

Social Service Human Relations Board

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Social Service Human Relations Board, March 24, 2016

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

President Biggs called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Present were Vice-President Williams, and members Radding, Hyman, Blake, Sorensen, and Davenport.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the special meeting of February 1, 2016 were approved as presented.

M/S Hyman/Williams Unanimous

3. AGENDA ITEMS

3-A RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PUBLIC SERVICES FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR FY 2016-17

President Biggs began by sharing that in lieu of a staff report, Alameda Housing Authority (AHA)/CDBG staff, who is not able to be here this evening, sent a letter which SSHRB staff will go over with us.

SSHRB staff explained that AHA staff informed the Board that Habitat for Humanity (HFH) is currently receiving funds for some of the services described in their application, and that the services for which they are requesting funding do not meet the SSHRB refined priority of safety net services. The letter also stated that BFWC withdrew its submission for the Rental Assistance Operating/Administrative funds.

In conclusion, the letter from AHA staff stated that there are currently no funds available for emergency homeless prevention services. In the past, BFWC administered such an emergency fund. It would be within the Board's purview to consider this need given our housing crisis, and to make a recommendation for allocating a portion of the remaining funds to provide emergency homeless prevention services. Such a recommendation could be added to the scope of services of an existing applicant.

Before introducing the speakers, President Biggs reminded the Board of information that had been provided at its previous meeting. In past years, at the City Council's request and annually as a part of the public review process, the Board reviewed staff's recommendations for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for Public Services. Starting last year, at the request of AHA/CDBG staff, the Board now also participates in the development of the RFP and scoring criteria, and evaluation and scoring of the applications. At tonight's meeting the Board will make recommendations regarding funding allocations for FY 2016-17.

AHA/CDBG staff informed the Board that there was a 3.1% reduction to the FY 16-17 CDBG Public Service cap. \$181,368 will be available for FY 2016-17. Funding for Fair Housing and the Eden 211 Program will be taken off the top of the Public Services funding allocation. Fair Housing will be funded with \$15,000 from Public Services funding. The Housing Authority will fund \$10,000, as affirmatively furthering Fair Housing is a requirement of receiving Federal funds. The 211 program will be funded with \$18,556 from Public Services funds (\$181,368 -

\$33,556 (ECHO/TL)). The Public Services funds available for distribution total \$147,812.

He added that, since the Board will not be considering the HFH application and BFWC's application for rental assistance, and because the remaining five agencies are requesting a total of \$ 129,136, the Board can fully fund the five remaining agencies, and still have an additional \$18,676 to allocate.

President Biggs then introduced the first speaker.

Kate Rosenbaum, Development Associate for Legal Assistance for Seniors (LAS)

Ms. Rosenbaum thanked the city for their level of support, adding that, without it, they would not be able to offer the level of service they currently provide. They enjoy being a part of the Alameda community, especially their relationship with Mastick Senior Center. She added that their Executive Director has initiated discussion with AHA staff, Claudia Young, regarding a future housing project. She concluded saying that she is available to answer any questions the Board might have.

Patricia Bidar, Director of Development and Communications, Building Futures with Women and Children (BFWC)

Ms. Bidar began her presentation by thanking the City of Alameda for its on-going support of BFWC, and that it makes a tremendous difference in their clients lives.

She went on to speak to the withdrawal of their application for rental assistance, stating that BFWC staff will continue to provide tenant-based rental assistance, and will be inviting the families on Central Ave., who are being displaced, to a housing workshop. She added that the challenge of identifying affordable units in which to place their clients is one of the reasons they withdrew their application.

Ms. Bidar then made a request that the additional CDBG Public Service funds available be added to the BFWC grant, and that their scope of work be expanded to include the provision of emergency housing services.

In conclusion, she shared that the change in how Emergency Solutions Grants State funding for emergency shelters is now allocated, has resulted in the County receiving much less than they had received in the past. Last year, funding was allocated based on quality of services, and BFWC received nearly all of the county's allocation.

