

Social Service Human Relations Board
Minutes of the Special Meeting, April 1, 2014

1. **CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL**

President Biggs called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. Present were members Radding, Watkinson, and Blake. Absent were Vice President Villareal, and members Williams and Robles-Wong

1-A. **SEASON FOR NON-VIOLENCE DAILY READING**

President Biggs explained that each year, the Board partners with the ACCYF and community organizations to support activities and events during the Season For Non-Violence which begins on January 30, and ends on April 4. Daily words and readings have been created for elementary, middle, and high school students in hopes of inspiring and guiding them into a safer, more peaceful world. Like the City Council, AUSD Board, and ACCYF, SSHRB traditionally begins ITS meetings during the Season For Non Violence with the Word and Reading of the day.

Commitment

Today's principle from A Season for Nonviolence is COMMITMENT. Do you feel a commitment to nonviolence? Can you think of a way to express that commitment today?

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Special Meeting, February 19, 2014 were approved as presented.

M/S Radding\Biggs Unanimous

3. **AGENDA ITEMS**

3-A. **REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) NON-HOUSING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PUBLIC SERVICES
FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR FY 2014-15**

**CLAUDIA YOUNG – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM MANAGER, CITY OF
ALAMEDA**

Ms. Young began her presentation by introducing Victoria Johnson, the Housing Authority's new Director of Housing and Community Development. She went on to explain that HUD has now provided information as to why year's funding is less than was anticipated and used to formulate the staff recommendations presented to the Board at its Special Meeting on February 19, 2014. The maximum amount of CDBG Entitlement funds available for Public Services is 15% of the total grant, and is \$161,058 for FY 2014 – 15. This, added to \$30,000, which represents 15% of \$200,000 in Reprogrammed Funds, makes a total of \$191,058 available for Public Services. This leaves \$5,433 more to work with, compared to the amount available and recommended for funding by staff at the February meeting.

Speakers: (A number of speakers arrived after the Board had entered into the discussion phase of the agenda item. However, all were given the opportunity to speak, and are listed below in the order they spoke)
All of this evening's speakers were also present and spoke at the Board's meeting on February 19.
Additional information on their programs can be found in the minutes of that meeting.

Erin Scott, Executive Director -- Family Violence Law Center

Ms. Scott reiterated how important the services of the Family Violence Law Center were to victims of domestic violence, and shared that contact with her agency is written into the Alameda Police Department Domestic Violence protocol. She added that in addition to assistance with the initial Restraining Order immediately after the incidents of domestic violence, the agency also assists with other restraining orders dealing with custody, pets, housing, and other issues. In response to a question from President Biggs, she responded that the CDBG funds received are used for legal services only.

Barbara Bernstein, Executive Director -- Eden I&R, Inc.

Ms. Bernstein shared that the funds provided by each city for the program are based on a "fair & equitable funding plan", with its \$1.5 million annual costs of the service being divided into thirds (1/3 cities; 1/3 county; 1/3 private sector - based on population). She asked that the Board approve the staff recommendation of \$20,000 funding, because "cities look to one another for equity". She stated that, while Eden I & R would still continue to serve Alameda residents, if it did not receive funding from the city of Alameda, they are already not able to pick up 20,000 calls a year, because of loss of staffing. While the 211 program records a clients income as stated over the phone, many of the services to which clients are referred require verification of income at the point of service.

Angie Watson-Hajjem, Fair Housing Specialist -- ECHO Housing

Ms. Watson-Hajjem shared that the \$15,000 SSHRB recommendation for funding for ECHO would restrict its ability to serve clients. ECHO performs intake over the phone, and does not verify income.

In response to the question as to which of ECHO's services are mandated, Ms. Johnson / AHA staff responded that it was the Fair Housing component.

**Ebony Brown , Program Director Family Support Services/ Family Support Center
Alameda Family Services**

Ms. Brown shared that if its program were to be recommended for funding, the main part of the grant would go to provide a part-time case manager for housing stability issues that would be different than that provided by ECHO and Legal Aid for Seniors. One of the challenges working with seniors is that they often require that more time be spent with them during the case management process. Their experience to date has been an average of 90 minutes per meeting, with two meetings per client, but in some cases as many as nine meetings. Their services would also include home visits, which is required for some seniors with mobility issues and added that these type of services also help with seniors with a sense of independence

Liz Varela, Executive Director – Building Futures with Women and Children

Ms. Varela thanked the Board and staff for their continued high level of funding and support of Midway Shelter and the Homeless Prevention Services provided by Building Futures. The support from the community through donations to the Alameda Homeless Network, and local support in general, also make a big difference. She added that, with the possibility of additional loss of state funding, Building Futures is anticipating that it may need to close one of its shelters San Leandro. She suggested that, if Alameda Family Services were to provide Homelessness Prevention case management and qualify their clients for rental assistance, Building Futures might be able to provide direct services.

