



**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE** 700 NW 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33311  
**June 10, 2024 – 4:00 P.M.**

**DRAFT**

**Meeting Minutes  
 City of Fort Lauderdale  
 Community Services Board**

**Department of Sustainable Development**

<b>MEMBERS</b>		<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
Christi Rice, Chair	P	8	2
William J. Dunne, Vice Chair (dep. 5:14)	P	6	3
Wismy Cius (arr. 4:22)	P	6	0
Latrisha Greaves (arr. 4:18)	P	9	1
Anna Henry (dep. 5:56)	P	1	0
Gary Hensley	A	2	1
Sharon Hughes	P	7	3
Ronald Pierre	P	1	0

**Staff Present**

Eveline Dsouza, Administrative Supervisor, Housing and Community Development  
 K. Cruitt, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

**Communications to City Commission**

None.

**I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

- **Quorum Requirement – As of June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, there are 7 appointed members to the Board, which means 4 constitutes a quorum**

The meeting was called to order at 4:15 p.m.

Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS**

New Board member Anna Henry introduced herself at this time.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – May 13, 2024**

**Motion** made by Ms. Hughes, seconded by Vice Chair Dunne, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Ms. Greaves arrived at 4:18 p.m.

Mr. Cius arrived at 4:22 p.m.

#### **IV. HOPWA FY23-24 PERFORMANCE PRESENTATION**

##### **1. Legal Aid Services of Broward County**

Edwin Cordova, representing Legal Aid Services of Broward County, reported that this organization has already served 145 unduplicated clients this year, which exceeds their goal of 105. Cases addressed by Legal Aid include foreclosures, evictions, lease reviews, and more.

Mr. Cordova advised that there are several gaps in proper access to housing, as prices are still very high in Broward County. Many landlords are unwilling to renew leases with clients because they are waiting for those leases to end so they can increase rental rates.

The Florida Supreme Court recently approved new forms with instructions and information regarding evictions. One change resulting from these instructions is that tenants may now request jury trials; however, the tenant would be responsible for the expense of that trial. It is not yet known how this process will take place.

Ms. Henry asked if the instructions apply only to private landlords or if they are also applicable to low-income housing. Mr. Cordova replied that all residential housing, including private and public housing, is subject to these instructions.

##### **2. Care Resource**

Eric Kuzinski and Maryfer Lacruz, representing Care Resource, reported that from October 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024, this organization has served 455 clients, which exceeds their goal of 300 clients. 100% of clients achieved initial housing plan goals designated by target dates, and also received assistance in preparing a monthly budget and obtaining appropriate follow-up actions.

109 clients were assisted in seeking employment, and 180 clients were discharged from the program after achieving their goals. 85 applications were submitted to the Permanent Housing Placement (PHP) and Short-term Rental, Mortgage, and Utilities (STRMU) programs.

Some of the issues Care Resource has dealt with during this time period include clients' lack of access to technological equipment and computer knowledge. Housing case managers have ensured that clients are assisted with these issues, collecting all documentation needed to apply for different types of assistance. Housing case managers also provide food vouchers and refer clients to medical, dental, and behavioral centers.

Challenges that arose over the last quarter included rising rent prices, as well as clients refusing to sign required documentation needed for housing assistance and inability of clients to provide nonrefundable application fees.

Ms. Greaves requested additional information on refusals to sign documentation. Ms. Cruz stated that not all clients want to provide the documentation necessary for assistance. A large number of landlords have begun to require nonrefundable application fees, although it was noted that there are some landlords who refund this fee.

Ms. Greaves also asked if the organization works with any properties that have not raised their rents. Francisco Gomez, also representing Care Resource, replied that many clients have had to move to other housing because they can no longer afford rising rents. Because lack of transportation remains a challenge, Care Resource provides bus passes for clients who need them.

Ms. Greaves asked how clients are made more comfortable with modern technology. Mr. Gomez replied that staff works with clients to show them how to create passwords and access information.

