



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

SOCIAL SERVICE GRANTS COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: February 19, 2020

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Classroom A, Law Enforcement Center 320 S. Kansas Ave Ste 100

Committee members present: Councilmembers Karen Hiller (Chair), Christina Valdivia-Alcalá, Michael Padilla

City staff present: City Manager Brent Trout, Sasha Haehn (Director of Neighborhood Relations), Corrie Wright (DNR), Rachelle Vega-Retana (DNR)

1) Call to Order

Councilmember Hiller called the meeting to order at 10:00am. Committee members introduced themselves. Chairwoman Hiller gave a brief introduction of the goals of the committee to the audience.

2) Approve Minutes from February 4, 2020 Meeting

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá made a motion accept the minutes from the February 4, 2020 meeting. Committee member Padilla seconded the motion. Motion carried 3:0.

3) Discussion and Approval

a) Score Sheet, Allocation Guidelines, and Appeals

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if the committee had any further questions or comments regarding these items. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá asked staff to review the steps for the Appeal process. Corrie Wright, Division Director of Housing Services, explained the process:

- Submitted applications are scored by the Review Committee.
- The scores are sent back to Staff.
- Staff then sends the scores to the applicants and will include additional notes to explain scoring decisions upon request.
- The agencies have one week to appeal in writing.
- Once they appeal, the Committee meets and applicants are given the opportunity to appeal in person. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired about the details required by the applicants with regard to the one week turn around. Ms. Wright noted the applicant would need to submit, in writing, a

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Minutes Taken: 2/19/2020

Minutes Approved: 2/26/2020

As per Governing Body Rule 8.10, Chairwoman Karen Hiller approved the minutes.

basic statement that they are going to appeal, and include a summary of what section(s) they were going to be appealing. Chairwoman Hiller noted the process was also included in the RFP.

Committee member Padilla inquired about the step where additional comments on scores are provided upon request. Ms. Wright noted that the program is set up in an Excel sheet format and that agencies would not be able to view the comments in that format, however, by requesting them, Staff would move the comments into a document. The Review Committee adds the comments, Staff uses a cut-and-paste method to provide the information to the applicants.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá sought confirmation when the appeal process is held at the Committee level. Ms. Wright confirmed this has been the process in years past.

Chairwoman Hiller stated that the Committee does have the ability to wait to decide on appeals for seven days following the initial appeal meeting, however in years past, the Committee has been able to make changes in the single meeting.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired about the reasoning for including the “seven days” requirement if there has not historically been a need for that length of time between the appeal meeting and the Committee making their final recommendations. Ms. Wright stated that language was added to keep the process in line with the budget timeline, and having this process reach completion before budget time.

Chairwoman Hiller stated decisions are based on scoring so appeals are based only on the scoring. With this timeframe, applicants are able to request their comments and have filed for their appeal before the Committee meets which allows Staff time to research the objective with the Review Committee so they are able prepare the information to provide the Committee. The seven days provides a buffer should something new be brought up that had not already been provided to the Committee or Staff. Additionally, the identity of the Review Committee members is kept confidential from agencies as well as from the Council Committee. Currently, Staff knows who serves on the Review Committee, and moving forward, the Vendor will know who those individuals are.

Ms. Haehn explained the timeline of the grant process. The Social Service Grants Committee makes a final decision on the dollar amount recommendation that is approved by the Governing Body for funding for the following year. The Finance Department prefers to receive this fixed number by early June so that work to complete the final proposed budget can include Social Service Grants program funding when presented to the Governing Body for approval. Agencies are aware that there is no guarantee to the funding amount until after the Governing Body has voted on the budget for the final time and the City has received the HUD allocation.

Chairwoman Hiller stated that the Governing Body generally votes on the Social Service Grant budget piece a year out, and changes are rarely made, however, Ms. Haehn's comment, about final decisions were correct.

b) Vendor Fee Source for Future Years

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired which area of the budget the outsourcing vendor fees will come from. Chairwoman Hiller suggested, per prior discussion, that the Committee might recommend to Governing Body and Senior Staff that whatever the Vendor fees, they are not to come from the Grant Allocation fees, but rather from a different and consistent source. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá made a motion to approve. Committee member Padilla seconded the motion for purposes of further discussion.

