

# Community + Human Development



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Tommy Gonzalez

## CITY OF EL PASO

### FAIR HOUSING TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, July 14, 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: 921 462 545# and was called to order at 6:04 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.

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

Absent Members: Mauricio Felix, Anibal Olague and Robert Fernandez

Members with prior notification: Anibal Olague and Robert Fernandez

**Motion by Jonathan Macias and seconded by Bill Schlesinger to excuse absent members with prior notification.**

**Ayes: Miguel Hernandez, Rosa I. Estrada, Andy Farias, Daniel Hernandez**

**Objection: None.**

## 3. Approval of Minutes from June 9, 2020 Meeting

**Motion by Miguel Hernandez and seconded by Andy Farias to approve minutes.**

**Ayes: Jonathan Macias, Rosa I. Estrada, Bill Schlesinger and Daniel Hernandez**

**Objection: None.**

## 4. COVID-19 Community Response + Recovery Programs Presentations on:

- Rental Assistance
- Mortgage Assistance
- Utility Assistance
- Rapid Rehousing
- Community Assistance Fund

## \*PRESENTATIONS\*

Mica Short— *Vice President of Development*

The Under One Roof Collaborative is honored to have been selected through a competitive proposal to facilitate \$10 million in rental assistance to those directly adversely impacted by COVID-19. The Under One Roof Collaborative is comprised of the Paso del Norte Community Foundation, Under One Roof (the charitable arm of

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the El Paso Apartment Association) BakerRipely, Harvey Home Connect and Barracuda PR.

Rental Assistance website: <https://www.eprenthelp.org/>

Program Timeline (pending contract with City of El Paso)

- Friday, July 17<sup>th</sup> – Friday, July 24<sup>th</sup>: Landlord Enrollment
- Monday, July 27<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday, July 29<sup>th</sup>: Joint Landlord-Tenant applications to be submitted by landlords
- Monday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> + Forward: Begin disbursements to participating landlords on behalf of eligible tenants based on prioritization criteria

**\*Board Member Commentary\***

Daniel Hernandez:

Asked to share with the local elected officials at the state level. Works for Senator Rodriguez— gotten a lot of constituent cases/referrals regarding rental and utility assistance. Another outlet and if help is needed distributing information, he can assist.

Kimberly Cook McDaniel:

Clarification, do they absolutely have to be in eviction status?

RE: Mica Short: We are prioritizing the funds based on the risk of eviction. i.e. 80% of applicants are at risk of eviction, then that funding will be allocated first and the remaining 20% per say, of funding available will be based on other prioritization criteria. Median income 30%, 60% and 80% – going with those tiers to ensure we help the neediest applicants first.

Jonathan Macias:

Mentioned initial contact from the community, can you speak at all to if they have been the actual renters, or landlords if there has been a percentage breakdown?

RE: Mica Short: I would say that it is probably 60/40 tenants contacting us, the 60%. Receiving their emails, single parents that are at risk of eviction that have already received their notice of eviction, expressed desperation for rental assistance. We have heard from some tenants whose landlords will not agree to submit the application on their behalf. Going to work individually with those situations and see what we can do since the landlord really does need to submit on their behalf.

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### Martha Vargas— *Emergency Housing Payment Assistance Program Manager*

The City of El Paso granted Project BRAVO \$1,500,000 in CARES funds for rent payment assistance (\$1,284,784 in direct services)

Additionally, Project BRAVO secured:

- \$1,300,000 in Community Service Block Grant CARES funds for rental/mortgage assistance
- \$84,713 in Emergency Food and Shelter Program funds through the United Way for rental/mortgage assistance

Emergency Housing Payment Assistance (EHPA) Program developed will provide:

- Up to 3 months of rental assistance for eligible households affected by COVID-19
- Up to \$1,000 per month to cover past due rent from April 1 through December 1

In total the EHPA program will provide close to \$2.7 million in rental mortgage payment assistance. Assuming the average payout is \$2,800, the program will assist approximately 953 households and provide 2,859 units of service.

Program will deploy July 20 in partnership with six referring community partners.

