



# CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

## SOCIAL SERVICE GRANTS COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL  
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**Date:** July 10, 2023

**Time:** 1:00 p.m.

**Location:** 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room Cyrus K. Holliday Bldg 620 SE Madison  
(virtual attendance option also offered)

**Committee members present:** Councilmembers Sylvia Ortiz (Chair), Karen Hiller, Brett Kell

**City staff present:** Carrie Higgins (Division Director Housing Services), United Way of Kaw Valley vendor staff: Brett Martin, Jessica Lehnerr, Joyce Katzer, Juliet McDiffet, Audrey Mott

### 1) Call to Order

Chairwoman Ortiz called the meeting to order at 1:00pm Committee members, City Staff, and United Way staff introduced themselves.

### 2) Approval of June 30, 2023 Minutes

Committee member Hiller made a motion to approve meeting minutes. Chairwoman Ortiz seconded the motion. Motion approved 2-0-0. Committee member Kell was unable to vote due to technical difficulties.

### 3) Agency Appeals

Brett Martin, United Way of Kaw Valley, noted that three agencies had submitted letters to appeal. Agencies were called up to speak on their appeals. Appeals are heard for agencies that feel there was an error on the scoring of their application. Chairwoman Ortiz provided some ground rules for speakers. Speakers will have four minutes to speak to the Committee. Additional time will be requested to the Chair after that time.

Papan's Landing - Robin St. James, Director, stated that their application received a 96%, however, she felt the score should have been raised an additional two percentages. The application was docked two points for late submission of the second quarter report for the prior grant year. Ms. St. James stated that the second quarter report was not submitted, and that the inaction had occurred prior to her employment with the organization. She did not feel this application should reflect a penalization from actions taken by a past administrator.

Mr. Martin provided some clarification, noting that past practice has been to review the most recent past grant administration for the City. As was mentioned,

Papan's Landing were not awarded in 2023, however they were awarded in 2022. In 2022, the second quarter report was due on July 15, 2022 and it was submitted July 19<sup>th</sup>. That was what the score was based on for past-grant administration.

Chairwoman Ortiz requested that, in the future, all appeal letters and corresponding program applications and scoring rubrics sent to the Committee at least a few days prior to this appeals meeting. Mr. Martin acknowledged the request.

Chairwoman Ortiz inquired if there were additional questions from the Committee. Committee member Hiller provided some background to the rules and rating process that was done before, noting there were pre-application and post-application training sessions through United Way on application process. She felt the Committee was charged with considering the appeal if it was felt that the applicant had not received assistance in a timely manner, and then had been docked on points due to something being late, and that this did not seem to be the issue in this instance.

MOTION: Chairwoman Ortiz made a motion to award the appeal to give Papan's Landing the additional two points, as requested by Ms. St. James. Committee member Kell seconded. Motion approved 2-1-0. Committee member Hiller denied the motion, explaining that this change will effect the other awardees. In the past, the Committee has made changes to the following year's rules, however has chosen not to change allocations. The motion stands.

Florence Crittenton - Mary Hoover and Jolie Eckert are appealing their score on the basis that one of the outcomes, related to the achievement of outputs and outcomes on prior grants, had received a score of zero. Ms. Hoover felt this was a technical issue related to the application process. The question on the application requested data from the past quarter of 2023, rather than for the full year of 2022 and through the first quarter of 2023. She felt their agency is able to provide measurable outputs and outcomes for the application as requested.

Mr. Martin provided some additional information. The application does request the most recent outputs and outcomes for the programs. The applicants provided that information. During the review of email correspondence, it became clear to United Way that the language may not have been clear to the Executive Director. He noted that once the Executive Director was made aware of the issue, she did provide a list of the outputs and outcomes achieved for the program related through a grant they had received from another grantor. In the review, it is

recognized the language may not have been clear the Executive Director, and in looking at the outputs and outcomes, an organization would not meet the outcomes if there was only one quarter's worth of data provided. Mr. Martin stated this would be a larger issue, related to process and related to organizations that have not received City dollars in the past, that United Way would like to recommend for process improvement at the Fall meeting.

