



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
City Commission Chambers, City Hall
January 10, 2022 – 4:00 P.M.**

January-December 2022

MEMBERS		PRESENT	ABSENT
Marisol Simon, Chair	P	1	0
Christina Disbrow, Vice Chair	P	1	0
Pamela Aiken	P	1	0
Emma Collum	A	0	1
Elizabeth Cupido	P	1	0
Christi Rice	P	1	0
Shackera Scott	P	1	0
Terra Sickler	A	0	1
Dana Somerstein (via Zoom)	P	1	0

Staff Present

Rachel Williams, Housing and Community Development Manager
Eveline Dsouza, Senior Administrative Assistant, Housing and Community Development
Ben Sorensen, Fort Lauderdale City Commissioner
Carla Blair, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communication to the City Commission

Motion made by Ms. Cupido, seconded by Ms. Somerstein, to allow for a virtual option, particularly in support of all organizations that show up every day serving the community of those at the highest risk, particularly while we are in a resurgence of a very serious virus. It was clarified that this permission would be extended to representatives of grant recipient agencies as well. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 5-2 (Ms. Disbrow and Ms. Rice dissenting).



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Motion made by Ms. Scott, seconded by Ms. Disbrow, to add different aspects to the previous motion that was approved, to add “through 2022” if the first one is shot down and then “for just the grantees” if that is shot down. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

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

- **Quorum Requirement – As of January 1, 2022, there are 10 appointed members to the Board, which means 5 constitutes a quorum**

Vice Chair Simon called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. Roll was called and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

Vice Chair Simon asked if Ms. Somerstein, who was attending remotely, would be permitted to vote at today's meeting.

Motion made by Vice Chair Simon, seconded by Ms. Aiken, that this is an emergency circumstance that would warrant [Ms. Somerstein] being able to participate fully in today's Board meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

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

IV. ANNOUNCE THE RESIGNATION OF CSB CHAIR:

Vice Chair Simon reported that the previous week, the Board members had received notice of former Chair April Kirk's resignation.

- **Motion to amend the agenda**

Motion made by Vice Chair Simon, seconded by Ms. Aiken, to amend the Agenda to add an Item announcing the resignation of the Board Chair and to discuss the possible replacement of a new Board Chair. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NOVEMBER 8, 2021

Motion made by Ms. Rice, seconded by Ms. Somerstein, to accept the minutes as written for the November 8 meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

The Board returned to Item IV at this time.

IV. ANNOUNCE THE RESIGNATION OF CSB CHAIR:

- **Motion to nominate new chair or add to next CSB meeting agenda**

Motion made by Ms. Cupido, seconded by Ms. Rice, that Marisol [Simon], who is currently serving as Vice Chair, take the Chair position moving forward. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Ms. Dsouza explained that the Board may vote to elect a new Vice Chair at today's meeting or at the next scheduled meeting.

Motion made by Ms. Scott, seconded by Ms. Cupido, to nominate Christina [Disbrow]. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

V. CDBG Update – FY20-21 Performance Report

Ms. Dsouza recalled that the Board had requested an update from representatives of two agencies receiving Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, as they had not been present at the November 8, 2021 meeting.

Victoria Ruiz, Director of the South Florida Institute on Aging's (SoFIA's) Senior Companion Program, reported that the agency's goal was to have 18 senior companion volunteers serve 45 isolated older adults and/or adults with disabilities and their caregivers. They provided 14 volunteers who were companions to and provided supportive services for 18 Fort Lauderdale residents. Another 12 Fort Lauderdale residents were served by the program, and 25 volunteers participated in the program and received a stipend but did not fall within the millage of the program or were not comfortable filling out the program's required documentation.