All applicants will be screened and must meet the following criteria for City funding:

- Reside in city limits
- COVID-19 impact
- At or below 80% AMI

CSGB and EFSP CARES funding:

- Reside within el Paso county
- COVID-19 impact
- At or below 200% FPL

Priorities will be given to the following:

- Very low income households
- Households quarantined due to COVID-19
- Households in receipt of eviction notice or notice to vacate
- Households not eligible for unemployment benefits
- Households not in receipt of stimulus check

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### \*Board Member Commentary\*

#### Jonathan Macias:

Sounds like there is a little bit of a nuance with if they will be providing the provisions of rental assistance, but I see currently on the COVID-19 resources page that there is a sentence that says that Project BRAVO does not provide rental assistance so I was not sure if there is way to approach and navigate for people that might be interested or manage it through your case management instead?

RE: Martha Vargas: We will update the website to remove that statement on July 20<sup>th</sup> and that landing page will include all of the information regarding rental assistance, as well as being able to download the application for the EHPA program.

RE: Laura Ponce: We have been doing a soft opening rental assistance through some existing partnerships and working with the department of Public Health and Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid to provide some limited rental assistance so we could make sure we had our policies and procedures in place and ready for inflow of applications.

#### Ruby Alvarez— ADP + Community Development

The Mortgage Relief Program, in collaboration with the City of El Paso and the GECU Foundation, will:

- Allow families the sustained housing security in the midst of financial uncertainty
- Help families with up to three months of mortgage-payment assistance
- Is not an exclusive to GECU members, rather it is open to the entire community
- Using the tracking software program, GECU will measure the number of applicants in the number of families helped
- The Mortgage Relief Program will help households affected by COVID-19 through job loss or income reduction, currently standing at or below 120% AMI
- We have designed a bilingual online application and software program for processing and tracking
- Community members will apply online and there will be designated phone line for questions and assistance
- The GECU Foundation is currently pending the final agreement from the City of El Paso
- We look forward to launching in August

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### Maribel Miranda— *Project Vida*

#### Homeless Prevention and Recovery Program (HP&RP)

##### Permanent Supportive Housing

- Chronically homeless families
- Dedicated Plus
- Intensive case management

##### Rapid Re-Housing

- Quickly re-house households already homeless to prevent long-term homelessness
- Case management
- Recovery support services

##### Homeless Prevention

- Prevent at risk households from becoming homeless when face with eviction due to economic hardship and inability to meet rental payments
- Case management
- Recovery support services

##### Project Vida ensures the accessibility of homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing services through

- 211 Coordinated Entry referrals
- Assessing needs of families and individuals at initial contact
- Developing action plans based on needs assessments
- Making referrals to other Project Vida programs/services and to outside agencies as needed by client
- Submitting payments for rent and/or deposits directly to landlords/owners
- Intensive case management (short or medium term)
- Accommodations for intake appointment or other meetings for those who lack transportation services
- Facilitating communication between landlords and clients
- Conducting inspections of dwellings to ensure standards for housing safety and stability or met
- Assist clients to navigate complex systems by getting them connected to community resources

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### John Martin— *Opportunity Center for the Homeless*

