the Board to make decisions on public service allocations, including the \$50,000 for Parks and Recreation, and proposed that their communication to the City Commission be amended as follows: in good faith, the agencies and the Board have acted in a way that assumed the Board would have the same percentage of funding without any additional "lop-offs" or "take-offs" from the top, as they have had in past years, and as such, they are going to go ahead with funding at that level.

The Board members discussed their responsibility for the allocation of CDBG public service funds. Mr. Fillers declared that the Board should point out that they are unable to fulfill their responsibility if the \$50,000 in question is allocated by another party. Chair Gonsler advised that they should proceed as if no determination has been made for the \$50,000, and the City Manager would need to request these funds of the City Commission. She concluded that the City Commission has been very supportive of the Board in the past and should be given the opportunity to respond to their recommendations.

In a roll call vote, the **motion** failed 4-4 (Mr. Bean, Mr. Jimenez, Mr. King, and Mr. Lovell dissenting).

Motion made by Mr. Fillers, seconded by Vice Chair Hinton, that on next Monday's session, that the Board will calculate and prepare the recommendation for [the] City Commission for the distribution of the Community Development Block Grant public service funds in an amount equal to those as calculated in previous years, anticipated to be roughly \$143,027.05.

Mr. Lovell pointed out that if the Board allocated an additional \$50,000 among the applicants at the April 21 meeting, the applicants would be likely to think they had received a larger allocation than they would actually receive if the City Commission retained the \$50,000 for Parks and Recreation. Chair Gonsler advised that the agencies are aware their recommended allocations are not finalized until they are approved by the City Commission.

In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 7-1 (Mr. Lovell dissenting).

- **CSB holiday schedule**

Mr. Brown advised that the Board will need to discuss Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) funding at its June meeting, as its recommendation will go before the City Commission at its July 1 meeting. He recalled that HOPWA funding has been reduced by \$900,000. Information will be provided to the Board in May so they can make a recommendation in June.

Chair Gonsler recommended that meeting dates should ensure that Jewish holidays are taken into account during scheduling, as tonight's meeting was on the first night of Passover.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

VIII. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Mr. Brown confirmed that all applicants have been advised to send a representative to the April 21 Board meeting, at which funding recommendations will be made. Chair Gonsler requested that the Board members review each agency's performance indicators as submitted.

IX. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COMMISSION

It was noted that the **motion** made by Mr. Fillers would be sent as a communication to the City Commission.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board 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.]