



GENERAL ASSISTANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES Wednesday, October 13, 2021 at 2:00 PM

PRESENT: Erin Koehn, Renee Grummer-Miller, Aaron Terrones, Kristi Tisl, Vicki Ellison, Monica Tate, Isabella Burns

STAFF: Ashley Balius, David Thielen, and Laura Brade

INTRODUCTIONS & CALL TO ORDER:

Ashley called the meeting to order at 2:02 P.M. She asked the committee to go around the “room” and introduce themselves as we have a few new members.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

GA Advisory Committee reviewed the minutes of July 14, 2021. Motion was made and approved to accept minutes as presented.

BUDGET & DATA DISCUSSION

Ashley started by reviewing the year to date budget. She stated that it has continued to be an unusual year like the previous fiscal year. This is due to the many other resources available within the community and the enhanced level of coordination between the various assistance providers. As a quick recap, Ashley provided a summary of year end budget from the end of FY21. The original budgets amount for FY21 was \$1,010,950 but the actual at year end was \$643,655. The surplus from GA from the original budget was \$367,295. Ashley reminded the committee that as a General Assistance Advisory Committee we had made a variety of policy changes to spend down the surplus and meet needs, and while many needs were met by these changes, there was still a large surplus at year end.

Ashley then followed up that conversation to say that GA is trending this way again in FY22 which is due in large part to the existence of ERA2 funds. In Quarter 1, the total allocated was \$226,035 or 17% of the total budget. She said this below expectation which is 25%. Ashley then provided a breakdown of how the budget has been allocated so far and is as listed below:

- Total Financial Assistance Expended: 15% (25% expected)
 - Rent: 14%
 - Lot Rent: 15%
 - Utilities: 32%
 - Gas: 23%
 - Electric: 24%
 - Water: 49%
 - Funeral: 24%

Ashley then updated the Advisory committee on the Stop Gap program that was put in place using anticipated GA surplus funds and stated that it was not highly utilized but did prevent an eviction for five Linn County households. Total expenditures from this program is \$6,864. Ashley stated that she believes this was not highly utilized because many landlords simply wanted to move forward with eviction because of their experiences over the last year with the eviction

moratorium. She said she has been hearing from the different providers that landlords are exhausted and frustrated and seem to be less willing to work with assistance programs. Ashley ended this conversation by stating that she and the GA staff continue to investigate and identify other ways that GA can meet needs.

LINN COUNTY ERA 2 UPDATE

Ashley then reviewed the Linn County Emergency Rental Assistance Program with the committee:

- Up to 18 months
- 3 months of prospective rent
- Low documentation burden
 - Treasury encourages this and the use of proxies and self-attestations
- Some sort of financial impact since March 2020
 - Treasury encourages a self-declaration

Ashley then reviewed a few statistics with the committee:

- 8/16/21 - 10/12/21
 - 424 Linn County Households Assisted
 - \$1,352,312.57
 - 92.6% Acceptance Rate
- Of the 424 Households Assisted:
 - Under 30% AMI: 65%
 - Between 30% - 50% AMI: 24%
 - Between 50% - 80% AMI: 10%
- Top 4 Zip Codes assisted:
 - SW Cedar Rapids 52404 - 31%
 - NE Cedar Rapids 52402 - 23%
 - Marion 52302 - 14%
 - SE Cedar Rapids 52403 - 11%

Ashley said that she will bring additional data back to this committee at the next meeting.

ONGOING HOUSING NEEDS

Ashley then stated that in the various meetings that she serves on housing has consistently been identified as a major issue - especially since the start of the pandemic and further exacerbated by the August 2020 Derecho. Given this, it was decided that there needed to be a larger overarching group to take a look at what is going on in our community as it relates to housing needs and identify reasonable steps to address these issues. With that, the groups set out to talk to community to conduct a SWOT analysis and identify key issues as well as potential solutions. Ashley stated that through this effort she had 16 different conversations with different collaborative groups that have some sort of connection to housing. From those conversations four key issues were identified

1. Housing Quality/ Energy Efficiency/ Resiliency
2. Access to Housing/ Homelessness
3. Scarcity of Units
4. Equity

Ashley explained the structure of how this group will work. It will leverage the existing work groups already engaged and doing this work to develop action plans on how we resolve the issues that we have in Linn County. The core Ongoing Housing Needs group will still meet and function but will be focused on providing accountability, support and help brainstorm solutions to barriers that are identified as the action planning groups execute their action plans.

Ashley stated that as progress is made through this group she will bring back updates to this committee!

MEETING SCHEDULE

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 12, 2022 at 2:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.