Committee member Padilla presented the question to the City Manager to find out if, and how, Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá's directive came down, if it would cause an issue from year to year. Mr. Trout stated the term "consistent" would mean the funding would be available, but that giving a specific area within the budget might make it more difficult to ensure funding each year. More than likely, the source of the administrative piece of the grant would come from the General Fund. There may be another grant, which could come along to pay for that portion. Mr. Trout felt the intention was to not reduce the amount of funding provided to agencies from the Social Services Grant fund. Some clarification to understand that the term "consistent" means the funding would be available, without restricting the exact location of the funding would be preferred.

Committee member Padilla stated he understood Mr. Trout's suggestion and would support clarifying the definition in that way.

Chairwoman Hiller stated her suggestion to have the funding come from a defined area of the budget, would be so that anyone interested in finding that money would be able to find it, and know where to look for it. Mr. Trout stated he understood that position, and that the line item in the budget would fall under the “Contracted Services” classification. Chairwoman Hiller stated the assumption that the Neighborhood Relations Department budget would retain this Contracted Service, as they will continue to oversee the contract with the vendor and a portion of the process. Mr. Trout confirmed that would be the case.

MOTION

Vendor fees will not come from the Grant Allocation fees, but rather from a different and consistent source.

3:0 Motion passes.

c) Vendor Qualifications

Staff provided a revised version of the Scope of Services. Ms. Haehn noted the appeal process was included in this version, as the number six directive. There was a revision to the Qualifications for Grant Administration from three years, to five years, and added “and have experience in and an understanding of outputs and outcomes-based grant writing and administration”. Chairwoman Hiller inquired about another change regarding management of money. Ms. Haehn stated that there was additional language found in directive nine “provide the City’s Department of Neighborhood Relations an invoice or statement of reimbursements to agencies” and directive ten “the statement of reimbursements will serve as verification to the City that the agencies have submitted required invoices and reports for the quarter”. This language was added to clarify that grant funds will continue to be disbursed by the City of Topeka to funded agencies and is a change from the original RFP.

Committee member Padilla inquired about the directive regarding change from three to five years, and stated he did not find an issue with this change, but wanted to know the language was inclusive to allow any qualified vendor to submit an application, and to avoid the language becoming too vendor-specific. Chairwoman Hiller agreed, and stated that a review team would need to be well-qualified.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired about the RFP Timeline. Ms. Haehn stated the deadline is tomorrow (February 20, 2020), and at this time there have been no submissions to her knowledge. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired who would be able to bid on the RFP. Mr. Trout noted the Bids are placed online, so anyone who would go to the City's website would be able to view the RFP and make a choice on whether or not to submit a bid. There was further discussion about the process for soliciting and accepting bids from potential vendors and the selection of moving forward should no parties be interested in this bid.

d) Roles of Staff/Vendor/Committee

Chairwoman Hiller asked Staff to explain the roles for this process. Ms. Haehn stated:

- Vendor responsible for: entire application process, bringing the scores to the committee, working through appeals with the Committee, providing an invoice for agency funding to the City's Finance Department
- Committee responsible for: taking final funding recommendation to the Governing Body, for priorities sheet, making any requested revisions to score sheet, and the calendar
- Staff: oversee the contract with the vendor and ensure all services are to standards agreed upon in the contract, Finance staff will cut checks to grantees based on the invoice received from the vendor, Neighborhood Relations Staff will be involved in reviewing the statement for funding along with acting as the liaison between the vendor and Finance Department through that process

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá inquired if it was common practice that the City retain the funding and cut checks directly to the grantees. Ms. Haehn stated her initial recommendation was to outsource the entire process, however, Finance wanted to retain a piece of the process in order to know the funds were being allocated as they were supposed to be. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá wanted to understand if the projected cost-savings from Staff time would amount to the estimated \$30,000 if there would truly be a savings with Staff from other departments spending time on the process. Although there would be some responsibility on the City's end, however, a clean break of the majority of the process would yield a more accurate way to track cost-savings. Chairwoman Hiller stated that a review later this year, when the

process has been completed for the first year, a more accurate account of the cost-savings with relation to Staff time would be able to be recorded.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá feels it is important to track the amount of savings to the City, and that by having proof of statements would be ideal. Ms. Haehn stated following 2020, Staff would be able to provide a better total of the savings amount by utilizing the outsourcing process. However, the intention behind seeking the outsourcing process was to remove the political nature of the process, with the cost savings being an additional benefit.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá stated she felt the financial piece was very important and should be known prior to moving forward for future outsourcing decisions.

