



Richland County Council
Coronavirus AD Hoc Committee Meeting
MINUTES
February 14, 2023 – 2:30 PM
Council Chambers
2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Gretchen Barron, Chair; Jason Branham, and Chakisse Newton

OTHERS PRESENT: Paul Livingston, Yvonne McBride, Cheryl English, Sarah Harris, Chelsea Bennett, Zachary Cavanaugh, Dante Roberts, Michelle Onley, Michael Maloney, Abhijit Deshpande, Ashiya Myers, Stacey Hamm, Elizabeth McLean, Michael Byrd, Jennifer Wladischkin, John Thompson, Dale Welch, Lori Thomas, Leonardo Brown, Tamar Black, Angela Weathersby, and Anette Kirylo

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairwoman Gretchen Barron called the meeting to order at approximately 2:36 PM.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a. **December 7, 2022** – Ms. Newton moved to approve the minutes as distributed, seconded by Mr. Branham.

In Favor: Branham, Barron, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** – Ms. Newton moved to adopt the agenda as published, seconded by Mr. Branham.

In Favor: Branham, Barron, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

4. **ELECTION OF CHAIR** – Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Mr. Branham, to nominate Ms. Barron for Chair.

In Favor: Branham, Barron, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

POINT OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE – Ms. Barron thanked her colleagues for entrusting this position to her again.

5. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/ACTION**

a. **ARPA Application Update** – Ms. Lori Thomas, Assistant County Administrator, stated the County received their allocation from the federal government in May 2021, with the first tranche of about \$40.2M. The second tranche of \$40.2M came in July 2022. She noted Council felt it was imperative to have some of the funds reallocated to the community in specific groups, as required by the U.S. Treasury. In July 2022, Council allocated \$16M to specific categories, as follows:

- \$1M – Small Businesses
- \$1M – Non-Profits
- \$1M – Educational Assistance
- \$1M – Workforce Training
- \$1M – Senior Assistance
- \$2M – Food Insecurity
- \$2M – Broadband Expansion

- \$4M – Affordable Housing
- \$2M – Housing for Unhoused Individuals
- \$1M – Youth and Recreational Services

An application process was adopted, and a rubric by which the applications would be scored. In addition, Council approved a third party to review the applications for U.S. Treasury compliance and scoring based on the rubric.

The application portal was opened on September 1, 2022, and closed on October 14, 2022. A total of 427 applications were received, with a requested amount of \$107M.

Guidehouse scored the applications based on risk assessment. From that process, the pool of applicants was reduced to 147. Since December, Council has approved moving forward with the recommendation to accept organizations scoring 15 or higher.

Guidehouse has also preliminarily evaluated and scored the applications based on the rubric and presented 50-60 applications that may be eligible for funding.

Ms. Thomas recommended that the committee receive and review the applications by the end of next week, which would then be discussed at a future work session. She noted that some applicants might need to change their amounts, some funding requests may not be allowable, and there could be more requests than funding in some categories.

Ms. Barron applauded Mr. Leonardo Brown, County Administrator, Ms. Thomas, and their team for their work thus far.

Ms. Newton requested the number of applications potentially eligible for funding and the total amount of funding that represents.

Ms. Thomas responded there are 50-60 applications, totaling approximately \$14.7M. She noted some categories exceed what was requested, and some do not.

Ms. Newton stated, for clarification, the current process is that Council will take the applications and make recommendations as to which ones are funded.

Ms. Thomas replied Guidehouse would point out issues they may see with each application. If there are funding requests they think may be problematic for U.S. Treasury guidance, Council will receive that information.

Mr. Livingston stated one thing that would be helpful for him is to receive a list of things that led to some applications not being accepted.

Ms. Thomas responded the main characteristic is that each application has to meet Treasury requirements for the use of funds and demonstrate they can manage those funds.

Ms. Barron stated for clarification, the applicants not being funded will receive notification and feedback as to why they were not funded.

Ms. Thomas responded the applicants would receive notification that they were not funded but did not know if a generic reason would be provided for why they were not funded.

Ms. Barron stated that would further support Mr. Livingston's question. She noted she does not need specifics, but if the applicants can get a copy of their risk assessment, it will be helpful, especially for smaller non-profits looking to do business with the County in the future. We must set them up to be successful and help them along the way.

Ms. McBride inquired as to how many applications were received.

Ms. Thomas responded 427 applications were received.

Ms. McBride inquired if Guidehouse gave reasons for their scoring for each application.

Ms. Thomas replied they have an assessment worksheet.

Ms. McBride requested a summary of why each applicant did not meet the requirements. At the beginning of the process, she noted one of her major concerns was if we would give those applicants with less experience the same opportunity to apply for funding. We should provide technical assistance to those who did not receive funding so they know the improvements needed. It has always been a major concern that there needs to be more grant writing training for those who do not have experience.

The County Administrator, Leonardo Brown, stated the County has only one grant person. In order for us to do something, we would have to invest in additional staff.

Ms. McBride responded she supports having a grant department. She thought there were ARPA funds that assisted with administration and was under the impression the vendor would be performing those tasks.

