

COVID RELIEF SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

June 2, 2020 – 10:00 a.m.

<https://kentcountymi.zoom.us/j/91670339486>

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 10:00 a.m.

I. WELCOME

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

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF MAY 28, 2020

Ms. Brieve moved to approve the minutes from May 28, 2020 as presented. Supported by Mr. Stek.

Mr. Talen moved to amend a sentence in section IV of the minutes. He asked that "...businesses on the ground that are doing the work," be included. Supported by Ms. Brieve.

Motion to amend the minutes carried.

III. PRESENTATION BY GR AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SMALL BUSINESS RELIEF SUPPORT

Chair Bolter welcomed Mr. Andy Johnston and Mr. Dante Villarreal from the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Johnston and Mr. Villarreal updated the subcommittee on their small business relief support efforts and provided a demonstration of the technology that will be utilized.

Chair Bolter asked if it would be possible to keep track of how many total employees a business has as well as how many full-time employees. Mr. Villarreal answered that component can be added to the application tool.

Vice-Chair Stek asked what kind of businesses will most likely apply. Mr. Villarreal stated it will likely be a wide variety. When the Grand Rapids Chamber did their work with Rapid Relief Funding, there were various types of industries represented. Even businesses that are closed have expenses they are incurring and could qualify for funding. Mr. Villarreal also emphasized the important of outreach in the front end of this project in order to make sure there is diversity in the different industries represented.

Vice-Chair Stek also asked if the businesses that receive funding will need to provide documentation or keep receipts. Ms. Linda Howell, Corporate Counsel, answered that documents will be maintained by the applicant and held for a period of time in order to be prepared for an audit. There will be a level of trust involved, but it will be verified with the application. Mr. Villarreal added that the recipients will also be asked to provide an update at their regular 30-day check-in.

Vice-Chair Stek then asked about the process of approving applicants. He asked if each of the recommendations will come to the County for final approval. Mr. Johnston answered yes, the County will need to execute the grant and agreement. Ms. Howell added that the recommendations will come from the Chamber

through the selection committee. The money will stay within the County, but the approval process will be done through the selection committee.

Vice-Chair Stek also asked if the cost to do this will be estimates or a fixed fee. Mr. Johnston answered they would propose a fixed fee.

Mr. Talen emphasized the importance of utilizing the expertise that is out there on the ground throughout this process. He stated they should affirm expertise and trust from other organizations. Some organizations are struggling, and this could be one way to utilize them in a way that helps both the process and the community. Chair Bolter stated that when they talk further about technical assistance, they can help those organizations provide it for their members. There will be mutual assistance.

Mr. Morgan asked for further details about the process of outreach. Mr. Johnston stated that the goal is to get the word out through all means necessary. Not everyone receives a certain newsletter, so it will take phone calls, people on the street and telling businesses about it. There will be a focus on training the trainer before launch, and then get the word out as best they can and then follow up.

Chair Bolter asked for more information about the outreach happening all at once. Mr. Johnston described it as an embargoed press release. The group understands there will be an avalanche of interested right away, so they want to make sure people know they don't need to rush and apply immediately. They need to make sure the applications are filled out in the timeframe but also that they are filled out correctly. Mr. Villarreal gave additional examples of online platforms that will be utilized to communicate the information before launch.

Mr. Womack asked about equity and if there will be any role involved to be more intentional with minority and women owned businesses. He wondered if there is anything that can be done for the 49503, 49507, and 49508 zip codes that were most impacted by COVID-19. Mr. Villarreal stated their core value is equity for all. He thinks if they have strong outreach up front and make sure the staff is prepared and represents communities of color, they will be successful.

Mr. Skaggs asked for more detail about a criteria section for "goods and services." If someone is buying a good or service, it has value to the community. He wondered if that criterion could be transformed to be more about giving back to the community in different ways, such as being clearer about going the extra mile for community engagement. He also expressed approval for the robust communication that will be done to make sure the applicant pool is a diverse reflection of the County. He wondered if there might be some intentional effort to give some preference to the geographies hit the hardest by the pandemic. It will be the hardest for those businesses to recover. Chair Bolter echoes these same sentiments and asked if there are ways to ensure they capture different demographics without violating laws or rules. Mr. Matt Nelson, from Warner, Norcross & Judd, answered they will need to ensure there aren't barriers to entry. They will need to build out a model that is inclusive without running afoul the Constitution or Civil Rights Act. At this they believe the proposal adequately answers equity concerns.

