City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
October 12, 2015 – 4:00 P.M.
City Commission Chambers – City Hall
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301

October 2015-September 2016

MEMBERS		**PRESENT**	**ABSENT**
Wanda Francis, Chair	P	1	0
Jasmin Shirley, Vice Chair	P	1	0
Benjamin Bean	P	1	0
Mark Fillers	A	0	1
Jason King (arr. 4:20)	P	1	0
Chris Lovell	P	1	0
Richard Morris	A	0	1
Noah Szugajew	P	1	0
Joseph S. Van de Bogart	P	1	0

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

Communication to City Commission

None.

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

- **Quorum Requirement – As of October 2, 2015, there are 9 appointed members to the Board, which means 5 constitutes a quorum**

Chair Francis called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present. All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

The Staff members present introduced themselves at this time.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – AUGUST 10, 2015

Motion made by Vice Chair Shirley, seconded by Mr. Bean, to approve.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 21, 2015

Motion made by Mr. Szugajew, seconded by Mr. Van de Bogart, to approve.

In a voice vote, both **motions** passed unanimously.

V. HOPWA / BROWARD HOUSE FUNDING REQUEST

Mr. DeSantis explained that Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) provider Broward House has made a funding request, which would help the agency close out its last fiscal year.

Steve Nolte, representing Broward House, provided the Board members with a handout reflecting the average voucher payment during fiscal year (FY) 2013-14. Beginning in October 2014, Broward House paid $102,000 for 134 vouchers, which was reduced to 124 vouchers in September. He asserted that while the agency can control such costs as salaries and administrative expenses, vouchers cannot be similarly controlled, as they are based on the amount of rent that individuals are paying as well as the amount of rent paid by HOPWA. Over time, the average voucher amount has increased from $700/month to $809/month. This can mean clients are living in more expensive housing, or they may have less income.

It was noted that the voucher budget in FY 2013-14 was $1,253,976, which was reduced by $85,000 the following fiscal year because attrition was expected in the program. However, actual voucher costs have increased by $69,000. The total variance in budget compared to expenses is $46,518.55, most of which is owed to the voucher program. This is the funding amount requested.

Mr. DeSantis stated that many of the tenant-based voucher program clients have been advised to stop working and collect SSI or SSDI benefits. If a client is not working, the voucher program pays the entire subsidy rather than a partial subsidy. He added that not all clients qualify for SSDI benefits. The percentage of clients who are no longer working or earning less money is not currently known. It was noted that Broward House plans to track these figures on a spreadsheet in order to accurately determine how many clients they are helping and to what extent, as well as the average cost and why this cost is changing.

Mr. DeSantis continued that another difference in voucher costs may be that families with more members are often placed in higher rent districts than individuals due to the need for more bedrooms. He clarified that it has not yet been determined how many Broward House clients are single individuals rather than families, so the difference in costs has not been calculated. Clients of tenant-based voucher programs who are employed provide HOPWA agencies with pay stubs each month in order to show the portion that goes toward their rent.

Mr. King arrived at 4:20 p.m.

Mr. DeSantis continued that this is the first instance in three years in which there has been a shortage in the tenant-based voucher program. He did not know at this time if this would be an isolated incident or representative of a trend; however, he pointed out that other programs, such as short-term rent, mortgage, and utility (STRMU) and permanent housing placement (PHP), did not run out of funds due to cost constraints. He emphasized that the tenant-based voucher program is intended to assist individuals who have steady incomes. As vouchers are terminated and clients move on to become self-sufficient, the program is not being backfilled.

Mr. Brown explained that approval of the funds would typically be an administrative function; however, Staff wished to keep the Board aware of issues such as this one in case they become ongoing. He confirmed that Staff is supportive of Broward House's request. The funds will come from unused dollars, the total amount of which will be determined in December 2015. Because the request is for less than $50,000, it does not require City Commission approval, although Broward House's contract will require amendment to reflect the new funding amount.