Committee member Padilla stated he agreed that the driving factor was less about the cost-savings, but rather removing the political piece of the process and that it was less about where to put the money, but more about improving Staff efficiency in doing their job with some of the time working on this grant process being shared by a third-party. Committee member Padilla added that the employees will continue to get paid, however, they would be able to shift what they are doing with their time; from working on the grant process to now doing something else.

Chairwoman Hiller noted that the previous committee members had hoped that by outsourcing the process, time would be saved by the Committee and Governing Body, as well as by Neighborhood Relations Staff, and that the integrity of the process would be saved. The current Committee, however, would like to dig in and monitor the current funding cycle to see if the goals for outsourcing were met.

e) Calendar

Chairwoman Hiller would like to send a Committee Report to the Governing Body at the March 3rd meeting. Mr. Trout recommended the Committee Report be moved to the March 10th Governing Body, rather than March 3rd. Chairwoman Hiller would like to bring the Committee Report to the Governing Body to approve, with regard to the Score Sheet and Allocation guidelines. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá stated she also felt the explanation would be important to send to the Governing Body. Mr. Trout stated that from Staff perspective, a final approval by the Governing Body was not necessary, however if the Committee felt differently, Staff would comply. Committee member Padilla

expressed he felt that by having regular Committee Reports sent to the Governing Body to explain how the meetings have been going, the Governing Body would be able to understand and there would not be a need to have votes for the individual items, such as the score sheet, by the full Body. Chairwoman Hiller expressed hope for re-establishing a “normal” expectation by the Governing Body to know that the Committee is working hard on their level that there would be less questioning or reservations, however feels that by allowing the full Body to complete the additional check-point, they would be able to be comfortable with what they were supporting. Mr. Trout noted Staff would need to know the exact items that would need to be included.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired with Staff would feel the timeline would be too tight if it was included on the March 10th agenda. Ms. Haehn stated Staff would be able to make whatever directive work. Mr. Trout will follow up with the Committee.

Items to be included along with the Committee Report: updated RFP Guidelines and score sheet for full Governing Body final approval, the Priorities sheet (for reference), and minutes from the February 4th and February 19th meetings.

MOTION:

To bring the Committee Report to the Governing Body on March 3 or March 10. The Committee is providing final recommendations on the updated Score Sheet and RFP Guidelines, and would like to allow the Governing Body to vote to approve these changes before moving forward. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá made the motion. Committee member Padilla seconded the motion. Motion passes 3:0.

f) Post-process Agency Survey(s)

Ms. Wright noted in addition to a written survey, an electronic version could also be sent out using Survey Monkey. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá liked those suggestions. Chairwoman Hiller inquired with the Committee, Staff, and the audience about items on the survey.

Kathy Votaw, LULAC Senior Center, noted that, in her experience, paper surveys were not very successful in yielding returns. Face-to-Face, and phone call interviews work well. If paper surveys are used, and are longer than a few questions, they do not get returned. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá

inquired about the suggestion of using Survey Monkey. Ms. Votaw stated she was familiar with the platform and felt it would work well. Especially with the intention of sending the surveys to the applicant agencies.

Laura Pederzani, Midland Care Connection Inc, is a grant writer for Midland Care and stated it was not uncommon for funding agencies to request surveys be completed with their first and fourth quarter reports. A lot of agencies who use platforms similar to EclImpact are able to put surveys onto the same portal that the reporting is completed on. This method could be set up to provide a reminder asking for the survey to be completed and it closes when the deadline closes. Specific questions that are asked by other funding agencies include: How pleased were you with training provided to prepare you for this application? Were you satisfied with scoring? And including some open-ended questions to allow for comments.

Chairwoman Hiller noted agency attendance to the Committee meetings was typically high, and if having a meeting rather than a formal survey to receive feedback would be more beneficial.

Mike Spadafore, Topeka Metro, suggested tying surveys in with the quarterly reports in order for agencies to receive their fourth quarter funding. If a survey was required in order for an agency to receive their 4th quarter payment, there would be a 100% return. Chairwoman Hiller appreciated the suggestion but expressed concern with wanting to evaluate the process in August or September, which would be prior to agencies receiving their first payment. It would be pre-grant/pre-contract time.