Chairwoman Ortiz sought additional clarification of the appeal. Mr. Martin stated that Florence Crittenton provided one quarter of outputs and outcomes, rather than a full year. Once the information was received for the full year, it was determined that Florence Crittenton had achieved 100% of their outcomes and outputs. This issue was discovered after the cutoff time. Ms. Eckert stated the organization was notified and did provide the data that was needed, however that had occurred after the date it was originally due. Because the data that was actually needed was not made clear on the application, Ms. Eckert did not know going into this process that they would need to provide an additional grant-year's worth of outcomes through their other grants to prove the program had achieved outcomes that would have met the criteria for this grant. Further, once notified of this need for additional information, it was provided to United Way within the requested timeframe, but due to a technical issue, it did not initially appear to have made it through in time. She felt it was a miscommunication of the program outcomes.

Mr. Martin expanded that the language in the email to the agency, they had asked for most recent grant outputs and outcomes. The Executive Director provided the most recent quarter's worth of information. The email had not clarified "annual", only "most current outputs and outcomes". He stated that it was then recognized the language moving forward needs to state "most current annual outputs and outcomes" so that individuals can provide the appropriate information.

Committee member Hiller inquired if it was United Way's recommendation that the error was such that the score should be changed in this case? Mr. Martin stated they would recommend awarding the appeal. Committee member Hiller inquired as to what that meant for their ranking and prospective allocation? Mr. Martin confirmed it would change these. He provided the Committee with some projections. With the overturning of this decision, it would remove the 86% programs (two of them), which would now fall below the cutoff. For the two programs that had tied for 87%, they would now split the remainder of the dollars available, which would be \$21,179. It would change the wording for those programs now as well. Committee member Hiller inquired if that amount was due

to Florence Crittenton? Mr. Martin answered they would receive 98% of the \$21,179 as that would move their score from 78% to 98%.

Mr. Martin stated that the overall scores were the highest seen in this process than any other year in the past, by all applicants.

MOTION: Committee member Kell made a motion to overturn the score of 78% for Florence Crittenton, as recommended by the United Way of Kaw Valley, to now reflect a score 98%. Committee member Ortiz seconded the motion for discussion.

Committee member Hiller reminded the Committee that with this change, it will mean two other original awardee applicants will now be moved down and not receive funding. Chairwoman Ortiz inquired with staff if it was known where the other money would come from, or who the other applicants would be that would now be knocked out? Mr. Martin stated that they had the information related to what this would look like, and noted that applicants are informed via the letter they receive, that award amounts are contingent on the appeals process on the approval of the SSG Committee and the approval by the Governing Body. Committee member Kell felt that, if the City trusts United Way to oversee the process and if they are recommending to overturn their score due to an error made on their end, that should be the action taken.

FINAL MOTION: Approved 3-0-0 to recommend the award to Florence Crittenton to reflect a score change from 78% to 98%.

Topeka Rescue Mission – Christian Stringfellow sought clarification on pieces within their scoring. He noted the first mistake on TRM’s part was that activities were mis-stated. Instead of stating the things that would be done, they had stated a broader description of how TRM would reduce homelessness. The other mistake was related to the proposed outputs missing.

Mr. Stringfellow asked questions about the grading on a few of the different points. The first was about “the organization manages program effectively”. A reviewer comment stated “there was not a lot of non-direct assistance expenses for rent and utility program not meeting outcomes or outputs. He noted that in reviewing the program budget, a lot of the information was dependent on whether salaries the employees are actually administering are included in the direct or non-direct assistance category. With that, \$155,000 was noted for the salaries of four different employees with roughly \$200,000 for the actual rent assistance to help individuals with their rent and deposits. If that was the intake accounting for

the direct assistance, and also the staff salaries to provide the direct assistance is only about 1.3% of the total budget, was non-direct assistance.

Mr. Stringfellow also referenced a commend about the program not meeting outcomes of outputs. He stated the program had been incredibly effective over the past couple of years, with 135 people being referred to the program that were successful in finding housing. This demonstrates a 100% success rate over last year's time.