Erin Scott, Exec. Dir. Family Violence Law Center (FVLC)

Ms. Scott began by thanking the Board for its support, and for the careful consideration of the proposals. She added that, from FY 2013 – 14 to FY 2014 – 15, FVLC has seen a 17 percent increase in the DV calls they receive from Alameda residents. She added that there seems to be a reorganization at APD as to how they handled DV calls. In the past, an investigative team would take the felonies, and the misdemeanors were handled at the patrol level. While FVLC is still written into the protocol of APD, and still receives all the calls, all the investigation is now being done at the patrol level. She said that they will watch it very closely, and be in contact with the police department, to assure that domestic violence is still considered a high priority.

Ms. Scott went on to say that a study at New York University in 2015 showed the positive impact civil legal assistance has on domestic violence survivors and on the community. Furthermore, civil legal assistance, which is what is being funded through this CDBG grant, helps reduce domestic

violence, and the associated medical and other costs.

In response to questions, Ms. Scott shared that she had just found out today about the change in protocol, and would be in contact with Chief Rolleri to find out the reason for the change. She went on to say that some police departments have all of their DV calls investigated at the patrol level. One change she sees with the new protocol is that, in the past, APD had sent FVLC spreadsheets of all of the DV calls, and that they may no longer get them.

Angie Watson-Hajjem, Fair Housing Counselor, ECHO Housing

Ms. Hajjem shared that her work at ECHO is in Fair Housing, and she encourages all residents to call if they feel that they are being discriminated against.

President Biggs stated that Fair Housing funding is not reviewed by the Board, and that the application for funding that they reviewed from ECHO is for tenant– landlord services.

Ms. Hajjem explained that calls to ECHO for tenant-landlord services has increased as the housing crisis has become more critical. While the RRAC is available primarily to handle rent increase issues, ECHO provides education as to both the rights of a tenant being evicted, and the rights of a landlord wanting to do a just-cause eviction.

President Biggs asked why most of the funds requested in the ECHO tenant-landlord application go to education as opposed to mediation.

Ms. Hajjem replied that ECHO's Executive Director wrote the proposal, and would be in a better position to answer that question.

Karen Zeltzer, Board Member Alameda Food Bank (AFB)

Ms. Zeltzer thanked the City and the Board for their years of support and funding. The AFB provides food to 5,000 residents of Alameda, representing nearly 2,000 households. They serve all of Alameda's diverse community, with more than half of their clients being children, and many being elderly and disabled. The CDBG funding from the city of Alameda allows them to provide both quality and quantity in the food packages that they distribute. Families are able to access the Food Bank seven times a month, and they also provide delivery to homebound Alamedans. The average family participating in their programs can receive enough food to save \$500 a month on their grocery bills. The money saved can help offset the cost of increasing rent, medication, and other bills.

While they do have income limits, the limits take into consideration the high cost of living in the Bay Area, and no one is turned away. One of their challenges is in having families in need feel comfortable about coming in and asking for food. They have the capacity to serve more clients, and recently received a grant from a research firm who will help them develop strategies. Ms. Zeltzer said she is reaching out to the community to let them know about their services. In addition to attending the Alameda Collaborative for Children, Youth, and their Families meetings and community events, and reaching out to Alameda's faith community. They also have positive relationships with the Alameda Journal and SUN, and have an increasing presence on social media.

Member Hyman made a number of recommendations for the Food Bank to interact with AUSD, in addition to the relationships they have already established.

President Biggs thanked all of the agencies for their presentations, and for the extraordinary services they provide in our community.

Discussion

After a brief discussion, President Biggs suggested that the Board proceed by first entertaining a motion to fund all five agencies at the requested amounts, and then enter into a discussion as to how to allocate the remaining \$18,676.

A motion was made to fund AFB, BFWC-Midway, AFB, LAS, and ECHO at their requested amounts, for a total allocation of \$129,136.
M/S Davenport/Williams Unanimous

Discussion then continued as to the allocation of the remaining \$18,676.

President Biggs shared that there is a real need for emergency housing services, and that BFWC has the capacity for, and experience in, administering these type of services. The remaining funds could be used to provide motel assistance for families waiting to move into a new apartment, or provide rental assistance for a family that has identified housing, but does not have all of the funds needed for their move-in. He added that these type of services would not meet the needs of Alameda's chronically homeless.

Member Blake was concerned about the integrity of the process, and that for the second year, the Board is being asked to allocate funds to a program, without that program going through the process that other applicants were required to do.

Member Radding inquired as to the frequency of requests for this type of funding, and how providers were made aware of the requests.

