

COVID RELIEF SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

November 19, 2020 – 9:30 a.m.

<https://kentcountymi.zoom.us/j/93483318876?pwd=WUFiK0VGK1V5M1c0VG44TDhrOHlrQT09>

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

Chair Bolter called the meeting to order at 9:55 a.m.

I. WELCOME

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

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 8, 2020

Commissioner Brieve moved to approve the minutes from October 8, 2020 as presented. Supported by Commissioner Ponstein. Motion carried.

III. CARES RELIEF FUNDING ALLOCATION REVIEW/UPDATE

Prior to the CARES Relief Funding Allocation review, Dr. Adam London of the Health Department provided a COVID-19 update for the subcommittee. There has been a significant increase in the number of cases locally and across the nation. The next few months could be extremely challenging, so it is important that people follow the guidance regarding gatherings throughout the holiday season.

The Health Department is also making sure they are prepared to store and distribute the vaccine as soon as it becomes available. The challenge with the Pfizer vaccine is that once it is brought to room temperature, it needs to be used within six hours, so proper refrigeration will be vital. The Moderna vaccine is the other vaccine in the planning stages. Testing is up to 4,000 – 5,000 tests per day and nationwide shortages are leading to longer response times.

There have been informative meetings with health and business leaders in order to improve outreach and communication efforts. There is a significant portion of the population who have heard these messages from health agencies, but it would be helpful to hear it from other leaders in the community as well.

Commissioner Stek noted the current strategy is testing, identifying, and contact tracing to isolate as best they can. But with 500-700 positive cases a day, it must be a challenge for staff. Commissioner Stek asked if any current CARES should be directed towards contact tracing. Dr. London agreed it is a challenge and stated they have sufficient funding now for contact tracing. They can also bring in other vendors and temporary employees to help.

Next, Mr. Stephen Duarte reviewed the balance of various expense buckets. Specific categories included business assistance, mitigation of homelessness, vulnerable populations, compliance with public health orders, school assistance, and local units of government. As of November 19, the committed amount remaining is approximately \$19.5 million.

Commissioner Skaggs asked if the original amounts set aside for local units of government was used. Mr. Britt answered that only one township has not accepted. Chair Bolter added that they have not heard

back from some townships. Ms. Howell answered they have reached out to all commissioners whose districts align with township offices that had not yet accepted allocations. Mr. Dood added that only two municipalities have declined.

Commissioner Stek noted there is still \$1 million for youth violence. Commissioner Stek also asked if the small business relief program is still on track.

Mr. Dante Villarreal summarized the Grand Rapids Chamber's work with small business relief. 4,708 applications have been received. 55% of recipients are minority-owned businesses and 39.3% are women-owned. Total funds remaining available are \$3.82 million, and the Chamber feels that they can provide additional support to industries that are being impacted again.

Commissioner Skaggs asked if, given the recent order from the MDHHS, they could give business owners one final week to apply instead of pushing the money to businesses that have already received funds. Mr. Villarreal agreed. They will promote that the program is coming to an end and urge people to apply. For the businesses that have already received funding, they do not automatically receive additional funding. Instead, the business owners can update their applications to include more current information regarding needs.

Commissioner Jones suggested they get an email back from each chamber that received funds noting what they have done since receiving their funds to help assist the community. This would add an extra layer of accountability. Mr. Dood stated this is the plan and is included in their signed agreements.

Commissioner Skaggs asked for clarification that the remaining \$3.8 million for small business relief will be clearly directed towards brick-and-mortar stores. Mr. Villarreal answered yes.

Mr. Dood summarized the remaining funds available. They are confident the Chamber will be able to spend all their grant funds. The business PPE Program is also picking up again during the second wave, so most of those dollars should be spent too. Technical assistance will have a small carryover of \$60,000. For the mitigation of homelessness, The Salvation Army announced they do not have the capacity to spend the second million dollars that was allocated to them. That \$1 million will instead be returned to Kent County and staff is currently working on a plan to spend that down. One option is to reimburse Kent County Community Action with about \$550,000 that can be expended into 2021 because they do not have the same December 30, 2020 deadline. Most of the "buckets" should be able to be spent down by the end of the year. It is the recommendation of staff that the remaining unallocated amounts be returned to Kent County for future expenses through the end of the year.

Commissioner Talen asked for more clarification about rolling up the unallocated funds and putting it into the Kent County category of expenses. Mr. Dood explained that they feel they can allocate any and all additional funds over to county expenses and still be in compliance with the CARES Act and the December 30 deadline. Mr. Dood estimated somewhere around \$2-\$2.5 million leftover from Grand Rapids, local units, and eviction prevention.

Commissioner Brieve moved to bring the funds that have been unused by municipalities back to the county.

Support by Commissioner Ponstein.

Commissioner Stek asked if this motion includes the potential \$540,000 to Kent County Community action.

Chair Bolter responded no. These funds would not include the \$540,000 for Kent County Community Action.

Commissioner Talen advocated for allocating dollars to the City of Grand Rapids. If they can document that they can use the additional funds, they should be provided to them.

Commissioner Skaggs asked if the City of Grand Rapids had sent the county something stating they would like and could use additional funds. Mr. Britt answered no; they have not heard back from the city about specific additional needs.

Yeas: Stek, Brieve, Jones, Ponstein, Skaggs, Womack, Bolter – 7

Nays: Talen – 1

Motion carried.

Chair Bolter asked for more information about the \$500,000 for youth violence prevention. Ms. Linda Howell explained that applications were reviewed by a committee and scored. They worked their way through the applicants until all the money was allocated for various nonprofits throughout the community that have come up with good ideas about how to spend the money in order to reduce crime in the city. She stated that those receiving funding include the Boys and Girls Club, New City Kids, the Urban League, YMCA, The Edge Urban Fellowship, Bethany Christian Services, and Muse Ed.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Elsa Skipper from Grand Rapids thanked the commissioners for their time and asked the County to enact a State of Emergency to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Ms. Maggie Rivera from Grand Rapids stated there seems to be a disconnect between the conversations and needs of the City and the conversations and needs of the County. She would like to see remaining COVID dollars be restricted only to COVID relief and not absorbed by the General Fund.

Mr. Kellen Martin noted the \$500,000 earmarked for crime prevention was going to GRPD, then the city commission voted that down. There is already funding within City coffers that is saved for the Cure Violence program. He wondered why the \$500,000 couldn't have been applied towards that.

V. MISCELLANEOUS

Commissioner Stek asked by what means they will be kept informed about the programs that are being implemented and the results of the programs. Mr. Britt explained that he will continue to provide a weekly or bi-weekly update to the commissioners and detailed report will be released at the beginning of the new year.

Commissioner Womack thanked those who spoke during public comment today. He encouraged them to continue to reach out to their commissioners. He further stated he has been thankful for the opportunity to serve on this subcommittee and see firsthand the dollars and work that has gone into this.

Chair Bolter thanked the staff and commissioners who helped with this huge lift.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for discussion, Chair Bolter adjourned the meeting at 11:31 a.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL FOR DISTRIBUTION _____