The Senior Companion Program received \$50,000 in CDBG funds for the previous fiscal year (FY). Another \$9217 was carried forward to provide emergency in-home services through a partnership with local home health agencies. By the end of the year, the program had spent \$58,294.82 of its total.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the Senior Companion Program, as the agency was unable to provide clients with in-home visits. These visits have been suspended during the pandemic, and the agency pivoted to telephone and video reassurance calls. All volunteers were provided with data-enabled tablets, and the agency collaborated with other agencies which shared technical training with the volunteers so they could connect with clients and participate in monthly in-service meetings. Remote visits, however, do not take the same amount of time as in-person visits, and limited the agency's ability to spend down its funding.

At present, the Senior Companion Program has resumed in-person services for clients who feel sufficiently comfortable in doing so. Vaccination is not required of volunteers; however, if a client is not comfortable meeting with a volunteer who is not vaccinated, the agency attempts to place them with a vaccinated volunteer. Some clients have not received services through this program in nearly two years.

Chair Simon asked how many volunteers are currently participating in the program. Ms. Ruiz replied that roughly half of the program's Fort Lauderdale volunteers had returned prior to the announcement that they may do so regardless of vaccination status. It is hoped that this percentage will increase since the announcement was made the previous week. Prior to the announcement, both the volunteer and the client were required to be vaccinated and to sign a statement of understanding of the risk of in-person visits. The statement of understanding is still required.

Ms. Disbrow asked if Turnstone Development has provided a report on their progress. Ms. Williams advised that this agency has discontinued the program it had planned to fund with CDBG dollars.

Chair Simon asked if Turnstone will be returning the balance of its CDBG funds. Ms. Williams replied that until their announcement of discontinuation, Turnstone had fully expended all of their funds ahead of schedule. Ms. Williams concluded that the agency will not be applying for CDBG funds in the next cycle.

VI. HOPWA Update – FY20-21 Performance Report

Ms. Dsouza reported that the Broward Regional Health Planning Council's (BRHPC's) permanent housing placement (PHP) program has reported that they served 64 clients against a goal of 75 in the previous fiscal year. 100% of these 64 clients were processed through the program.

Ms. Cupido asked if there are reasons other than the rising cost of housing for the shortfall in clients served. She also asked if BRHPC has revised its projections for the number of clients to be served in FY 2022. Ms. Dsouza explained that the contract for the previous fiscal year ended on September 30, 2021. She concluded that she would provide additional details at the next Board meeting.

VII. GOOD OF THE ORDER

a. January 10, 2022 Public Meeting 5:00 p.m.

Chair Simon noted that the annual public meeting to discuss the CDBG and Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) will be held at 5 p.m., following the adjournment of the Board meeting.

Chair Simon noted that clients, agency representatives, Board members, and members of the public with an interest in Community Services Board (CSB) business may have compromised immune systems, and asked if the Board should consider making a request of the City Commission to be permitted to hold hybrid in-person/telecommunications meetings on a regular basis. She recalled that the Board has discussed this issue previously but did not make a formal request.

Ms. Williams stated that the Board may move to send a communication to the City Commission requesting permission for hybrid meetings. The communication and vote are recorded in the minutes, which are then sent to the City Clerk's Office. This Office then forwards the communication to the City Commission. The Board's liaisons monitor this process and reach out to the Chair with any follow-up information.

Ms. Rice requested clarification of whether Board members only would be able to attend using communications technology, or if the general public would also be able to participate virtually. Chair Simon replied that while she had intended to refer specifically to Board members, the public could also be invited to view or listen to meetings using this format.

Fort Lauderdale City Commissioner Ben Sorensen advised that this issue was raised at a recent City Commission meeting. While he had advocated in favor of this permission, the Commission ultimately decided against it. No City advisory bodies are currently permitted to meet virtually.

Commissioner Sorensen continued that he would be willing to ask if an exception might be made for individuals with medical conditions. He recommended that the Board send a communication to the City Commission, and he would advocate for a hybrid option for Board members with extenuating medical circumstances.

