

COVID RELIEF SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

July 23, 2020 – 9:30 a.m.

<https://kentcountymi.zoom.us/j/99889598149>

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 9:30 a.m.

I. WELCOME

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

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF JUNE 4, 2020

Commissioner Brieve moved to approve the minutes from June 4, 2020 as presented. Supported by Commissioner Stek. Motion carried.

III. SMALL BUSINESS RELIEF & PPE UPDATE

Mr. Calvin Brinks, Purchasing Manager, provided an update on Kent County's PPE program for the community.

Chair Bolter asked if demographic information is being captured, such as large versus small businesses. Mr. Brinks answered yes, they are capturing types of businesses and zip codes, though not all applicants list their zip code. The requests are mostly consistent with the County's population.

Commissioner Skaggs asked what the turnaround time is from inquiry of the business to pick up. Mr. Brinks stated it is typically one to four days.

Commissioner Stek asked if the program is available to non-profits as well. Mr. Brinks answered yes. The criteria limit it to non-profits of 100 employees or less.

Commissioner Stek also asked if masks are the primary item requested. Mr. Brinks said they also receive a lot of requests for hand sanitizer and nitrile gloves. For masks, they receive requests for disposable masks, face shields, and cloth masks.

Commissioner Stek asked if they believe they will have enough supply to get through October. Mr. Brinks stated yes, at the current order rate they should be able to get through the end of October or beginning of November.

Chair Stek thanked Mr. Brinks for his presentation and for taking the time to answer questions about the PPE program.

Ms. Linda Howell, Corporate Counsel provided an update on small business relief grants. Mr. Dante Villarreal and Mr. Andy Johnston from the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce also provided insight on the program and how they have been able to reach out to various members of the community.

Commissioner Skaggs noted there have been 1,600 applications submitted and 352 grants awarded so far. He asked if the rest are still in review or if some applications have been rejected. Mr. Villarreal stated that there will be a second check of the applications after they have been able to work with business owners to help them with their applications. There are two additional review committees right now that will continue to receive and review them.

Commissioner Skaggs asked what the deadline is for applications. Mr. Villarreal stated there will be an end date announced when the funds are mostly diminished. Until then, the program is open.

Commissioner Stek asked how to be intentional in making sure the grants are getting out. Mr. Villarreal stated the 352 approved grants are from the first week, and only for businesses that had not received any other funding to date. As the program opens for all other businesses, there will likely be more grants requested and for higher amounts. They will also be intentionally targeting certain industries to make sure they are getting the help they need. He also stated they have found one-on-one meetings to help the program greatly.

Commissioner Talen asked what the communication with businesses is like when they have been recommended. Mr. Villarreal stated there is a team of five reviewers that look at each application. Three of the five reviewers must make a recommendation to move forward, but they still want to make sure they are helping all business owners. To make sure no one is overlooked, there is a second review team that checks the applications too. For communication with the applicant, they are not notified until there is a final determination. Ms. Howell clarified that the Chamber makes recommendations to the County, then the County makes the final determination. Once the County has made the determination, the Chamber can then notify the recipient they have been awarded the grant. The County has also made sure to have a member of the legal team sit as an observer on the review committees, and not vote, to ensure the process is followed accordingly.

Commissioner Talen asked where to refer business owners who may have questions. Mr. Villarreal suggested they reach out to him directly by phone.

Commissioner Womack thanked the group for their help with the 49507 zip code and making sure those communities are not left out. He thanked Mr. Villarreal for his help with directly reaching out to business owners door to door. He also requested that there continue to be clinics to assist business owners with filling out their applications. He asked Mr. Villarreal his opinion on the clinics. Mr. Villarreal said the clinics have been great and there has been great attendance. They have done three clinics so far and because the process is very mobile phone friendly, they can all go into the applications together. They plan to offer technical assistance in these communities and be the support they really need.

Commissioner Womack asked when the checks will be coming out. Mr. Villarreal said the first batch of notifications should be going out today. From there, the recipients will digitally sign the agreement and fill out a W9. After that, the County will start issuing the checks. Ms. Howell added that they are trying to automate the check process as much as possible for Fiscal Services so they can get checks cut promptly and securely. Mr. Villarreal invited the rest of the commissioners to reach out to him if they are interested in holding clinics as well.

Chair Bolter thanked the group for their efforts in reaching out to community members, including on evenings and weekends.

IV. ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL UNITS OF GOVERNMENT UPDATE

Mr. Jeff Dood, Fiscal Services Director, provided an update on reimbursement requests from local units of government.

Chair Bolter requested an update in August about what allocations have gone out.

Commissioner Skaggs noted the State has only discussed reimbursing payroll expenses for first responders. He clarified that when cities and townships are told to apply for funding from the state, it is only for those qualified expenses. Kent County will seek to reimburse the other expenses incurred due to COVID-19.

Commissioner Womack asked why Kent County is waiting to release funds to local units of government, because some say the State has already issued all the funds they plan on releasing to them. Mr. Dood stated they are encouraging local units to submit the information they sent to the State so that they can fill gaps if the State determines to reimburse only part of a qualified expense.

Chair Bolter thanked Mr. Dood for continuing to have open communication with local units of government.