Mr. Cius noted that one purpose of Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) is to help clients secure safe housing so they can achieve better health outcomes; however, Care Resource's performance indicators do not address health outcomes. Mr. Gomez replied that specific health information, such as viral loads and other health-based indicators, are not what is required under HOPWA, which particularly addresses housing needs. He confirmed that stable housing can have a positive income on clients' health.

### **3. Sunserve**

Brenda Rentas, representing Sunserve, reported that this organization provides intensive housing case management for clients. Assistance may include providing bus passes, identifying food resources, and more. The goal is to ensure that clients feel that they have been helped when they leave the agency.

If a client does not qualify for HOPWA, Sunserve also raises money for unrestricted funding. They work with community partners, such as the AIDS Health Care Foundation, in order to link clients to any medical services they may need. They provide mental health, substance use, senior, and youth services.

Chair Rice noted that by the end of March 2024, Sunserve has assisted 206 clients, while their indicators show that they have reached 52% of their goals year-to-date. Ms. Rentas explained that this means the agency has served 52% of 400 clients. Goals are currently tracking close to 80%.

#### **4. Mount Olive Development Corp.**

Jacqueline Stewart, representing Mount Olive Development Corporation (MODCO), stated that this agency owns 21 units, including both family and individual units. They provide case management in a 24-month program. All clients have some type of income, which may be Social Security disability or income from employment.

Representatives of MODCO are present on their property at all times. The agency has met the goals it had set for the quarters of the current fiscal year. Since the beginning of the current contract, eight clients have exited the program and five clients have gained employment since joining the program. Two clients participated in a first-time home buyer program.

Ms. Hughes asked how MODCO establishes that clients qualify for their programs. Ms. Stewart replied that other agencies refer clients to MODCO, as do other organizations within the community. MODCO then checks the prospective clients' qualifications. There is a waiting list for their units, although they occasionally provide housing on an emergency basis.

Ms. Stewart confirmed that clients must be considered adults to participate. The ages of MODCO tenants may range from 20s to 80s. Clients do not have to be employed, although they do need to have some type of income.

Ms. Greaves asked if MODCO defines an adult as 18, 20, or another age. Ms. Stewart replied that MODCO requires clients to be 18 or older.

#### **5. Broward House**

Tamika Weaver, representing Broward House, reported that the agency's assisted living facility reopened on April 12, 2024, which was exactly one year after it was closed due to Fort Lauderdale's catastrophic 2023 flooding. The facility serves 27 HOPWA clients and has a waiting list.

One barrier to assisting clients across all programs is securing stable housing for individuals who are on fixed incomes such as Social Security. 85% of the agency's clientele fall into this category. Ms. Weaver emphasized the importance of showing clients in the assisted living facility that they are safe.

Broward House is changing how workshops and classes are held by focusing on total individuals. This includes addressing not only income, but helping clients maintain health and sobriety. The organization may be the only support system that its clients may have.

Broward House has received grant funding to offer physical wellness for its assisted living clients, as exercise and activity can be helpful for many individuals, particularly those experiencing high stress.

Ms. Hughes requested clarification of Broward House's protocol if a client relapses. Ms. Weaver explained that they provide support for those clients, which includes managing stress and determining solutions. Matt Patterson, also representing Broward House, added that relapses or recurrences of substance abuse do not mean automatic discharge from the program; instead, outcomes can be rewritten to individualize the clients' goals and help them achieve success.

Mr. Pierre commented that he appreciated Broward House's individualized and fluid structure in assisting its clients.

Ms. Hughes asked how many beds are provided by Broward House. Mr. Patterson replied that the assisted living facility has 72 beds, of which 60 are currently operational. A portion of the facility is still undergoing certification. Residents of the assisted living facility must be 18 or older.

Mr. Patterson also addressed health outcomes such as viral load suppression, pointing out that Broward House has been selected by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide HIPAA housing intervention for persons with HIV/AIDS. They provide HUD with data that supports housing as an intervention on its own. Clients who stay in the assisted living facility for 60 days have reached viral load suppression regardless of their viral load upon intake. Ms. Weaver emphasized that it is easier for clients to follow case management in a stable housing environment.