Motion made by Ms. Cupido, seconded by Ms. Somerstein, to allow for a virtual option, particularly in support of all organizations that show up every day serving the community of those at the highest risk, particularly while we are in a resurgence of a very serious virus.

Ms. Cupido clarified that her **motion** was also in favor of extending a hybrid option to grant recipient agencies as well as Board members.

Ms. Rice stated that she would be in favor of requiring Board members to attend in person but allowing representatives of recipient agencies to call in to the meetings. She felt the protocols currently in place for in-person meetings did not place Board members at high risk.

Chair Simon noted that the makeup of the Board is intended to include members of the HIV/AIDS community, who would be at higher health risk if they were exposed to the coronavirus or other communicable illnesses. Ms. Scott added that HIV/AIDS is not the only condition by which an individual may be immunocompromised, and recommended that this be taken into consideration to ensure that membership is fully inclusive.

In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed 5-2 (Ms. Disbrow and Ms. Rice dissenting).

Ms. Williams advised that the Board members have the option of providing a written report within 15 days of the meeting, which would provide additional detail on their communication to the Commission. The liaison would attach this report to the communication. Ms. Disbrow volunteered to provide the written report.

Ms. Scott suggested that the Board consider an attachment to the **motion** which would either permit hybrid meetings for a limited time in case the Commission is opposed to allowing this format in perpetuity, or allow agency representatives to participate remotely.

Motion made by Ms. Scott, seconded by Ms. Disbrow, to add different aspects to the previous motion that was approved, to add "through 2022" if the first one is shot down and then "for just the grantees" if that is shot down.

Ms. Rice pointed out that Board members experiencing extenuating circumstances are currently permitted to call in to meetings. She added that Board members are aware of the expectations of membership when they are appointed or reappointed to the Board, while members of the public or agency representatives do not share these circumstances.

In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Commissioner Sorensen thanked the Board members for their service to the community. He advised that the previous Chair had emailed him regarding some of the frustrations that arose from her experience on the Board, and asked how the Commission might be able to improve the members' experiences.

Ms. Rice noted that the Board is currently experiencing lower membership than usual, and suggested that the Commissioners could encourage members of the public to volunteer for membership in order to foster more robust discussion.

Commissioner Sorensen recalled that former Chair Kirk had indicated she felt the Commission was not responsive to the Board's concerns or requests, and asked if the members would recommend any specific action to improve this perception. It was proposed that this discussion be tabled until the February 2022 meeting, which Commissioner Sorensen would be invited to attend as well.

Ms. Rice recalled that in 2021, the City announced the addition of a new grant process and gave oversight of this process to the Budget Advisory Board. This had surprised the CSB, as they already had experience in overseeing the City's CDBG and HOPWA grants. She felt there had been a lack of communication to either the Board or the grant recipient agencies regarding this decision.

Commissioner Sorensen replied that one concern he and other members of the community had expressed was whether or not the Budget Advisory Board was sufficiently familiar with grant funding and how to evaluate grant requests. He expected that in FY 2022, the Mayor and City Commission would make a decision regarding whether or not to continue to fund nonprofit agencies, either at their current funding amounts or possibly at all. He concluded that the CSB's experience with grant funding could be helpful to the Budget Advisory Board.

Commissioner Sorensen also requested an estimate of the amount of funds addressed by the CSB each year. Chair Simon estimated that the Board makes recommendations on approximately \$10 million annually.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Williams reminded all present that the City's annual grant planning meeting would be held immediately following adjournment of the Board meeting. She invited any interested Board members to attend as well, particularly if they are new members. Agencies applying for public service CDBG funds are required to attend this meeting so they have a clear understanding of the program before they apply.

IX. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Chair Simon concluded that additional HOPWA information would be provided at the February 2022 meeting, and the Board would also further discuss the communications to the City Commission made at today's meeting.

X. COMMUNICATIONS TO CITY COMMISSION

It was noted that this Item was previously discussed.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:06 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.]