



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

SOCIAL SERVICE GRANTS COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: January 3, 2020

Time: 2:00pm

Location: Holliday Building 1st Floor Conference Room; 620 SE Madison

Committee members present: Councilmembers Jeff Coen (Chair), Michael Padilla, Councilmember Michael Lesser

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

1) Call to Order

Councilmember Coen called the meeting to order at 2:01pm. Committee members and staff introduced themselves.

2) Approval of the November 22, 2019 Minutes

Councilmember Padilla made a motion to approve the minutes. Councilmember Coen seconded. Minutes approved 2:0:1. Councilmember Lesser arrived just after the minutes were approved.

3) Discussion: Splitting Out Aging Services

Sasha Haehn, Director of Neighborhood Relations, stated the Governing Body had asked the committee to review the Social Service Grant program and to consider removing Aging Services from the pool of applicants for the Social Service Grants process.

Councilmember Lesser made a motion to keep the Aging Services agencies as they are and not split them from the other organizations. Councilmember Padilla seconded the motion. Councilmember Lesser stated he felt if organizations that serve certain populations began to be split from the whole group, it would difficult to put an end to splitting other services off. Councilmember Padilla stated that he also did not want to see the

aging service programs split out from the group. Councilmember Padilla voiced concern for having to set aside a set amount that was guaranteed to the Aging Services agencies, and although he feels those agencies are very important, there needs to be some accountability to the process and that is lost when funds are guaranteed.

Councilmember Coen inquired as to the process for sending this item back to the Governing Body. Ms. Haehn stated the item and decision by the committee would be included in the committee report that is sent back to the Governing Body. Ms. Haehn noted that a special circumstance would have to occur as Councilmember Coen's term will end on January 7th. Ms. Haehn and City Manager did not think this item would be ready to send back to the Governing Body by January 7th, and recommended the committee designate one of the other members to present to the Governing Body. Councilmember Lesser nominated Councilmember Padilla for this duty. Councilmember Padilla accepted, and will present the report to the Governing Body at an upcoming meeting. The date of that meeting is not known at this time.

Motion to not split out ageing services passes 3:0.

4) Discussion: Appeal Process

Ms. Haehn provided committee members a handout with the appeal process. The paragraph describes the appeal process as it is currently listed in the RFP for Grant Applications. Ms. Haehn stated that Staff is recommending the removal of the appeal process and noted that, to her knowledge, there is not an appeal process during any other grant program where applicants are able to appeal their scoring.

Councilmember Lesser made a motion to remove the Appeal Process (G) from the Social Service Grants RFP. Councilmember Padilla stated he would be interested in hearing from agencies in the audience to hear their thoughts on the matter.

Councilmember Coen inquired if any attending agency representatives wanted to speak on this matter. No individuals came forward. Councilmember Padilla seconded the motion in order to move into discussion.

Councilmember Coen inquired if the appeal process was set up when the Social Service Grant process was set up. Corrie Wright, Division Director in DNR, stated that many years ago, there was not an appeal

process. Without the process, agencies would make their appeals to the full Council during Governing Body meetings, which made for very long meetings. When the Committee was established, the appeal process was added to allow agencies to make their appeals at the committee level rather than to during Governing Body meetings. However, agencies ended up appealing not only to the committee, but also to the Governing Body.

Councilmember Padilla inquired as to the number of agencies that took advantage of the appeal process. Ms. Wright stated that almost all of the agencies that do not receive funding appeal.

Debra Dawkins, East Topeka Senior Center, addressed the Committee to state she would like to see the appeal process remain due to having the ability to right an error. Councilmember Padilla stated that he understands the recommendation to remove the appeal process, as it would remove some of the politicism.

Councilmember Padilla continued that by retaining the appeal process, there is a customer service component. Councilmember Padilla is hopeful that by outsourcing the grant process, some of the pressure that is said to come to bear by the councilmembers would be relieved. However, he would like for the committee to have the opportunity to review it a final time to ensure accuracy. His desire would be to keep the appeal process in the RFP, but that the appeals would be made to a Body outside of the Committee or Council. Ms. Haehn stated that when results are sent to the applicants, DNR Staff offered to schedule meetings with anyone who has questions regarding their scoring and provide feedback so that those agencies are able to understand how to improve their scoring for the next grant cycle. Councilmember Padilla stated if City Staff was no longer in charge of reviewing applications, there would need to be some oversight to ensure programs are being given the same consideration as they are now. Ms. Haehn stated language would be added into the contract with the vendor to ensure that the process was followed, and if concerns came forward of the third-party vendor not sticking to those instructions, consequences could be enforced, to either make them follow that instruction or terminate the contract.