Mr. Skaggs asked if the COVID Relief Subcommittee or Board of Commissioners can expect periodic reports from the Chamber to ensure accountability. Chair Bolter stated that the intention was for them to not only receive reports, but for this plan to go through the full board. With the 30, 60, and 90-day check-ins, she expects the Chamber will report back to the Board. She agreed with the process being transparent and stated the need to have a robust audit plan. Mr. Johnston agreed and said Kent County staff will continue to be engaged

in this process moving forward. Mr. Villarreal stated they could provide updates or reports even specific to particular components, such as the demographic breakdown of applicants and the number approved.

Mr. Skaggs suggested that a question asking how many employees the business had before and how many they anticipate being able to retain be included. Mr. Villarreal said they will ask that in the application.

Ms. Brieve said that when they do their marketing and communication, she would like to see the message put out about this being for everyone, and not just for members of the different Chambers of Commerce or specific organizations. All small businesses in the County that meet the criteria should know they can apply. Mr. Villarreal agreed. They do not reference memberships and will make sure to involve all business communities.

Mr. Womack asked if those who received Rapid Relief Funds will be eligible. Mr. Villarreal answered the first phase will be for those who haven't received any funds, but they can apply in the second phase.

Mr. Morgan moved to partner with the Grand Rapids Chamber to provide small business relief efforts. Supported by Ms. Brieve.

Ms. Jones asked if the grant funding amounts go up, if the fee will change. Mr. Britt stated that will be negotiated.

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

Motion carried.

IV. REPORT ON MUNICIPALITY SURVEY RESULTS

Mr. Britt presented the survey results from local units of government regarding the expenses incurred due to COVID-19 and estimated costs for the remainder of 2020.

Mr. Skaggs asked for clarity about the State possibly providing funding to municipalities. Mr. Jeff Dood, Fiscal Services Director, stated that the CARES Act authorized the Treasury to make direct payments to local governments with populations of over 500,000, in amounts equal to 45% of the local government's per capita share of the statewide allocation.

Mr. Morgan expressed concern that it doesn't appear that some of the townships fully understood the terms or requirements. He asked how this will be reconciled. Mr. Britt answered that staff will go back with every municipality to make sure they aren't duplicating efforts. Chair Bolter added she would like follow-up for the municipalities reporting a need of \$0, and why they declined or why they think that is the amount needed.

Vice-Chair Stek also expressed uneasiness with the low dollar amounts requested of some local units of government. He also said he is still unclear about the direction from the State to provide funds to municipalities. He asked when they will find out if or when that distribution will happen. Mr. Britt said they have asked the Treasury and lobbyist but have not heard back yet.

Mr. Talen said he was uncomfortable putting a number on the allocation for local units of government until the City of Grand Rapids confirms their numbers. Mr. Britt stated he has had several discussions with the City of Grand Rapids and would follow up again today. Chair Bolter expressed they cannot continue to wait though. The dollar amount needs to be settled this week so the subcommittee can move forward.

V. UPDATE ON COVID EXPENDITURES

Mr. Steven Duarte, Assistant to the Administrator, provided an update on Kent County's COVID-19 expenditures.

VI. CARES ACT ALLOCATION STRATEGY

The subcommittee reviewed the CARES Act Allocation strategy.

Ms. Jones asked if these allocations will have to go to the Finance and Physical Resources Committee and then the full Board of Commissioners. Mr. Britt stated that once the agreement is approved, it does not need to go to the full board for approval. However, for the different contracts and decisions to move money, those will need to go to the Finance Committee and full Board. There is also the ability to move allocations sooner if necessary, through the resolution that was approved in March.

Vice-Chair Stek asked what "economic stabilization" refers to. Mr. Duarte stated it has to do with working with organizations such as The Right Place or Experience Grand Rapids.

Vice-Chair Stek also referenced the allocation for second wave funding and asked what happens if a second wave does not occur. Mr. Britt stated they have been using the best data they can from the Health Department and Sheriff's Office to make sure they are prepared. Mr. Adam London, Administrative Health Officer, agreed. There are a lot of unknowns right now as well as new testing strategies and partners available to prevent a second wave. He stated he believes the numbers are good, but he is comforted to know there is reserve available for new opportunities or problems that could arise in the next six months.