Committee members all agreed that feedback throughout the process would be helpful. Chairwoman Hiller stated the Committee would want to hear feedback from all of the applicants, not only the grantees who receive funding.

Questions for the first survey would be: How was the training? How was the scoring? How was the process? With an area to allow for commenting in addition to a standard checkbox.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if August might be a time to pursue sending the survey out, once the City's budget has passed and allocations are final. This would also be pre-contract. Chairwoman Hiller inquired if the vendor would be responsible for the contracts. Ms. Haehn confirmed that the vendor would be

responsible for contracts with the exception of CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) Funded programs. Staff will retain some responsibility with those programs.

4) Set Next Meeting and General Calendar for the Committee

Chairwoman Hiller noted there may not be another meeting prior to taking the Committee Report to the Governing Body. If, at that time, the Governing Body sends something back to the Committee, or if a vendor is not able to be found, there may be a need for an additional meeting soon.

Chairwoman Hiller noted that the Committee had discussed some future agenda items that the Committee was interested in reviewing this summer or fall and suggested perhaps the Committee would want to study all Social Service funding sources and procedures.

Chairwoman Hiller noted a positive for using an outsourced vendor would be the different perspective they would be able to bring to the process.

Chairwoman Hiller noted a discussion regarding requiring applicants to submit a full operating budget along with the program budget may be worth looking into at a meeting later in the year.

With regard to the Senior Centers, Committee member Padilla expressed interest in better understanding how the Senior Centers are using other funding and how the programs can be enhanced with the additional funding by the City, and would like to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of funding to the Senior Centers, and how the City's Social Service Grant dollars are impacting those agencies.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá agreed with Committee member Padilla's statements, and included she would be interested in holding these meetings in a round-table style of discussion.

Chairwoman Hiller inquired if the Committee would want to focus on the agencies that the City has funded in the past, with regard to senior programs, or to include any agency within the community that offers programming for seniors.

Committee member Padilla noted he would like to review programs that the City funds, to see if it would be more appropriate to continue having them addressed by City programs or to link them to other resources within the community.

Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá noted there is a concern to consider duplication of services, however, with the senior agencies that have received City

funding, an important component is to keep stability of place, location and programs as they are. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá agreed with Committee member Padilla's suggestion of keeping the scope of the meetings to the agencies that the City has previously funded.

Chairwoman Hiller stated that without at least a list from other agencies within the community, it will be difficult to determine what other services may be offered to senior centers, and to know if services are being duplicated or falling through the cracks.

Susan Harris, Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, addressed the committee. JAAA receives funding from the City for two programs the Older American match money and the Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas program. Other services are provided for seniors and other agencies that provide services to seniors, however those two are funded with City of Topeka dollars. Ms. Harris stated JAAA has a list of resources offered to seniors by agencies within the Topeka/Shawnee County area and would be able to provide that information to Staff and the Committee.

Committee member Padilla stated he would be interested in including any other agency that receives City funding for programs to seniors, but perhaps not all of the non-profits if there are no services to Senior citizens.

Laura Pederzani addressed the committee, this time as a District 2 constituent, and stated she would like to have agencies that go through the process to apply for the City grant funding be invited to the table. Not simply any and every agency within the community who assists seniors.

Chairwoman Hiller reviewed:

- What programs the City is funding or involved with, in regard to senior assistance programs?
- What may be falling through the cracks, with regard to senior services?
- How the agencies are handling the funding that is received?
- What other funding sources are agencies utilizing?
- The round-table conversation will be to see what is out there? And what else is needed in order to continue to do better?

Committee and Agencies in attendance agreed. Committee member Valdivia-Alcalá noted it may be important to include the Greater Topeka Partnership in these conversations. Chairwoman Hiller inquired as to the amount of time the Committee felt would be needed for this meeting. The decision was 2 hours.

Next meeting, unless otherwise assigned, will be July 15, 2020 at 10:00am-12:00pm. With subsequent meeting to have the post-allocation and set up for the 2022 funding cycle will be September 16th, October 14th, and November 18th.

5) Adjourn

Chairwoman Hiller adjourned the meeting at 11:39am.

Meeting video can be viewed at: https://youtu.be/Gq5Fp5u9p_I