In response to questions about the \$5,000 in their grant to staff the Domestic Violence Task Force, she stated that they have been very fortunate to be able to leverage funds from congregations and foundations, and have had active and positive participation from all of the Task Force partners.

Discussion

President Biggs shared with Members Watkinson and Blake, who were not present at the February 19 meeting, that he and Member Radding had the opportunity to review and evaluate all of the grant applications.

Primary elements of the Board's discussion are summarized in the three underlined paragraphs below excerpted from Social Service Human Relations Board recommendations to the Mayor and City Council regarding the proposed FY14-15 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) public service funding levels and programs.

Following the RFP process, City staff ranked and selected proposals for funding. Deviating from the practice of previous years, members of SSHRB were not included in an objective ranking of the proposals. Eight agencies applied for funding, and staff selected seven of the agencies for funding. All eight agencies proposed services are important to the community, but not all proposals addressed the safety need priority as identified by SSHRB. Two of the proposals - for 211 and Echo Housing - were submitted for services that historically have been funded by the City out of non-public service funds; (one of them, the 211 program was originally funded out of General Fund) however at staff's discretion, they were included in the public service pool this year. This was done to fulfill a HUD mandate and/or expectation that the City must fund these programs. However that mandate does not, and historically has not, meant that they must be funded out of public service funds that should be used to serve community needs. While both of the selected programs provide a useful service, neither program addresses the limited safety net priority identified by the SSHRB. Despite this and other weaknesses in the proposals, both of these programs were recommended for funding by staff.

Several agencies submitted proposals that addressed the emerging need of services for seniors, including one proposal to provide services for an increasing number of Alameda seniors who are becoming homeless. Despite evidence that this was a real and immediate community-identified need, and that it clearly addressed the priorities laid out by SSHRB, staff chose not to recommend funding this proposal. In reviewing the system used for scoring applications, SSHRB has raised concerns that there were flaws in the way scoring was applied among programs that influenced the selection process.

The revised staff allocations, presented at this evening's meeting, ignored the recommendations of SSHRB and continued to deny funding for homeless and at-risk seniors. At the meeting staff did assure members of SSHRB that they recognized the need for services for homeless and at-risk seniors and were diligently seeking out alternate sources of funds for the 211 and ECHO housing services in the hopes that by the time the City Council considers the allocations, all programs can be appropriately funded.

In response to questions from President Biggs, Ms. Johnson shared that Alameda Housing Authority continues to recommend that no CDBG Admin Funds be used for any of the Public Service Programs, including ECHO and Eden I&R 211 program, so no changes to the current staff were made. She added that she did, however, support efforts to try to identify additional sources that would make it possible to fund all applicants, and that she had had conversations with Debbie Potter, Community Development Director in this regard.

Member Radding suggested that the Board use its recommendation formulated at the February meeting as a starting point, and determine where it might add the funds necessary to reach the total of \$191,058.

It was agreed that the additional funds could be obtained between ECHO Housing and Eden I&R's 211 programs. (See chart in ATTACHMENT A for funding recommended by Board).

Motion to recommend FY 2014–15 CDBG Public Service Funding at the levels discussed by the Board that include full funding of Alameda Family Services and partial funding of ECHO Housing and Eden I&R's 211 (SEE ATTACHMENT A), with the acknowledgment of the value of the services provided by all of the agencies who applied for CDBG funding, including Echo and Eden I&R, and with the hope that staff will be able to identify additional funding to fully support these programs. The letter would also express concerns regarding the process for scoring the applications. It was agreed that President Biggs and Member Radding would draft the letter to the Mayor and Council, and that they would both be available to work with staff on a funding recommendation agreeable to all, before the May 6 Council Meeting.

M/S Radding/Watkinson Unanimous

4. **BOARD/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS, NON-AGENDA** - Information - 10 minutes

President Biggs shared that Board had received an email from a West End resident expressing concern regarding homeless individuals on Webster Street. President Biggs asked that an item be placed on the agenda for the regular April meeting to address this concern.

5. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS** - Information - 3 minutes per speaker

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM. M\ S Watkinson\ Blake UNANIMOUS

Respectfully submitted by:

Jim Franz
Secretary