Ms. Hughes and Mr. Cius commended the Broward House representatives on providing their performance indicators and addressing the "housing first" model.

Ms. Weaver next addressed Broward House's project-based rental (PBR) program, which serves 65 clients to date. They have been able to successfully transition 10 clients thus far. The organization asked its case managers to reach out to different housing authorities by email, alerting them to have clients fill out applications for the waiting list when spaces become available.

Broward House's PBR program is based in apartments or properties that it owns. Its clients are individuals eligible for HOPWA funding. The organization also partners with landlords in the broader community so clients transitioning out of PBR have potential connections to affordable living. Broward House is also working on making the transition easier from assisted living to PBR.

Ms. Henry commended the PBR program, emphasizing the importance of basic living structure, particularly for young adults who need support. Ms. Weaver confirmed that

the PBR program involves case managers working very closely with clients and helping them develop life skills.

Ms. Henry asked if the PBR program has a waiting list. Ms. Weaver confirmed this as well, adding that priority is given to individuals who are currently living on the street.

Mr. Cius asked how many clients transition out of Broward House's programs. Ms. Weaver replied that 10 clients successfully transitioned out of the PBR program, either going into Section 8 housing, receipt of a housing voucher, or independent living. Assisted living clients transition into PBR and then to the tenant-based rental voucher (TBRV) program.

Ms. Hughes requested a copy of Broward House's PowerPoint presentation be provided to the Board members.

Vice Chair Dunne left the meeting at 5:14 p.m.

Ms. Weaver explained that the TBRV program provides vouchers to individuals who can choose their own independent living. At present, there are 87 clients in and six discharges from this program. Broward House provides credit-building courses for its staff, which makes them more able to teach clients how to prepare their budgets in money management workshops. Broward House has also increased its number of vendor landlords to eight, most of whom own multiple properties.

Mr. Cius requested additional information on how Broward House has fostered these relationships with landlords. Ms. Weaver advised that the organization emphasizes the role of case management in its services, which means case managers will view the potential unit with the client, be present at closing, and advocate for their clients. This helps alleviate landlords' anxiety about participating in the TBRV program.

## **6. Broward Regional Health Planning Council**

Sharon Alveranga-Jones, representing Broward Regional Health Planning Council (BRHPC), stated that performance goals focused on maintaining stable outcomes, increasing access to care, and reduction of risk of homelessness through intervention. There has been a significant increase in unduplicated clients across all programs. PHP has increased by 83%, as they have served 55 clients to date. STRMU participation has increased by 29% against an objective of 35 clients.

The TBRV program has seen a 25% increase due to the recent opening of the waiting list. By the end of the third quarter, BRHPC expects to have registered more than 100 clients.

The TBRV program is assisted by case management. Case managers visit their clients at least once per month. BRHPC has a database of over 100 landlords, some of whom they have worked with for 10 to 15 years.

Ms. Alveranga-Jones continued that BRHPC partners with Consolidated Credit to assist clients in gaining information about credit. Night classes are held every month. They also focus on education as a means toward better-paying jobs.

Challenges include the shortage of affordable and available rental units for clients with low incomes, insufficient supportive housing, affordable home ownership, a poor credit or rental history for some clients, poor employment history, abuse, and criminal backgrounds.

Ms. Hughes strongly emphasized that something must be done to address housing needs, as even individuals with secure incomes may be functioning at a financial deficit. She asserted that there must be a system that supports individuals' housing needs.

Ms. Greaves noted that the term "affordable housing" needs to be clearly defined. She asked what can be done to assist clients with poor credit scores or rental histories. Ms. Alveranga-Jones replied that Consolidated Credit provides classes for clients, who may choose to participate in classes on any topic.