Ms. Thomas replied we contracted with the vendor to review, score, and communicate those scores to the County. We will take this information and share it with the applicants. Training the applicants on their mistakes would be more than we have contracted with them to do. With the monitoring after the funds are disbursed, our budget would not sustain the training.

Ms. McBride responded she was not speaking to training but feedback. The training comes after their problems have been identified. Once we get grant staff, then we can look at providing training.

Ms. Barron stated that one of the things we did in this process was to ensure additional monitoring. The monitoring process is structured to provide additional monitoring for the smaller non-profits. She noted that some organizations would need additional support that larger non-profits may not need. In the future, we are looking at a uniform way of addressing grants, allowing us to commit to the non-profit community.

Ms. McBride noted she is careful with using the term monitoring versus technical assistance.

Ms. Newton inquired, once Council has approved the award of funding to the specific non-profits, what is the approximate timeline for the funds to be disbursed? In addition, will these be lump sum disbursements or incrementally?

Ms. Thomas indicated the timeline for disbursement would depend on how quickly the grant contracts are executed. She noted that once some organizations understand the reporting requirements or what they must produce to accept the grant, they may not be interested. Since these are Federal funds, we have to work within their parameters. She noted it is not our expectation that anyone will receive all funds upfront but would be funded in increments, with much of it being on a reimbursement or milestone basis.

Ms. Newton inquired if it is 100% reimbursement.

Ms. Thomas replied it would depend on if the expenditures submitted meet requirements.

Ms. Newton requested a summary of how many applications were received for each category and the total amount requested.

Ms. Thomas indicated that once they have the applications in their categories, they stay within them since they are limited by category.

Ms. Barron inquired regarding the next steps.

Ms. Thomas responded that the next step would be to finalize the list from Guidehouse. They will provide any concerns and explanations for those entities recommended for funding. Staff will pull together each group's application and scoring in their Zoom Grants application. It will then be up to the committee to review and provide a recommendation to Council.

POINT OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE – Ms. Thomas recognized Ms. Sarah Harris, who has joined the County as the Grants Director. She came from Grant Thornton and Guidehouse. Ms. Harris has been instrumental in assisting us to work through these last steps.

Mr. Livingston inquired as to when the finalized list will be received.

Ms. Thomas replied the list would be available by February 24th.

Ms. Barron inquired if the Council would receive the packet or only the committee members.

Ms. Thomas responded that it is up to the discretion of the committee. The committee will provide their recommendation to Council.

Ms. Barron stated that if Councilmembers wish to attend the work session, it would be helpful for them to have the documents to review so they are prepared to have an informed discussion. She noted there are certain committees that we are not privy to

information prior to; therefore, she feels like she needs more time to be ready to have a discussion then.

Ms. Thomas stated that what has stood apart with this program is that Council has been very intentional about handling the process with kid gloves and without input from Council. The process was totally benign to maintain its integrity, so everyone was graded appropriately based on their application. As with any work session, the documents would be made available to the public during the work session. It would be up to the committee if it desires Councilmembers to have the documents before the work session.

Ms. Newton stated she would operate under the assumption that all Councilmembers would receive information for a work session. At work sessions, no action can be taken. It is just for further consideration. If there is a compelling reason why Councilmembers cannot have the information; otherwise, she would assume all Councilmembers would receive information.

Mr. Branham replied that his thoughts were similar to Ms. Newton's.

Ms. Barron noted she feels comfortable providing the documents to Council.

Mr. Branham stated; there was \$16M allocated by Council to specific sectors which fall under the committee's jurisdiction. His understanding is that we are down to 50-60 qualified applications, which could represent \$14.6M. Based on the eligible applications, some of the categories will exceed the funding threshold. If funds remain in another

category, would there need to be a Council vote to transfer the funds to those categories with overages?

Ms. Thomas responded that would be a Council decision.

Ms. Barron indicated it would be helpful to keep the general public aware of where we are in disbursing the funds. She inquired if Administration believes that is doable.

Mr. Brown responded we want to ensure that people stay informed and not create any issues for the committee or Council.

- b. Work Session – Ms. Barron noted Ms. Thomas mentioned we are looking to host a work session to review the eligible applications. She inquired about the work session's expectations (i.e., timeframe).

Mr. Brown indicated the committee should allot at least three (3) hours. The work session will be open to the public. We anticipate recording the work session and having it available for future viewing.

Ms. Barron requested the Clerk to Council's Office to schedule the work session for the first or second week of March.

Ms. Newton requested a three (3) hour meeting and coordinate committee members' schedules. She noted this cannot be an effective meeting if the expectation is to have the information presented to us and then make a decision. We will need to do a lot of digesting before the work session. She noted if we had a framework to facilitate the conversation, it would be helpful.

Ms. English inquired if this work session could be accessible via Zoom.

Ms. Barron responded with the new Council Rules; there is the opportunity to call into a meeting. She pointed out we want as many Councilmembers as possible to participate in the work session. Council has been hands-off, and this will allow them to have input into the projects presented.

6. OTHER TOPICS – There were no other topics.

7. ADJOURNMENT – Ms. Newton moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Branham.

In Favor: Branham, Barron, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:15.