

Community + Human Development



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Tommy Gonzalez

CITY OF EL PASO

FAIR HOUSING TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 29, 2020

1. A meeting of the Fair Housing Task Force was held virtually on Microsoft Teams +1 915-213-4096 United States, El Paso (Toll) Conference ID: 643 728 356# and was called to order at 3:34 p.m. by Kimberly Cook-McDaniel, Committee Chair.

Regular Board Member	Present	Absent	Excused	Not Excused
Mauricio Felix	X			
Anibal Olague	X			
Jonathan Macias	X			
Miguel Hernandez		X	✓	
Rosa I. Estrada	X			
Kimberly Cook-McDaniel	X			
Bill Schlesinger	X			
Andy Farias	X			
Alternate Board Member				
Christine Gallegos		X		✓
Daniel Hernandez		X		✓
Marc A. Salazar		X		✓
Robert Fernandez	X			
Luis Yañez		X		✓

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City staff present: Nicole Ferrini; Abraham Gutierrez; Mark Weber; Sandra Pellegrini; Sarah Ortiz; Nicholas Muñiz; Felipe Garcia; Clarissa Cervantes; Cindy Mam

Public present: List of attendees available upon request.

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2. Discussion and Action on the Request to Excuse Absent Members

Absent Members: Miguel Hernandez and Rosa Estrada (emailed confirming her attendance on the meeting—could not unmute)

Members with prior notification: N/A

Motion by Bill Schlesinger to transfer item to the end of the meeting and seconded by Anibal Olague.

Ayes: Mauricio Felix, Jonathan Macias, Rosa I. Estrada, Kimberly Cook-McDaniel and Robert Fernandez

Objection: None.

3. Approval of Minutes from March 10, 2020 Meeting

Motion by Bill Schlesinger and seconded by Jonathan Macias to approve minutes.

Ayes: Mauricio Felix, Anibal Olague, Rosa I. Estrada, Kimberly Cook-McDaniel and Robert Fernandez

Objection: None.

4. Discuss status update: Entitlement Funding

Nicole Ferrini – Director of Community + Human Development/CRO

Entitlement Funding: item not for action, discuss and receive feedback. There has been action at the federal, state and local level, that have allowed us to do a lot of shifts, how we can deploy resources in the community. The Community + Human Development department manages the federal entitlements and we have received additional dollars from the federal government via the CARES Act that occurred a few weeks ago. In summary, we received \$5.7 million in stimulus funding, first tranche/first phase of stimulus funding. \$5.7 million is broken up into three separate pots, three separate grant mechanisms that our department has historically managed. Those grants are: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and the Housing Opportunities for Persons with Community + Human Development | 300 N. Campbell | El Paso, TX 79901

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AIDS (HOPWA). The Community Development Block Grants contain just over \$3 million, carries the most flexibility of the three and partially why the federal government has chosen to push them, because they can in fact address a wide array of need. The Emergency Solutions Grant approximately \$1.9 million, less flexible, very focused on addressing the needs of folks that are experiencing homelessness and or preventing homelessness in the first place. Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS \$91,000, passed directly to the health department whom administers those dollars.

*Shares the following screen: *Critical Need Eligible Activities Response + Perceptions Assessment**

Domestic Violence and Abuse

- Shelter Provision
- Case Management
- Relocation
- Respite Childcare

Healthcare

- Mental Health
- Clinical
- Telehealth
- Supplies (COVID Related)

Homeless

- Shelter Provision + Operation
- Adults and Youth
- Extended Quarantine / Isolation

Housing

- Rental and Utility Assistance
- Mortgage Assistance
- Rapid Rehousing

Economic Development

- Payroll Assistance
- Rental and Utility Assistance for Business
- Independent Contractor Assistance

Food + Nutrition

- Non-Perishable Food
- Equipment (Tied to Provision of Food to the Public)

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Board Member Commentary

Mauricio Felix:

Avoid an increase in the need. For example, somebody is in a situation where they are homeless. They are already there so we can't prevent them from that, but if we provide economic development, we could probably prevent businesses from going out of business. Therefore, the business owner, being in a situation where they require rental and utility assistance, or they have to go to a homeless shelter in an extreme case. I would focus in economic development.

Kimberly Cook-McDaniel:

Question— In El Paso, majority of businesses here, are they going to deploy 100 or less, 50 or less employees is that the majority, and are those the ones that are hardest hit, at this point, do we know that now or no?