Councilmember-elect Christina Valdivia-Alcalá spoke to the Committee to state that the customer service aspect of the grant process would be left out if the ability for agencies to appeal their scoring was removed. Councilmember-elect Valdivia-Alcalá stated there should be some type of consistent oversight for the appeal

process if a third-party vendor became involved. Councilmember-elect Valdivia-Alcalá stated she had heard, in previous meetings, concerns brought forward of the social service grant process being a flawed process. Councilmember-elect Valdivia-Alcalá would prefer to keep the process in-house to maintain the customer service component, and that by utilizing a third-party vendor, tax payers' dollars are not being spent wisely.

Councilmember Lesser stated the score sheet accurately reflects the priorities sheet. Another important component that needs to be included in the RFP is to allow organizations to attend pre-meeting solicitations, to ensure there are opportunities for the grantees to ask questions prior to beginning the process, and to be able to have questions addressed during the process. Another concern with holding an appeal process is where to put the line of concerns that organizations have with their score. Councilmember Lesser stated that by having clearly defined the expectations for the submission, clearly defined the timetable, and clearly defined that the score sheet satisfactorily meets the requirements of the priority sheet. If those items are all met there would not be need for the appeal process.

Councilmember Coen inquired if there was any further comments by the audience. There were none.

Councilmember Coen inquired if the appeal process decision had to be at this meeting or if it could be made during discussions of the contract. Ms. Haehn replied either way could be done, as long as the committee felt comfortable with defending the decision to the Governing Body. Ms. Haehn continued to state that in her five years of being involved with the process, there has only been one agency application where the score was changed during the appeal process due to an error that was found. Even with that correction, the program was not awarded funding as they had not scored high enough in other areas. The majority of the appeals that are made are from agencies with programs that did not like how a particular sections was scored, and that is subjective; not an objective measure that could be corrected during an appeal.

Councilmember Coen restated that a motion had been made by Councilmember Lesser to withdraw the appeal process. Without further discussion by the committee, a vote yielded 2:1, with Councilmembers Coen and Lesser in favor; Councilmember Padilla opposed.

Councilmember Lesser made a suggestion to change the order of the agenda to switch items 5 and 6 around. "Finalize Priority Sheet" will be Item 5. "Update the Score Sheet" will be Item 6. The suggestion was agreed on by other committee members. The minutes will reflect this change in order.

5) Finalize Priority Sheet

Ms. Haehn stated that Staff had included this item to the agenda in the event that the Committee had voted to separate the Aging Services. As that is not the recommendation, the only correction to the proposed priority sheet is to change the word "agencies" to "program", in the language about funding new program applications.

The committee decided a few years ago chose to set a maximum amount of funding that could be applied for, the decision was made to score the program rather than the agency. The error on the priority sheet was by Staff, for not changing that earlier, however, the process had been following the format of scoring the program and not the agency since that time.

Councilmember Coen inquired if there was a way to provide the funding amounts over the past year's amount to show the progression for funding for the Governing Body members to view. Ms. Haehn inquired if the committee would find a second sheet that shows the past five years in funding. Councilmember Coen felt that suggestion would be helpful.

Councilmember Coen inquired if there was a motion to approve the proposed 2021 Priority Sheet as amended. Ms. Haehn noted the priority sheet would be included in the RFP for the third-party vendor and that agencies would be applying for 2021 funding. Councilmember Padilla made a motion to approve. Councilmember Lesser seconded. Motion passes 3:0.

6) Update Score Sheet

Staff provided the committee with a copy of the current score sheet as well as a copy of the proposed update to the score sheet which would remove language that would not be reviewed by a third-party vendor. The section titled "Program Grant and Administration is Effective" has historically been scored by Staff. If the process will be outsourced to a third-party vendor, Staff is recommending the removal of this section. The "past grant administration" could be and should be considered by the third-party vendor, however Staff feels it is a better score sheet without that section (Program Grant Administration is Effective), as the vendor will evaluate a program's

past performance based on the outputs and outcomes that were included in the contract with the agencies, and whatever was reported in the final report for the year.

Councilmember Lesser inquired if the intention was to add the language back into the 2022 score sheet. Ms. Haehn stated that a third-party would not review the information regarding past grant administration, however those details could be provided to the committee as supplemental information. Ms. Haehn stated that the committee and vendor would meet, once the new committee was established, to lay out a new process as to how the vendor will be expected to report out and review the process to the committee. Ms. Haehn stated this process has not been done in the past, but feels it is an important piece and should be added moving forward to allow the community and the committee to understand how tax dollars are being spent.

