

COVID RELIEF SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, May 21, 2020 – 10:00 a.m.

<https://kentcountymi.zoom.us/j/7625970792>

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Mandy Bolter; Vice-Chair Stan Stek; Commissioners Emily Brieve, Diane Jones, Roger Morgan, Phil Skaggs, Jim Talen, and Robert Womack

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

Chair Bolter called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

I. WELCOME

Chair Bolter welcomed the group and thanked those who joined the meeting.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF MAY 19,2020

Vice-Chair Stek noted a change in pronoun that needed to be made to the minutes.

Mr. Talen moved to approve the amended minutes from May 19, 2020. Supported by Mr. Stek.
Motion carried.

III. RIGHT PLACE RESPONSE TO COVID & MEDC SMALL BUSINESS GRANT UPDATE

Mr. Tim Mroz and Ms. Birgit Klohs reported on The Right Place's response to COVID-19 and provided an update regarding the MEDC Small Business Grant.

Chair Bolter asked how many people were on the panel that reviewed applications and how those individuals were selected. Mr. Mroz answered 13. The Right Place partnered with many groups, including the Chambers of Commerce, and took recommendations on who should be part of the group. They also made sure to include someone from the legal field.

Vice-Chair Stek asked what the key parameters and objectives were for deciding who to fund. Mr. Mroz answered they reviewed the application which consisted of seven questions, five of which were objective and two subjective.

Mr. Skaggs noted a figure from the presentation which stated 35% of the grants went to minority- or women-owned businesses. He asked how that happened. Mr. Mroz indicated that of the seven questions on the application, none of them would have given a particular group an advantage. One question was regarding the business' ability to survive, and another was how important or critical to the community the business is. That allowed those businesses to show where they went the extra mile with the community.

Mr. Womack noted that many minority business owners he has communicated with indicated they have not been able to receive any stimulus money. By the time they hear about a new opportunity, they will call within 24-48 hours and the funds will have already been depleted locally.

Chair Bolter asked for further advice they could provide regarding a process like this. Mr. Mroz spoke about what The Right Place has learned. Some specific pieces of advice he gave were knowing what type of business you want to help; automate the process as much as possible; seek legal guidance; be prepared to be

inundated with requests; establish a clear grading rubric that is point based; and be prepared to spend a lot of time and labor hours working on it.

Mr. Skaggs requested that a memo be sent to the committee listing these lessons learned so that they may refer to it in the future. Tim Mroz said he would share this communication with the Board.

Mr. Skaggs referenced the PPE Directory that The Right Place implemented and asked if the demand for PPE is known and what it might be in the future. He asked if the County is able to use this program to bulk purchase and then distribute so that local manufacturers can be supported. Mr. Mroz stated the goal of the PPE Directory is to make sure everyone has access to at least one point of access for PPE equipment. Ms. Klohs added that the future needs are not known yet.

Mr. Morgan asked what The Right Place needs from this subcommittee in order to get people back to work. Ms. Klohs answered they need to double down on retention work. The Right Place needs to interact with businesses in order to do their work. They have pivoted their duties in order to help where it is needed, and now the need is to have good jobs, collaborations with the County, and build up programs and invest in the Right Place. Mr. Mroz added that the County can help businesses be part of industry councils that help get out important information about resources.

Vice-Chair Stek asked for advice for how to concentrate funding. Ms. Klohs answered that it is better to be narrow and deep rather than wide and shallow with help. It is important to see where the most impact can be made. She further stated the base employers, for example those who manufacture PPE or support resources are the companies that will best help the community.

Ms. Jones asked about the impact of working from home and how it may change how some businesses operate. Ms. Klohs answered it will change some working habits, but things like manufacturing cannot be done from home. Furthermore, supply changes will be re-engineered globally. For companies who have converted to making PPE, it may be important to weigh the benefits of continuing to do so even after the pandemic, that way the needs can be met locally.

Chair Bolter thanked the Right Place for their presentation and advice.

IV. PPE EFFORTS AND UPDATE ON LOCAL UNIT OF GOVERNMENTS EXPENDITURES

Mr. Calvin Brinks, Purchasing Manager, presented a proposal for small businesses facing challenges with obtaining PPE.

Vice-Chair Stek asked if this subcommittee is authorized to make this decision. Mr. Britt answered yes, with the approval of a resolution by the Board of Commissioners in March, this is authorized.

Vice-Chair Stek asked what the parameters and limitations of this program are. Mr. Brinks answered that as it is currently recommended, there are 8,000 small businesses of 50 employees or fewer who could qualify.

Vice-Chair asked, in response, what advices would be given to businesses with over 50 employees. Mr. Brinks stated they will be referred to sources in a similar manner to The Right Place.

Chair Bolter asked if the businesses will be charged for this PPE. Mr. Brinks answered no, there will be no charge to the company, it will be charged through grants.

Mr. Talen stated concerns about adequate supply of PPE. This proposal does not address enough businesses who need it, for example childcare providers.

Ms. Brieve asked how they would limit businesses from ordering all the supplies. Mr. Brinks answered that through the relationships made with local industries, they have a good idea of what is realistic for a supply. There will be a maximum amount that can be requested, and a business cannot go over that amount.

Chair Bolter proposed this opportunity be expanded to businesses with 100 employees or fewer, and not just 50 or fewer. Mr. Talen expressed concern with this approach given the amount of supplies indicated in the proposal. Mr. Skaggs added that the budget could be doubled to make accommodations.

Mr. Morgan made a motion to double the number from 50 to 100. Supported by Mr. Skaggs.

Yeas: Stek, Jones, Brieve, Talen, Morgan, Skaggs, Womack, Bolter - 8
Nays: 0.

Motion carried.

V. UPDATE ON COVID-19 EXPENSES AND OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

Mr. Jeff Dood, Fiscal Services Director, provided an update on current County COVID-19 expenses and funding sources.

VI. OTHER (SUBCOMMITTEE DOCUMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE)

The subcommittee discussed other groups they may want to hear presentations from or receive written correspondence, such as minority groups and 2-1-1.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Britt stated the group will need to discuss a plan for the homeless community as soon as Tuesday, May 26 if possible.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for discussion, Chair Bolter adjourned the meeting at 12:46.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL FOR DISTRIBUTION

Pam VanKemen