The second question was about organizational leadership. The category on the application states "organizational leadership is strong and maintains community-based representation". The application was docked two points, about 40%, due to the lack of diversity of the Board. He explained that TRM attempts to construct their board in a way that addresses the needs of the guests or individuals that are coming to them. The president of the board is female, and is a judge. This provides representation from the judicial or legal system. There are also doctors, people who represent the education system, and ministry, as TRM is religious-based organization. He asked if the 40% being docked, he would like to ask what TRM could do better within this area to increase the score in the future?

The third question was a combination of two different things. First, they were marked down for "past grant administration is effective"; receiving a 3/5. They were also marked down for a late report. With the former application being from another United Way grant application, Mr. Stringfellow inquired if this would be something to be applicable to this situation as well? He referenced the Florence Crittenton application, and noted that on the same section "the applicant has achieved outputs and outcomes on prior grants meaningful measures", TRM was given 10/20 points, and that five of the thirteen outputs had been met. He noted that the CARE program is the only other program that has received a grant from United Way. The CARE program holds high value for TRM, to help guests get into employment. They also have to take into consideration the challenges that some of the guests come to TRM with. There has been a change noticed over the past several years shifting the dynamics of the homelessness, with increases in mental health and addiction and the increase in the overall age of the guests. The CARE program will likely have some issues with meeting all of the proposed outcomes. He asked that TRM's application be taken into consideration.

Mr. Martin walked through the pieces of this appeal. The reason for the reduction of 5 points to 3 points, related to "organization manages program effectively", as stated on the comments were due to a lot of non-direct assistance expenses for

the rent and utility program but the reason for the reduction from was related to the comment “not meeting outcomes and outputs”. When the reviewers were looking at the applications, if they saw that a program met 50%, or fewer, of their outcomes, they used that information to inform their score on program management with the thought being that effective program management would achieve more than 50% of the outcomes.

Related to “Organizational Leadership”, the rubric provided by the Social Service Grants Committee and City of Topeka, states that in order to reflect community-based representation, a board must have less than 70% of one gender. Mr. Stringfellow pointed out that six of the eight TRM board members are one gender, which is a 75%.

Related to outputs and outcomes, past practice has been that when program or organizational information is not found within the system, from prior grants, the process is to first check with the City to see if they have any outputs or outcomes in any other system they have. United Way contacted City staff and were informed they did not have outputs or outcomes for this program. Then, United Way looks through their systems in the same way. Mr. Martin confirmed United Way had looked at TRM’s CARE program as a comparable program. He referenced Mr. Stringfellow’s comments stating there were five out of thirteen outputs achieved for the CARE program. This is why they received 50%.

Chairwoman Ortiz recalled that the Topeka Rescue Mission has not applied for or requested funding from the City of Topeka in any capacity before. She recognized this is a new step and would be something new for their organization.

Committee member Hiller provided some feedback for the TRM applicant. She offered that, in response to the issue of what overhead expenses are and what program expenses are, that the staffing and all of the time they spend with the guests at the Rescue Mission and in outreach, is part of the program; and sometimes clarifying that they are direct services, and are not “just” giving away rent and utility money, with a program that would not need any people to make those decisions. She also referenced the mention from Mr. Stringfellow of both the housing program and the CARE program, and that agencies will sometimes put in multiple applications for multiple programs, and if the way to address that internally would be to separate them to provide a clear separation of outputs and outcomes from the two programs. Another thing is to be realistic about the outcomes. If a good outcome for someone who has received housing is that, whatever the percentage is, that part of the program was to stay on with the

individuals and not to simply move them in, could be measured as an output. There was a comment on the application from a reviewer about follow-up, so if the routine is to invest in staff time, to check on people regularly and a secondary measure of success is to show that those people are still housed six months later and in good standing, working on defining the outcomes may be tough but to not be afraid to have a reasonable outcome.

No further comments related to this application.

