Richland County Council
Coronavirus AD Hoc Committee Meeting
**MINUTES**
December 7, 2022 – 2:30 PM
Council Chambers
2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Gretchen Barron, Chair; Paul Livingston and Chakisse Newton

OTHERS PRESENT: Lori Thomas, Leonardo Brown, Patrick Wright, Tamar Black, Angela Weathersby, Sarah Harris, and Anette Kirylo

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairwoman Gretchen Barron called the meeting to order at approximately 2:30 PM.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

    a. June 29, 2022
    b. July 5, 2022

    Mr. Livingston moved to approve the minutes of June 29, 2022, and July 5, 2022, as submitted, seconded by Ms. Newton.

    In Favor: Livingston, Barron, and Newton

    The vote in favor was unanimous.

3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** – Mr. Livingston moved to adopt the agenda as distributed, seconded by Ms. Barron.

    In Favor: Livingston, Barron, and Newton

    The vote in favor was unanimous.

4. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/ACTION**

    a. Seeking Approval for two Public Service Projects funded by CDBG-CV funds – Ms. Lori Thomas, Assistant County Administrator, stated the two projects are time-sensitive.

    Ms. Sarah Harris, Director of Grants, stated they have two award-worthy organizations in the local area that provides a lot of critical services for underserved communities, particularly those who are under mental and health duress and/or homeless crises. She noted COVID impacted the community, from the loss of jobs to the stress of the pandemic. As we see more people on the streets and address the housing crisis, we are noticing these

underserved communities often become neglected during the process. It is important to get these grants to the finish line with these organizations because of the critical nature of the work they perform in the community.

MIRCI (Mental Illness Recovery Center) – A fully accredited behavioral health clinic providing community members with various services (disability insurance, health insurance, and mental care and wellness). They have a robust internal infrastructure to assist residents. In addition, they have licensed clinical social workers and caseworkers to walk individuals through mental and health crises.

Palmetto Place – The organization provides a safe place for the youth in the community. They have a step program that assists individuals to get on their feet. There is a lot of unhoused youth, which come from abused and neglected homes. The group serves a variety of needs with caseworkers and social workers. In addition, they partner with the school districts to serve the community.

Mr. Livingston stated, for clarification, we are talking about CDBG funds and not COVID funds.

Ms. Harris responded these are CDBG-CV funds, which are the COVID leg of the CDBG funds.

Mr. Livingston moved to forward to Council with a recommendation to approve moving forward with funding two Public Service projects totaling $150,000 to be funded using Community Development Block Grant COVID-19 (CDBG-CV) Federal funds, seconded by Ms. Newton.

In Favor: Livingston, Barron, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

b. ARPA Funding Update – Ms. Barron noted the ARPA Funding application has been out for the last couple of months.

Ms. Thomas noted there was an overwhelming response to the application period. If you recall we accepted applications from September 1 – October 14, 2022. There were 427 applications received during that period totaling over $107M. As they began to review the documents we realized there was a wide range of requests and capacity. The recommendation from Guidehouse, who is the third-party vendor, was to perform a risk assessment on the organizations and proposed projects. She noted the industry best practice is that an entity should consider not funding organizations with a risk score higher than 20%. The County accepted Guidehouse's recommendation and for the last 35-40 days they have been conducting the risk assessment. The scores ranged from 0%-25%. Based on the data, 163 applications are eligible to be vetted according to our rubric. The next steps would be for Guidehouse to review the 163 applications against our rubric and bring back recommendations in the various categories of funding.

Ms. Newton stated, for clarification, there is a rubric to assess risk, which is a best practice. All of the applications were evaluated. The applications that scored lower than 15% would be in the lowest risk category.

Ms. Thomas responded it is actually the applications that scored above 15%.

Ms. Newton inquired if the 163 applications are within the risk threshold.

Ms. Thomas responded in the affirmative.

Ms. Newton inquired if the statement "there are more requests for grant dollars than grant dollars available" is still true when looking at the 163 applicants within the risk threshold.

Ms. Thomas responded generally.

Ms. Newton stated the request is to use this as the threshold to review the applications that meet the risk threshold criteria.

Ms. Thomas responded that would be an accurate statement.

Mr. Livingston stated, for clarification, the spreadsheet notates there are 5 agencies that will be further looked at in the Affordable Housing category.

Ms. Thomas responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Livingston inquired if the risk assessment was conducted in categories.

Ms. Thomas replied the assessment was kept within categories. Many of the applicants did not state their category; therefore, it slowed the review process because Guidehouse had to determine which category each application best fit.

Ms. Barron stated, when Guidehouse provides a final recommendation, this body will have to look at the applications since the requested amount is greater than the available funding. For example, one of the costs included in several of the applications is vehicles, which is not an allowable cost. In addition, we will have to look at what is fair and just when start to award these funds.

Ms. Thomas noted Guidehouse should be in a position to provide the data to the committee in January.

Ms. Barron inquired if there is a recommended timeline for the committee to make a recommendation to Council.

Ms. Thomas replied it will depend on the number of applications that come back within the rubric and how much deliberation the committee needs to take. If we are looking at large numbers in certain categories it could be prudent to request recommendations on priorities within those categories. We are trying to be certain, as we move through the process, we maintain the integrity of the project. They believe it will be best for the third-party vendor to do the evaluations, so there is no ambiguity about the process.

Ms. Newton moved to forward to Council with a recommendation to allow Guidehouse to evaluate those applications with a risk assessment score of 15 or greater based upon the County's approved scoring rubric. Guidehouse should be able to provide this information to the Committee by mid-January. Mr. Livingston seconded the motion.

Ms. Newton inquired which committee the recommendations will be provided.

Ms. Thomas replied the recommendations will be provided to the Coronavirus Ad Hoc Committee.

Ms. Newton requested a copy of the rubric Guidehouse will be using to evaluate the applications. She noted as we look at evaluating the applications, we should keep in mind how well they align with the strategic plan.

Ms. Barron stated she would be hesitant to fully support the applications aligning with the strategic plan, as that was not a part of our application process.

Ms. Newton noted she was not advocating for the addition of new criteria, but more of a tiebreaker if the projects are equal.

Ms. Thomas stated the rubric will be a score for each application. The hard decisions will have to be made by the committee. One of the key strategic goals is good governance.

In Favor: Livingston, Barron, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

5. **<u>ADJOURNMENT</u>** – Mr. Livingston moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Newton

In Favor: Livingston, Barron, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:42 PM.