Motion made by Mr. Van de Bogart, seconded by Mr. Szugajew, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

VI. CDBG DISCUSSION (CONTINUATION)

Mr. Brown explained that this was a continuation of the discussion begun at the September 2015 meeting, at which a quorum was not present. He advised that Staff would address any questions regarding Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) documentation, and would take any changes recommended by the Board to the City Commission if necessary. He noted that not all changes would require Commission approval.

Mr. Brown further clarified that if the Board wished to eliminate a specific category included in the Annual Action Plan, this request would have to go before the City Commission, as the Commission has approved a specific policy document including performance indicators for agencies; however, if the Board wished to eliminate categories altogether, this would not require Commission approval.

The Board discussed the issue further, with Mr. King suggesting that instead of eliminating categories, a new category could be added for programs focusing on the arts. Mr. Brown observed that while such a category could be added, it could be difficult for organizations in this category to provide documentation showing that they are serving low-income communities. It was also noted that programs for the arts could apply under the category of Other.

Mr. Lovell spoke in favor of eliminating categories altogether, recalling that the previous year, one agency had submitted applications under multiple categories. He felt eliminating categories would allow the Board to judge each application on its own merit.

Mr. Brown reiterated that if the Board decides to make all categories available in this manner, City Commission approval would not be necessary.

Chair Francis recalled that there had also been discussion in September regarding a category which would consider the innovative nature of agencies and programs. Mr. Bean recalled that there had been the suggestion of adding points for innovation to the scoring process. Mr. Szugajew pointed out that innovation is mentioned in the application's Program Description. He recommended that if categories are eliminated, the application should emphasize the need for programs to be mission-driven.

Mr. Brown noted that removal of categories would result in a more challenging and subjective process for the Board, as it would be difficult to measure certain agencies against one another. This could also result in the City Commission hearing more direct arguments from applicants and possibly making more changes to the Board's recommendations. He suggested if categories are eliminated, other thresholds could be established, such as having companies within certain amounts of funding compete against one another. Mr. Brown concluded that the categories may be unrelated to the recent decrease in CDBG applications.

Mr. Bean proposed that if categories are eliminated, the Board could continue to use the CDBG public service mission statement as a measurement of the agencies' programs. Mr. Van de Bogart suggested that the categories could serve as examples of what public service programs could focus on rather than as areas under which to apply. Vice Chair Shirley observed, however, that this could lead to a lack of variety in applications.

Chair Francis recalled that another part of the September discussion was the practice of giving a certain amount of funding each year to the same agency or agencies rather than funding new agencies. Mr. Brown pointed out that the Board is not required to provide a top-rated agency with the amount of funding that they have requested.

Mr. Brown also advised that if the Board wished to eliminate the $50,000 funding cap for agencies, City Commission approval would be required. It was confirmed that the Board wished to retain this funding cap. Mr. King asked if the Board might entertain the idea of instituting an exception process for agencies that could demonstrate a need for more funding than this cap would allow. Mr. Brown cautioned, however, that if the cap was exceeded, there would be few funds left to distribute, as the Board receives approximately $150,000 in annual CDBG funds to expend. Vice Chair Shirley also pointed out that some agencies have difficulty documenting expenses for which CDBG funds may be used.

Mr. Brown stated that in the previous year there were $220,000 in public service dollars to spend; however, the City Manager's Office appropriated $50,000 for a program to assist the homeless population, and $30,000 was used toward fair housing activity. This left approximately $140,000 for CDBG use. He reviewed the previous fiscal year's CDBG allocations, which were as follows:

- Broward Partnership for the Homeless $40,000
- Care Resources $10,606
- Jack and Jill Children's Center $45,000
- Women in Distress $45,000

Mr. Lovell addressed another Board rule which prohibited funding an agency for more than three years in a row. Mr. Brown clarified that while this rule was not U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) policy, it was reflective of HUD guidance in order to prevent municipalities from favoring the same organizations and providing them with funding every year, which could prevent or discourage new organizations from competing.