RE: Nicole Ferrini: A lot of uncertainty right now. We see small businesses in our community being between, 5 and 15 employees. We have a great amount of a small businesses. There are businesses that would be considered micro enterprise, five employees or less, these are the mom and pop shops— the folks that are local and are supporting our local economy. There is a broad array of those folks and I do think, my opinion, that those folks are a lot at risk because they don't necessarily have the expertise or the resources to access some of the other funding that's available. For example, FDA federal levels are going something like 350 million dollars for businesses up to 500 employees. I want to be clear, that is my perspective.

RE: Abraham Gutierrez – Administrative Services Manger

We are using our small business revolving loan fund almost like a sample size of the current issues. Right now we are getting direct calls from our loan partners regarding call bases that they need a relief in the context of not paying their monthly payments for a significant period of time. At this point, we have not enough data in terms of months, to really be able to say. Ongoing trends moving forward. I think what we saw particularly over the last month, is folks are utilizing either one of two things: their tax returns and or their federal assistance to meet payroll and their payments to us. That being said, I do intend to brief this group once we have additional data.

Bill Schlesinger:

The City and County put out a loan fund to microenterprises through the LiftFund. There are funds that are restricted in between five cares for CDFIs institutions. Right now, our main challenge is the digital divide. Another issue in terms of food, we have to figure out how we choose people who can't leave units, don't have a vehicle to go in this extension service there in spite of the current pressure on the food bank. Fourth thing is under rental assistance, a long term issue here because right now

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there is a freeze on evictions—people can't pay their rent. When they come out of this, we are going to have a lot of people either evicted or pushed to bankruptcy. We need to look at this in terms of avoiding that kind of cliff not just getting through it.

Jonathan Macias:

Mention/General Question—Usability seemed to be allocated for these three purposes and that they are not intended to get swept up to cover any kind of general revenue losses going forward? As a caveat, I take it was when I was reading through the TRIZ Act, money is supposed to be specifically to prevent, prepare and respond to the coronavirus, these carry those kind of restrictions—Correct?

RE: Nicole Ferrini: That is one of the reasons why the federal government chose to push these down to the entitlement because while there are a number of regulatory waivers, allowing us, for example, a shorter period of time for public comment. Normally, when we have to put things out for 30 days; we don't have to do that, it's I think a five-day comment period. That being said, all of our investments are the entitlements, still has to meet the national objectives. For HUD the national objectives are about addressing vulnerable populations in low, low to moderate income individuals and so the dollars and the entitlement cannot be swept up to address other things.

Correct. The CARES money to be related to the COVID-19 crisis specifically, but HUD has allowed us credibility with other funds that have come down through the entitlement to be able to address needs more broadly in terms of recovery.

Anibal Olague:

Question: The comments/recommendations that we are making and submitting to you, you will present those to the CDBG committee for consideration, or what is it what we are trying to do?

RE: Nicole Ferrini: We are in the information gathering stage right now. One of the things that we have been asked to do is trying to assess, not only the categories of need, but also the dollar amounts associated with these. That is a much bigger task, but we are working on that once we are done, we will be incorporating your recommendations in our recommendations to leadership. And then we will also have we prepare our action plan for HUD. Ultimately we will be taking the recommendations to City Council.

Jonathan Macias:

Want to find a way for us to continue to maintain some level of accessibility, or being able to see if we can evaluate what options the City might allow to continue to meet in this manner. Had talked about before the pandemic and might be beneficial in order to be able to wrap in, and continue our meetings, even when we have issues related to traffic or not been able to physically be a space. A caveat to that also,

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having a long term discussion about what it looks like to start pushing out our message more consistently through the PIO.

RE: Nicole Ferrini: Conversation in City Council. We have already had some follow up with our public affairs folks. Replicate some of what we did for the outreach on the AI. think we can take that to the next level in terms of making sure that information is out there for the public. I would say that we are always very cautious, to not move into the realm of giving any kind of legal advice or anything like that to the public directly, but access to resources where they can find the information is absolutely imperative.

5. Public Comment

No Public Comment.

Revisiting Item #2 on agenda: Discussion and Action on the Request to Excuse Absent Members

Jonathan Macias moves to excuse absent members per extenuating circumstances and seconded by Bill Schlesinger.

Ayes: Mauricio Felix, Anibal Olague, Rosa I. Estrada, Kimberly Cook-McDaniel and Robert Fernandez

Objection: None.

Introduction / Welcome new Board Member, Andy Farias appointed by District 8

6. Adjourn

Motion by Anibal Olague and second by Jonathan Macias to Adjourn.

Ayes: Mauricio Felix, Rosa I. Estrada, Kimberly Cook-McDaniel Bill Schlesinger and Robert Fernandez

Meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Prepared by: Clarissa Cervantes

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