

COVID RELIEF SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

August 27, 2020 – 10:00 a.m.

<https://kentcountymi.zoom.us/j/97001116735>

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 10:25 a.m.

I. WELCOME

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

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF JULY 23, 2020

Commissioner Brieve moved to approve the minutes from July 23, 2020 as presented. Supported by Commissioner Jones. Motion carried.

III. SMALL BUSINESS RECOVERY PROGRAM UPDATE

Mr. Dante Villarreal from Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce provided an update about the Kent County Small Business Recovery Program. Topics included outreach and marketing, equity, and the status of applications and grants awarded to date.

Chair Bolter thanked Mr. Villarreal for the update. She asked how long they will continue to take applications in order to still meet deadlines. Mr. Villarreal answered around four more weeks, but it depends on how many businesses are applying.

Chair Bolter also asked if there is a reason some applications have been denied. Mr. Villarreal answered no, not in particular. Because they have been able to spend a lot of time in the front end helping with applications, that has led to fewer being denied.

Commissioner Jones asked how many grants have been awarded for the \$20,000 amount. Mr. Villarreal said a few have received the \$20,000 grants and most have been awarded between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

Chair Bolter suggested that depending on how much funding remains at the September meeting, they consider establishing a different type of criteria in order to get those funds out before they lapse.

IV. NOT-FOR-PROFITS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UPDATE

Ms. Linda Howell provided an update on the progress of the Kent County Non-Profit Organization COVID-19 Grant Fund.

Mr. Matt Nelson of Warner Norcross & Judd LLP discussed childcare, including the needs of daycare services. He also gave a summary about housing, including homelessness prevention, affordable housing, and assistance for those experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

Commissioner Stek asked for a breakdown of applications and if they are for COVID-19 expense reimbursement grants or program implementation grants. Mr. Nelson answered that all the grants are for program implementation.

The group discussed the importance of not leaving gaps in the assistance that is being offered, with both for-profit and non-profit businesses. Non-profits were affected by the pandemic in different ways than the for-profit businesses, so there should also be a distinction in what criteria is used to determine who needs funding.

Commissioner Talen said that because some organizations have been engaged with the county to provide COVID relief services, they have become ineligible for other assistance. He stated it seems like an unintended consequence that there are potentially organizations that could have gotten more support through this program than they got through providing a different piece of COVID relief for the county.

Chair Bolter thanked Ms. Howell and Mr. Nelson for their updates.

V. ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL UNITS OF GOVERNMENT UPDATE

Mr. Jeff Dood provided an update on reimbursements to local units of government.

The group spent time discussing CARES-eligible costs within public safety, revenue sharing, and other reimbursements. It was decided that further meetings should be scheduled in order to address all questions and concerns about this topic and others. The group decided to meet again on September 10 after the Board of Commissioners meeting.

Chair Bolter thanked Mr. Dood for the update.

VI. WIFI ACCESS POINTS UPDATE

Ms. MaryBeth Vantill summarized her conversations with local units of government regarding the addition of WiFi access points in various locations in the county.

Chair Bolter expressed concern about costs. Ms. Vantill indicated they are still having conversations with the Kent District Library (KDL) and other municipalities, so nothing is finalized yet.

Commissioner Talen asked about Grand Rapids Public Library's involvement. Ms. Howell stated the proposal received from KDL indicates they partner with all the other libraries too.

Commissioner Skaggs expressed frustration about accessibility, gaps, and delays in assistance. If this program is about WiFi in the county, it needs to be through the entire county including the cities.

Commissioner Jones asked what happens after December 30, 2020 when the CARES funding expires. Chair Bolter answered that the devices can be purchased with CARES funding. After December 30, the entities that are using the devices can choose if they want to continue the service, then the contracts can be transferred to them.

VII. CARES FUNDING ALLOCATION PLAN

Mr. Stephen Duarte summarized the CARES Funding Allocation Plan through August 21, 2020.

Commissioner Talen asked for an update about hotel/motel as it relates to FEMA funding. He asked that an update on this be provided at the next meeting in addition to an update about funding for vulnerable populations. Mr. Britt indicated that mental health funding for vulnerable populations has not needed to be used in the same ways as was predicted earlier.

The group then discussed the possibility of looking into this allocation plan more closely at the next meeting to determine where shifts might need to be made.

VIII. OTHER (SUBCOMMITTEE DOCUMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE)

None.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS

Commissioner Jones asked why the WiFi units could not be purchased now. Chair Bolter asked that staff look into this.

Commissioner Talen asked if local units of government could receive correspondence that the subcommittee will be discussing reimbursement, that way they can be aware and contribute to the conversation as well. Chair Bolter assured that there has been a great deal of communication done with local units of government.

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Kendall Joseph is from Mallowfields, a minority- and woman-owned software products company. He explained two lines of software that the company is building. The first tracks deliberations, accountability, and better decision making. The second enables communities and institutions to communicate and work on projects that use maps. He gave the example of helpkent.org, which is a detailed map of emergency food resources which they built and host for free for the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force. He asked that consideration be given to investing in their business because they have a product that can help the local community.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for discussion, Chair Bolter adjourned the meeting at 12:45 p.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL FOR DISTRIBUTION *Pamela VanKemen*