V. UPDATE ON AGREEMENTS & GRANTS

Ms. Howell provided an update on the Non-Profit Organization COVID-19 Relief Fund. This is a \$9.5 million fund being coordinated by Heart of West Michigan United Way in a similar way as the Chamber's program. It launched July 13 and has received 48 applications so far. The 14-person review team has approved five grants so far, ranging from \$5,000 - \$100,000.

Commissioner Talen asked if this program is also for specific COVID-19-related reimbursements. Ms. Howell answered yes, it is a little broader than the Chamber's program.

Commissioner Stek asked if there is a cap on the grant amount. Ms. Howell answered they are capped at \$150,000.

Commissioner Stek noted the different purpose of these grants versus the small business ones. The scope of the non-profit grants can be used to implement their services for the community. He asked if that is compliant with CARES Act restrictions. Ms. Howell stated the CARES Act allows them to provide economic and community support related to the impact of COVID-19.

Commissioner Stek also asked if the rate of applications is still strong. Ms. Howell stated it is continuing to trend upward and they are currently in their outreach and advertising phase.

Commissioner Brieve asked if there is a limit on the number employees for this program. Ms. Shannon Gardner from Heart of West Michigan United Way stated the majority of grant requests so far have been for smaller organizations of between 5 – 10 people. Commissioner Stek added it seems that factors such as community impact and track record are more relevant than employee size.

Chair Bolter expressed concern about the marketing for this program as well as accountability. She stated she wants to be sure the program is marketed adequately. She asked what is being done to hold recipients of large grants accountable. Ms. Howell stated that any grant over \$50,000 goes through a specialized

grant agreement which covers the scope of work proposed, representations they have made, and reporting that will be required of them. Auditors will look at this too.

Commissioner Womack asked if a percentage of the grants can be used for administrative expenses. Attorney Matt Nelson stated that no more than 10% can be used for administrative overhead and the remaining 90% must be used for advancing their program.

Commissioner Womack also suggested hosting clinics for this program like the ones they held for the small business relief grants.

Commissioner Skaggs asked if the program will be run the same way as the small business relief grants, with the final say coming from the commission itself. Ms. Howell stated the final approval comes to the County, per the requirements of the CARES Act. The grants will not all go through the board process.

Ms. Howell then provided an update on the Family Promise Grant and other grants in process.

Chair Bolter asked what bucket this funding is coming from. Ms. Howell answered most of them are from the Economic Stabilization line item under the County Expense header.

Commissioner Talen stated a workgroup has been meeting regarding housing, homelessness prevention, and eviction diversion. He asked if the County has been connecting with them. Ms. Susan Cervantes, Kent County Community Action Director, stated that they have been involved in homelessness/eviction diversion issues and have been coordinating with the courts, Salvation Army, Continuum of Care, and other committees. Mr. Talen stated the issue is whether the group knows the County has set aside resources for this work.

Chair Bolter thanked Ms. Howell for the update. She requested more details be provided to the commissioners about the agreement, criteria, and how things are working with the non-profit grants.

VI. CARES FUNDING ALLOCATION PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Steve Duarte gave an update of the preliminary allocations since June 4, 2020.

Chair Bolter asked about outreach for the Small Business Recovery Program. Mr. Nelson stated the levels of chamber technical assistance were based on the organization's last two years of expenditures. The purpose was to promote their programs, but also to address COVID-related needs in their specific business communities. There has been positive feedback on this program so far.

Commissioner Stek requested another column be added to the allocations sheet which reflects the amounts expended so they can see how they're doing. Chair Bolter stated at the next meeting in August they should be able to look at this information more closely and discuss moving allocations if necessary.

Chair Bolter provided an explanation about \$2 million being added for assistance to school districts. She noted that some point the allocation sheet may need to be amended, but this is a starting point.

Commissioner Jones requested further discussion regarding local chambers of commerce. There are some businesses that don't fall under any particular chamber's reach. She wanted to make sure adequate

outreach is being done. Mr. Dood stated it was made very clear that this is an outreach opportunity for the entire community, and not just for chamber members.

Commissioner Stek asked if this is the time to discuss the allocation of \$2 million for school assistance. He noted the importance of this funding as we try to help our students get back to school safely. Commissioners Skaggs and Brieve agreed and echoed Commissioner Stek's sentiments.

Commissioner Skaggs moved to amend the allocations sheet to include \$2 million for the Kent Intermediate School District.

Supported by Commissioner Brieve.

Yeas: Stek, Brieve, Jones, Skaggs, Talen, Womack, Chair Bolter - 7

Nays: 0.

Motion carried.

Chair Bolter asked about upcoming deadlines for getting information to the federal government. Mr. Dood stated last week they had to send preliminary allocations, then there will be periodic ongoing reporting too. They still have until December 30, 2020 to spend the funds.

Commissioner Brieve asked if a press release will be put out so the schools are aware. Mr. Britt said yes, there will be one.

Chair Bolter requested that they go through the allocations line by line at the next meeting.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS

Commissioner Talen asked if there is a way to blend Kent County's allocation with the Kent District Library for wireless hotspots. Mr. Britt said staff has been talking through a plan and will follow up soon.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for discussion, Chair Bolter adjourned the meeting at 11:23 a.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL FOR DISTRIBUTION Pam VanKemen