With regard to clients who may have a weak rental history, Ms. Alveranga-Jones explained that this can be a barrier when landlords perform background checks for prospective renters. BRHPC has a history of working with landlords to address these concerns. Ms. Greaves recommended greater clarity of this issue and potential solutions to it.

Chair Rice thanked the agencies' representatives for their presentations.

Ms. Dsouza stated that at the June 4, 2024 City Commission meeting, there were appeals in relation to the Board's allocations for both HOPWA and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. A representative of MODCO had indicated that their HOPWA allocation was not sufficient to sustain the buildings they owned. The Commission approved additional funding over and above MODCO's allocation of \$352,000 for the year. The additional funding would come from reserve funds left over from fiscal year (FY) 2023-2024.

Ms. Dsouza continued that Fort Lauderdale Vice Mayor Steven Glassman had also looked into funding for non-housing agencies, and requested that these agencies also be funded sufficiently to make them whole in terms of their requests. Approximately \$700,000 had remained in uncommitted funds from FY 2023-2024, which will be allocated to Sunserve and Care Resource. This additional funding will apply for the

full request for proposal (RFP) cycle, which means it must be sustained for the next three years as well.

Ms. Dsouza emphasized that all additional funds will come from reserves, which means no other agencies' allocations will be affected.

## **V. DISCUSS FY 2024 MEETING DATES**

The Board discussed their remaining meeting dates in calendar year 2024. Chair Rice noted that the Board's governing Ordinance requires eight meetings per year and they have met six times thus far. She also pointed out that the City Commission does not meet in July or part of August, which means any recommendations made by the Board would not be heard by the Commission until they return from recess.

**Motion** made by Mr. Pierre, seconded by Ms. Greaves, to cancel July and August. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Ms. Greaves requested that future meeting dates take the Broward County Supervisor of Elections' calendar into consideration so there are no conflicts. She noted that there are no conflicts for the remainder of calendar year 2024. The following year's meeting dates will be reviewed at the Board's October 2024 meeting.

Ms. Dsouza advised that the Board's next meeting will be held on September 9, 2024.

Ms. Dsouza stated that quarterly reports from HOPWA and CDBG agencies will be included on the Board's future Agendas. It was noted that third quarter performance reviews will be provided for HOPWA and CDBG agencies in September. These will be written reports only, and if the Board has questions, representatives of those agencies can be present to answer at that time or may attend in October. It was also noted that the November 2024 meeting has been moved to November 18 in observance of Veterans Day.

## **VI. GOOD OF THE ORDER**

Chair Rice advised that there is typically an annual formal orientation meeting for new City advisory body members. She added that the Community Services Board, like all City boards and committees, is subject to Florida's Sunshine Law, which means all Board business must be part of the public record. Two or more Board members are not permitted to discuss Board business outside of meetings.

Ms. Henry left the meeting at 5:56 p.m.

## **VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS**



Edwin Cordova, representing Legal Aid Services of Broward County, advised that in Florida, every City court record is public. This is the case even for minor crimes, and applies to evictions and other civil issues. He emphasized that landlords check these records when looking into prospective clients' backgrounds, and pointed out that this may include even issues such as minor traffic infractions.

Mr. Cordova concluded that while clients may believe they can use the last month's rent paid up front to cover the rent when they leave before a lease ends, this is not actually permitted.

Karen Whyte, representing Broward House, asked how this information is spread. Mr. Cordova explained that Legal Aid provides presentations on this and similar issues for the general public.

Francisco Gomez, representing Care Resource, thanked the Board for its assistance in helping that agency serve the community.

#### **VIII. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA**

It was noted that upcoming items were previously discussed.

Ms. Greaves requested a copy of BRHPC's PowerPoint presentation.

Ms. Greaves also suggested that the Board invite a representative of the City Attorney's Office to their September 9, 2024 meeting to provide information and answer questions. She concluded that she would send an email request to Ms. Dsouza's office.

#### **IX. COMMUNICATIONS TO CITY COMMISSION**

None.

#### **X. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]