Thankful for the award \$973,000. When you look at Rapid Rehousing, you need to understand the context of the homeless and the different difficulties that they face. In looking at this, we are using the Delta site as a foundation for the work. If you are not familiar with the Delta site, it is a collaborative initiative that was spearheaded by the City and put into place in April—basically an overflow shelter as well as a Welcome center for all homeless within the community. Base of operations will be incorporated within Delta because a large number of individuals that will access these services are already there. Looking to serve a little over 90 individuals and if we have some cost savings, we anticipate that number will increase as we work through it. Providing assistance and strong intensive case management as Project Vida indicated as well. Looking at a combination of virtual and one-on-one case management with this population. Case managers will be highly mobile—grant award does include cost associated with six case managers so we can maintain a 15-1 ratio based upon the goal of 92. In addition to that, we have a designated HMIS individual so that all information is entered into the big clarity system which is the geographic designated HMIS for the community. At this point, we already have approximately 50 individuals in the queue of the 92. Our Program Coordinator, which is Andy Farias, who sits on the Task Force Board, has intended to provide the rental assistance within the initial 2-3 months and then we focus on case management as it relates to sustainability beyond that 2-3 month period. We have already started to develop a housing inventory and that is through a partnership, for example, with the El Paso Apartment Association, Under One Roof Program and Paso del Norte Foundation to take advantage of their expertise as we move forward. Approximately 1/3 of the costs are focused on case management with the balance focused on rental assistance: includes a completely furnished apartment, utility assistance, transportation assistance, as well as food for the initial month. All-inclusive program, it is not limited to the individuals that are located at the Delta site, it is available to the community as a whole. Once we get the agreement in place, we will make the announcement to the community and in turn, there will be a central phone number for individuals to use. Partnerships are in place as we work through this. This is a joint endeavor between the Opportunity Center for the Homeless and Endeavors, in conjunction with the Salvation Army and the Rescue Mission and several others.

Andy Farias: The case management team has already taken it upon themselves to start combing through some of the people that have been identified, starting with the people that are at the Delta site, temporary shelters etc. Between that balance of people, case management has identified intakes, going through characteristics and prospecting housing inventory in the community.

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### Christina Montoya— *Communications & Marketing Manager*

About 7,000 residential customers are 60+ days late in paying their EPWater bill. Current outstanding balances from these customers is over \$3 million

El Paso Water received a grant of \$500,000 through the Community and Human Development Department to assist low-income customers who have been impacted by COVID-19. EP water is providing about \$200,000 worth of in-kind staffing services, 2000-2500 customers expected to be served. Qualifying customers will receive a credit of up to three months toward unpaid balances with a maximum benefit of \$500. Will launch in July—targeted outreach with full-time dedicated team. Collaborating with Project Amistad to prevent duplication of service.

### \*Board Member Commentary\*

#### Daniel Hernandez:

Leveraging funding at the state level for example through the Public Utility Commission or any other state funding sources, out of curiosity, if those were going to be working in conjunction with or if this is going to be the only program that you are looking at so far?

RE: Christina Montoya: I do not believe we report to the Public Utility Commissions, so I do not know if that would be relevant to us, but we are always actively looking for other sources of funding. I know that our Government Affairs Team is doing that so if there are some, they are looking.

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### Celia Garcia— *Project Amistad*

The Amistad CARES Utility Assistance Project will provide much needed assistance to individuals and families who are unable to receive assistance from other existing programs. In aiding with utility payments, we will work to prevent potential loss of basic necessities such as water, electricity and gas.

#### Requirements:

- Household at or below 80% AMI
- Reside in the City of El Paso
- Demonstrate a loss of income directly related to COVID-19
- Have an active and verifiable account with the utility company

Operate a resource/call center, which we get a lot of phone calls in. We already have a waiting list for clients that are seeking this assistance.

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Luis M. Suira— *Program Assistant El Paso Community Foundation*

El Paso Community Card will be granted with a cap of \$1,000

- Cards are limited to supermarkets, grocery stores and pharmacies
- Focus on households that did not qualify for stimulus and are highly impacted by COVID-19
- Project BRAVO will handle screening, EPCF will manage card accounts and reporting.
- Clients will mark either City or County residence for compliance reports
- Goal: serve at least 2,000 clients

Population served:

- Vulnerable populations in City of El Paso and El Paso County
- Under 80% Are Median Income
- Household did not qualify for stimulus
- Loss/reduction in employment due to COVID-19 or COVID-19 positive

Client Processing:

- Project BRAVO has an application and screening process
- Clients will be judged on a points system
- Upon approval, unloaded debit card sent
- Client confirms receipt and identify, card is loaded

## 5. Public Comment

**No Public Comment.**

## 6. Adjourn

**Motion by Jonathan Macias and second by Daniel Hernandez to Adjourn.**

**Ayes: Miguel Hernandez, Rosa I. Estrada, Bill Schlesinger and Andy Farias**

**Objection: None.**

Meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Prepared by: Clarissa Cervantes

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