Vice-Chair Stek then asked if the allocation strategy will come back to the subcommittee once they approve it. Mr. Britt answered that once they have the "buckets" of funding approved, individual requests will be brought forward as needed. The numbers could go up or down in different areas.

Mr. Skaggs asked what their firm date could be for the second wave. Chair Bolter suggested October 1 could be the date they revisit the allocations.

Chair Bolter expressed concern about the funding amount for PPE for small businesses.

Mr. Skaggs asked if the amounts suggested for testing and contact tracing are enough. Mr. London answered he believes it is enough based on the variables right now.

Mr. Skaggs also asked for more details about what funding for childcare expenses will be for. Mr. Duarte stated there were a lot of things they cannot do alone, so they could contract with various agencies to assist. Mr. Britt stated he can provide further details from the childcare community.

Mr. Skaggs stated some of the unallocated money could possibly be used to support municipal governments and the Clerk to make sure everyone has the genuine ability to exercise their right to vote in the safest way possible. He asked if that could be looked into. Chair Bolter stated she was uncomfortable earmarking unallocated funds, but if it's something that becomes a County cost, then they could possibly apply it. She doesn't recommend earmarking possibilities until they know further what the needs might be. Mr. Britt added they will work with local units of government about the topic and look within the Clerk's and County's budget to make sure it can happen.

Mr. Morgan stated he is comfortable with the allocation amounts as they currently appear, but suggested the full board have the opportunity to voice their opinion and vote on this. Chair Bolter agreed. She said if they confirm their recommendations this Thursday, the full board can have an opportunity to vote on the subcommittee report at the June 11 Board of Commissioners meeting.

There was discussion about sending additional funding requests to the Finance Committee and fill board. Chair Bolter suggested that individual distributions of over \$1 million go through the board process. Ms. Howell stated those details could be provided in the subcommittee report that goes to the board.

Ms. Brieve asked how other large counties are doing this. Mr. Britt answered he can follow up with those details. Chair Bolter also stated Kent County's situation may be different than some other large counties because they may not have approved a similar emergency resolution.

Mr. Talen asked what the reductions were in the City of Grand Rapids' request. Mr. Dood noted some duplications in funding such as homeless prevention.

Mr. Talen said he was alarmed to hear the PPE program will only be for for-profit businesses. Ms. Howell stated there is a companion program specifically for non-profits. When applicants begin the process, they will be asked if they are a non-profit. If they are, they will be redirected to a similar but different program.

Mr. Talen noted the \$2 million for Senior Citizen Assistance. He asked if there are resources in the senior millage that could be made for those needs. Mr. Britt said that there are resources there, but this is a placeholder. The number can be adjusted if necessary.

Vice-Chair Stek moved that the approved allocation be incorporated into the report. Supported by Mr. Talen.

Mr. Skaggs asked if more funds will be added for Return-to-Work PPE. Chair Bolter stated yes; it is likely. Mr. Britt added that today it is only the framework being decided upon. Chair Bolter also said it can be indicated in the report that the first available funds that aren't used be put towards PPE.

Chair Bolter stated she would also like an independent auditor and what they are auditing to be indicated in the report.

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

Motion carried.

VII. SUBCOMMITTEE DOCUMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE

Documents were shared with the subcommittee from the Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan, HUD, and the John Ball Zoo.

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS

Vice-Chair Stek asked if Unity Way would be the organization assisting in the allocation of \$10 million for the non-profit community. Mr. Britt answered yes, they are working through the agreement now.

Mr. Womack stated he enjoyed the way the meeting went today. With the state of smaller and greater communities right now, it is good to get out a message that is positive and being heard. They will need to do their part to make sure no community feels left behind.

Mr. Skaggs was in support of periodic reports for the subcommittee. Chair Bolter agreed and suggested the possibility of it being included in the Executive Committee's reports and the other subcommittee members could join. They could meet once a month or whatever is agreed upon.

Mr. Womack also thanked the work of Mr. Britt, his staff and the Health Department. Chair Bolter echoed those thanks and extended thanks to the subcommittee members as well. It has been a huge commitment and expressed how important this work is to the community.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for discussion, Chair Bolter adjourned the meeting at 12:34 p.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL FOR DISTRIBUTION

Pam VanKeuren