

COVID RELIEF SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

Tuesday, May 26, 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 10:10 a.m.

I. WELCOME

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

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF MAY 21, 2020

Ms. Jones moved to approve the minutes from May 21, 2020 as presented. Supported by Mr. Talen. Motion carried.

III. PRESENTATION BY GRAND RAPIDS AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY TASK FORCE

Chair Bolter welcomed the Grand Rapids African American Community Task Force. The task force presented information about the Urban COVID Response Team, a consortium that aims to assist the community by providing resources and support. Some areas of discussion included mobile testing, personal protective equipment, contact tracing, public service announcements, and a data warehouse.

Chair Bolter thanked the group for their presentation. She welcomed the opportunity to work collaboratively in order to expand the scope of help being offered.

IV. UPDATE ON LUOGS SURVEY & COVID EXPENDITURES

Ms. Marybeth VanTill presented results from a recent survey of local units of government.

V. CARES ACT ALLOCATION STRATEGY (PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS)

Mr. Stephen Duarte presented preliminary recommendations for the allocation for funds regarding COVID-19 relief.

Chair Bolter asked if these numbers were pulled together based on estimates they have been hearing. Mr. Duarte answered that the amounts are based on long-term estimates. The goal was to show some allocation recommendations and then allow the subcommittee to adjust and make modifications. Mr. Britt added that the list provided does not necessarily account for everything, and the numbers could be lower or higher. But regardless, the funds for hotel/motel are on a strict time restraint and must be acted on quickly.

Ms. Brieve asked what will happen if the money isn't all used in a particular allocation. Mr. Duarte recognized that some allocation estimates may be too little and others too much. Those funds will be shuffled where possible and care will be taken to ensure restricted and donated funds are used first. Mr. Britt added that there is a timetable to spend the funds by December 30, 2020.

Ms. Jones asked if the bigger plan is to have community partners be the lead in allocating from the amounts given to them. Mr. Britt answered that there will be a partner helping make those allocations, and the county will remain involved as well as auditors.

Ms. Jones then asked for clarification if a partner will assist with all the monies distributed in this way. Mr. Britt answered yes.

Chair Bolter encouraged the group to start making decisions soon. There will be a presentation from the Chamber on Thursday, May 28, and after that the allocations need to begin.

Vice-Chair Stek asked if the process is to first fix the amounts of the larger “buckets” and then drill down into the specifics, or if the buckets are predictive and not necessarily how the funds will be allocated. Mr. Britt explained some items need to be moved on very soon such as PPE and the hotel bill, but each category will have a drill-down component that will be worked from based on the recommendations the subcommittee has received.

Mr. Skaggs asked what the funding for contact tracing will be used for and if it will get the county to what the CDC recommends. He wondered if it would move things from a volunteer to a paid basis. He also stated it would be helpful to see what exactly they will be getting from the different allocations. He gave the example of the Public Safety amount, which seemed large, and how the funding for PPE will be used to help for-profit and nonprofit businesses. Chair Bolter answered the intention is not to provide PPE for every person in Kent County. It is more for businesses and organizations to distribute to get back to work. The subcommittee is trusting the Kent County Health Department on where things should be sent. Mr. Talen added that the Health Department staff are currently doing most of the contact tracing, supplemented by volunteers.

Mr. Womack stated that many businesses who have been first in line to receive aid continue to be first, and those who have been last in line continue to be last, and some have received no help at all. He asked what the subcommittee can do to be inclusive to those left behind. Mr. Britt said they have received information from the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce and the Right Place about those who haven't received assistance. That will be a starting point, but there have been calls coming from businesses too, and with the information being gathered, the group can do better. Chair Bolter added that the amount of funding in this category can be discussed further too. It will be vital that there be no discriminatory practices. This discussion can be continued on Thursday after the subcommittee has a chance to digest the information.

Mr. Womack requested that more information be provided about contact tracing. Specifically, he suggested getting more information about how it's done, who is responsible, how HIPPA laws relate, and how much participation it takes from patience. There is a lot of misinformation or lack of clarify about the subject and it can lead to people being secretive or unwilling to participate. Mr. Talen stated there is a good video about contact tracing on the Kent County Health Department's website.

The subcommittee agreed that the process of allocation needs to move forward, but further articulation of what is included in the different categories will be essential first.

Chair Bolter thanked the group for their work and advised they bring their questions and concerns to the Thursday meeting for discussion.

VI. HOMELESS FAMILIES REQUEST

Mr. Britt stated the group has heard testimony and understands the need to house homeless families dealing with COVID-19. Families currently staying in hotels for their safety and the safety of others will be evicted from the hotel by the end of the month if the funding is not continued.

Mr. Duarte gave an estimate of \$280,000 to pay through mid-July, but he indicated it still doesn't fix the problem. This will be an ongoing need and he asked if the group would prefer to have a funding bucket up to a certain amount, such as \$500,000. Then, as with the PPE proposal, it would go through the same process where the chair and Administrator would approve the request with support from the vice-chair, minority vice-chair, and Fiscal Services Director. Chair Bolter stated she would like to use the same process that was used for PPE.

Mr. Duarte indicated that the issue of whether there are other funding sources available is one that hasn't been resolved yet. For example, how FEMA V, City of Grand Rapids ESG funds, and Kent County ESG funds couple possibly be utilized. Because of that, a final number hasn't been proposed yet. Chair Bolter agreed that a long-term housing plan will not be approved today, but the shelter bill is a need that will need to be taken care of as soon as possible.

The subcommittee unanimously agreed to increase the amount to be allocated for this issue. Chair Bolter gave support for the Administrator to proceed with the process.

VII. SUBCOMMITTEE DOCUMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Britt shared documents received regarding the Latinx community and United Way/2-1-1. The plan is to have the Latinx group present to the subcommittee on Thursday.

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Womack thanked the organizations for speaking publicly because it is the best way for the subcommittee to learn and the best way to get requests. He stated he is thankful for the transparency. Mr. Talen followed up encouraging everyone to spend some time on the Kent County Health Department's website. They provide a lot of information and resources and give details about how Kent County and the Health Department are responding.

Ms. Brieve asked for a status update on the PPE that is supposed to be available for businesses. Mr. Britt stated that update will be sent out today.

Mr. Morgan advised he will be late to the meeting on Thursday due to a prior commitment.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Candace Cowling of Family Futures asked, "Will the County include community-based organizations/nonprofits as eligible for access to PPE support? (beyond the handful of nonprofits that have provided presentations that do the great work of focusing on homelessness.) There are many other nonprofits that are having experiences very similar to other small businesses and are an important economic engine in our community in addition to the important impact their mission focused services have to keeping our community healthy. Thank you for your work during these challenging times."

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for discussion, Chair Bolter adjourned the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL FOR DISTRIBUTION Pam VanKemen