Staff shared that calls for this type of assistance come into City Hall, the Housing Authority, police department, and service providers.

Member Davenport stated that, while he realizes there is a need for emergency homeless services, he would've liked to see an application for the provision of the services. He went on to suggest that the Board might divide the remaining funds equally between the five agencies that had just been approved for funding.

Member Radding agreed that we might consider dividing the funds equally between the agencies.

Staff commented that, when the Board distributed additional funds to agencies last year, the funds were divided proportionately, as opposed to equally.

Member Williams asked staff if the CDBG timeline allowed for the Board to conduct a second RFP process for the remaining funds, and hold a special meeting to consider the allocation of those funds. Staff replied that, without AHA staff present, he did not know whether there was time to conduct a second RFP process.

Member Hyman stated that, this is the second year in a row that the Board has been asked to allocate funds to a program at the time of its allocation meeting, and added that she is concerned

about the transparency of this process. Like other members, she shared that she understands the need for the emergency housing services, but feels that the process the Board is being asked to use to fund these services is not fair to the other applicants.

Member Sorensen added that, after the Board had gone through a similar process last year, the Board communicated to staff that steps should be taken to assure that this does not happen again.

President Biggs reopened public comment, to allow service providers to share their thoughts on the Board's discussion regarding the allocation of the remaining funds.

Ms. Scott with FVLC shared that she realized that funds for emergency housing services were needed, but that if she knew that there would be additional funds available, she would've applied for more funds.

Ms. Bidar with BFWC shared that she usually gets calls from staff at City Hall for these types of services, and appreciates the Board considering allocating additional funds to BFWC to provide emergency homeless services.

Ms. Seltzer with AFB stated that, as a social worker, she realizes the need for emergency homeless funds, and has often unsuccessfully made the calls trying to access the services for clients.

President Biggs thanked the speakers again for their input.

After a brief discussion, most members agreed that they would prefer to conduct a second RFP process, and to divide the funds proportionately between the five agencies, if this was not possible.

A motion was made that, if the CDBG funding for FY 2016-17 timeline allowed, a second RFP should be distributed to the five agencies currently approved for funding, inviting them to submit proposals for all or part of the \$18,676 available for distribution, and If the CDBG funding for the FY 2016-17 timeline cannot accommodate this process, the funds should be divided proportionately among the five agencies currently approved for funding.

M/S Williams/Blake Approved 6 to 1

YES: Vice-President Williams, members Radding, Hyman, Blake, Sorensen, and Davenport.

NO: President Biggs

3.-B REQUEST FROM ATAH FOR BOARD TO CONSIDER SUPPORTING THE SCREENING OF THE FILM "FORDSON" AT THE ALAMEDA THEATRE

Vice-President and ATAH Chair Williams shared that, on Monday, April 11, there will be an event in the Kofman Auditorium that will feature the award-winning film Fordson. The film follows an Arab-American high school football team from a Detroit suburb as they practice for their big cross-town rivalry game during Ramadan. Following the film, there will be a discussion about the film with students from Encinal High School's Muslim Student Association, and a representative from the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

It is hoped that this event will help Alamedans gain a better understanding of their Muslim neighbors, at a time when discrimination against Muslims and the bullying of Muslim students in California schools is of growing concern.

The event is currently co-sponsored by the Alameda Unified School District and the Alameda Collaborative for Children, Youth, and their Families, and Ms. Williams asked that the Board consider co-sponsoring the event, and providing a grant to help offset the cost of producing it.

Staff added that, over the years, the Board has co-sponsored and supported similar screenings, such as the screenings of BULLY, MILK, and Facing Fear, and that this event is consistent with ATAH's purpose of promoting civility, respect, and goodwill in the community.

After a brief discussion, a motion was made to co-sponsor the screening of the film Fordson and panel discussion, and to provide funding, not to exceed \$750, to help cover the costs associated with the event.

M/S Williams / Hyman Unanimous

4. BOARD/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS, NON-AGENDA

Member Hyman announced that the teachers and firefighters unions were having a crab feed fundraiser benefiting the Alameda Point Collaborative and Alameda Family Services on Saturday, March 26th.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS NONE

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 PM. M/S Williams / Radding Unanimous

Respectfully submitted by:
Jim Franz, Secretary