#### **4) Review & Approve Scoring and Funding Recommendations**

Chairwoman Ortiz asked Mr. Martin as to what the next steps would be. Mr. Martin stated their team would take the recommendations back and re-work the reward recommendations. From there, the Committee would need to meet again to review and make a final recommendation. At that time, United Way would then send out a new award recommendation letters to the agencies to let them know that, again these amounts now are contingent upon Governing Body approval, but not appeals. There is only one time for appeals written into the process.

Chairwoman Ortiz asked staff, Liz Toyne specifically, to find the full amount available for the grants process.

Committee member Hiller noted that the current total funding request, \$434,904 is the amount that was authorized by the Governing Body to be used for this grant cycle. She sought confirmation from United Way that they will have spent 100% of the combination of General Fund and CDBG funds that is there for this process? Mr. Martin shook his head to confirm. Committee member Hiller noted the total amount of dollars requested for the SSG program has not changed in in some time. She had asked City Manager Stephen Wade, in last year's SSG allocation meeting, if there would be a possibility to so some sort of increase and his answer had been a flat "no". She stated the Committee could request increasing the amount of funding during the Governing Body's budget process which would allocate money next year for the 2024 grants. Chairwoman Ortiz inquired as to how much increase Councilwoman Hiller was interested in requesting. Councilwoman Hiller stated a cut of roughly \$25,000 had been made, so the Committee could ask to add that back in to not have to cut the agencies that will now be cut after changes made to the Papan's Landing and Florence Crittenton programs. She stated the Committee had two options, one is to leave the funding request where it currently sits, with the amended scoring numbers, or the Committee could ask the Governing Body to add some additional funding. Mr. Martin stated that of the two agencies that received an 86% score, the amount

available was split between the two. One had requested \$25,000 the other had requested \$21,500. Those were added together and the ratio of what percent the \$46,500 that was requested, and the ratio of what the \$21,500 was of the \$46,500 so that it is proportionate to what their ask was, and apply it to the dollars that are available. If there were conversation related to fully investing in the two 86% programs, it would be higher than \$25,000. Committee member Hiller noted that, \$25,000 was needed to make up for the current changes, but that \$40,000 would actually be needed if the Committee wanted to make the whole list whole. Mr. Martin confirmed.

Chairwoman Ortiz inquired if anyone present knew how long the funding request had stayed at this amount? Mr. Martin stated he recalled it had been at least a few years.

Mr. Martin reminded that, based on the RFP and based on communications from United Way, they would need to notify the agencies about any changes within seven calendar days of appeal. If the information goes out by Friday (July 14), it would still be within the seven calendar days.

Committee member Hiller inquired if the letter would only be sent to the agencies who would be impacted by the change. United Way staff clarified that the changes will impact everyone. Mr. Martin stated they would send out a whole new set of pieces to everyone. It affect the two at the bottom. The applications that had received 100% will still get all that they had requested, but it will affect those at the cutoff.

Mr. Martin stated they could send the Committee a few sets of recommendation scenarios for amended dollars. One set could be based on the two appeals heard today, as it stands and wherever it falls is where it falls. This will exhaust the \$434,904. Another set of recommendations would run the two programs which scored 86%, and show what 86% of their request would be, and that would increase the \$434,904 and that would show the difference. They could also provide a third number that kept the two 86% at their current recommended funding, without the appeals.

Chairwoman Ortiz stated she would like to see all three scenarios. Mr. ,Martin reminded that there was only one appeal process set in this SSG process. There will not be another appeal process. So, if agencies receive the new recommendations on Friday, and they have been affected, there will not be another appeal. He noted that this is something that they stress to the agencies



throughout the application process...that they are not appealing whether or not they get dollars, but it is about appealing their score. The language in the RFP is very clear, that if an agency is near the cutoff score, there is a higher likelihood that they will not receive the full amount of the percent requested because it is whatever the remaining dollars are. That has been a problem in the past, and it was determined that the language in the RFP needed to be strengthened to make this very clear. And it is discussed in the grant workshop.

#### **5) Other Items**

No additional items.

#### **6) Adjourn**

Chair adjourned the meeting at 1:57pm

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