Councilmember Lesser stated he would like to have a survey sent out to applicant agencies regarding their experience with the third-party vendor. Once the RFP has been set, applicants could provide feedback as to their experience with the vendor. Ms. Haehn inquired about sending the survey between the deadline of submitting the applications, but prior to the scores being released. Brent Trout, City Manager, stated he felt the survey would need to be done in two parts. One part to find out about communication between the vendor and applicants during the application process, and the second part to inquire about the vendor's performance with answering questions pertaining to concerns on applications. Councilmember Lesser appreciated the suggestion and stated he felt it was a way to keep the outsourced vendor accountable during the process. Mr. Trout stated the feedback from agencies would be important for Staff as well as for the Governing Body with understanding how the vendor is doing.

Council-elect Valdivia-Alcalá stated she felt a survey would be an important customer service component, and inquired if the current process includes a customer survey. Ms. Wright stated there was a public meeting to hear comments for this program. Councilmember-elect Valdivia-Alcalá inquired if there was any survey or questionnaire done in writing. Ms. Wright stated there was not, outside of the minutes taken at the committee meetings. Ms. Haehn stated that customer surveys are sent out for other programs that the City initiates, such as the rehab programs. Councilmember Lesser noted he agreed with Councilmember-elect Valdivia-Alcalá that having a confidential or anonymous way to submit feedback

was important.

Councilmember Padilla stated the process has a high standard, and appreciates the suggestion by Councilmember Lesser to include a survey.

Councilmember Coen inquired if there was a motion to update the score sheet as amended by the Staff. Councilmember Lesser noted he would like time to review the score sheet prior to making a decision. Ms. Haehn noted there would be time for the committee to meet again, however Councilmember Coen would no longer be in office after January 7. Mr. Trout noted the score sheet was not something that would need to be included in the RFP, nor would it slow the RFP process down. Ms. Haehn emphasized that the priority sheet would need to be finalized prior to being able to include it with the RFP, however there would be time for one more meeting to review the score sheet.

Councilmember Lesser stated that he would like to review and discuss further the requirement for organizational leadership is strongly maintained and the weight placed on the agency Board diversity and attendance. Ms. Haehn stated Staff did not have a preference on the attendance percentage, and that the 65% was based on the attendance percentage requirement for the City's Governing Body. Ms. Haehn strongly suggested the committee consider the racial, gender, and ethnic make-up of the Boards as this topic comes up each year. Staff feels it is important for an agency board to reflect demographics of the population that they serve. Councilmember Lesser stated he understood, but would like to look at ways to phrase that section differently.

Kay Gray, Papan's Landing Senior Center - addressed the Committee and stated the Board is representative of the population served at Papan's Landing, however this item of the grant application has been problematic in the past due to the low number of ethnic minority Board members.

Councilmember Coen stated he had also heard from agencies about the difficulty with finding Board members from a minority ethnic background.

Mr. Trout stated that the decision to remove 10 points from the "Past Grant Administration is Effective" section, the 10 points could be added to a new section of criteria. The score sheet could also remain at 90 points instead of the 100 points. The 10 points could

also be added to other sections of the score sheet where the committee felt held more importance. This could be something that is discussed along with the consideration of removing the 10 points.

Councilmember Padilla spoke about personal experience with serving on a Board as one of few, or only, Hispanic members. He noted that many organizations struggle with finding Hispanic and African American individuals to serve on their Boards. Councilmember Padilla noted there are also many organizations who have provided training and information to the Hispanic and African American communities on how to apply for and serve on committees and boards. Councilmember Padilla stated there was a list of minority representatives and inquired if this would be a list that could be provided to the Mayor's office, or the Neighborhood Relations Staff, or somewhere if a Social Service Grants applicant agency needed help finding a minority to serve on their Board, they could find that information. Councilmember Padilla stated that the youth of the community has become a priority with training, as many of the Board members are aging out and it is important to have younger members trained and ready to fill the positions on these boards. Ms. Haehn noted the suggestions from Councilmember Padilla and stated the information could be provided to applicant agencies upon request.

Debra Dawkins addressed the committee to inform them of her service on a Momentum 2022 sub-committee, which has a specific goal to create opportunities to address diversity on Boards and Commissions. Ms. Dawkins stated United Way would be hosting an all-day event in April 2020, which will be a type of recruitment event that was focused particularly on matching organizations with the community members who are of a minority background and would like to serve on Boards. Ms. Dawkins stated that some agencies have Board members who are appointed, which limits the way the agency applies for grants.

Councilmember Coen initiated discussion regarding when the committee would like to meet next. Ms. Wright inquired if Committee Members would like to have input on the score sheet from the agencies available for the next meeting. Councilmember Lesser and Padilla agreed that information would be appreciated.

Council-elect Valdivia-Alcalá inquired about contracts for Senior Center funding that were due December 17th, but had heard a new date had been established and wanted to confirm that date was now

January 17, 2020. Ms. Wright confirmed January 17, 2020 was correct.

7) Adjourn

Councilmember Coen adjourned the meeting at 2:54PM.

Meeting video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/cxaZDVwzHtU>