The members briefly discussed the "Agency Status" category, which was included in order to award five additional points to agencies that had not received funding in the previous three years. Mr. King asserted, however, that this could be perceived as punitive of an agency that has received funding and done good work for the community. He felt that an agency's understanding of the community and constituency should be rewarded, particularly if that agency is having a positive impact on the community.

Mr. Brown advised that because the Board had created the scoring document, they may amend it without City Commission approval. Mr. Bean pointed out that the program description already encourages an agency to discuss its innovation in approaching an issue, and emphasized that a successful program should not be penalized in this manner. He concluded that the scoring sheet should not offer additional points for innovation, particularly if an agency loses points for having received funding within the last three years.

Mr. Brown confirmed that if categories are eliminated, City Staff will still explain the application process at its annual meeting with prospective applicants so they will understand how to submit their pre-applications. Once pre-applications are received, Staff works with each agency to ensure they understand the requirements of the CDBG process.

Motion made by Mr. Lovell, seconded by Mr. Van de Bogart, to remove the categories from the application process for the CDBG grants. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 4-3 (Vice Chair Shirley, Mr. King, and Mr. Van de Bogart dissenting).

Motion made by Mr. Lovell, seconded by Vice Chair Shirley, that no changes are made to the scoring system. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed 6-1 (Mr. King opposed).

Motion made by Mr. Lovell, seconded by Vice Chair Shirley, that no changes are made to the cap. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Motion made by Mr. Bean to leave the categories on the application, just not tell [the applicants] that they have to apply to a specific category.

It was suggested that category descriptions could be included in the application summary document as examples of programs the City may wish to support. Mr. Brown confirmed that Staff would retain the category descriptions in any case. Mr. Bean **withdrew** his **motion**.

Motion made by Mr. Lovell, seconded by Mr. King, that no agency receive funding for more than three consecutive years. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

VII. GOOD OF THE ORDER

None.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

IX. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Mr. Lovell requested additional information on the issue regarding the tenant-based voucher program at Broward Regional, and suggested that this agency be asked to provide a report similar to the one presented today by Broward House. He explained that this would give the Board a better understanding of how funds are spent and whether or not this may represent a trend for the tenant-based voucher program. Mr. Brown advised that the agencies are currently in the process of closing out the previous fiscal year. It was determined that January 2016 would be a more appropriate time for an agency to provide this report.

Mr. DeSantis also pointed out that the bigger question could be to ask the agencies how they are monitoring their voucher programs, such as on a quarterly basis, to determine where their funding stands. Chair Francis added that she would like to know how agencies track whether or not their clients in these programs are working. Mr. DeSantis replied that Staff is working to develop a set of enhancements to the program that could provide a more accurate picture of what is going on with clients.

It was also requested that Staff provide a year-end report of the different types of grants funded by the Board. It was determined that this would be available in January 2016, once the system has been closed out, and would be reflective of activity through August 2015. Vice Chair Shirley requested an update on the renovations underway for a HOPWA provider, which were discussed at a previous meeting. Mr. Szugajew proposed an overall mid-year report on all agencies that received funding through the Board.

Mr. DeSantis recommended that any unspent funds be reallocated only on an as-needed basis, as the HOPWA program is expected to lose funding over the next two

years. He advised that he would be able to report the reserve funds from the previous year in January.

X. COMMUNICATIONS TO CITY COMMISSION

None.

Mr. Brown addressed the elimination of categories from the CDBG process, reiterating that this change is consistent with what the City Commission has approved and would not require additional Commission approval. He suggested, however, that the Board consider how to make the CDBG application process fair for a small organization competing against a larger, well-funded organization. He expressed concern that some smaller agencies may decline to apply to the program when they learn they will be competing against large agencies that have professional grant writers on staff. It was decided that this would be an Agenda Item for the next meeting.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:25 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.]