



APPROVED

## MEETING MINUTES

### HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS COMMISSION

Wednesday, July 25, 2018, 7:00 P.M.

Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, Room 2402

**Present:** Chair Ellen Cushing, Alderman Eleanor Revelle, Monika Bobo, Noelle Gilbreath, Moika Long, Mark Kruse, Larry Donoghue, Renee Phillips

**Absent:** Vice-Chair Geri Palmer

**Staff:** Sarah Flax, Housing and Grants Administrator; Savannah Clement, Housing Policy and Planning Analyst

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#### **Call to order**

Chair Ellen Cushing called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM with a quorum present.

#### **Approve minutes of June 19, 2018 meeting**

Larry moved for approval, and Noelle Gilbreath seconded; Monika Bobo abstained. The motion was approved 4-0.

#### **Public comment**

Tina Paden, Evanston landlord, provided public comment stating that she will not be taking tenants from the TBRA program anymore due to money owed to her by Connections for the Homeless.

#### **Connections for the Homeless application for renewal funding for the Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program**

Betty Bogg, executive director of Connections for the Homeless, provided an overview of the Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program. TBRA is a two year program designed to help families with children under the age of 18 increase income and achieve self-sufficiency through rental subsidies and case management. Connections works closely with families to build skills. A case manager meets with families at least once month to discuss financial situation. Families pay 30% of their household income toward the rent, and Connections pays the balance. All of the TBRA funds are pass through. Connections leverages additional funds for case management. The program has had a lot of success. Populations served in this program are often not able to be served in other programs, so the TBRA program fills a vital role. There are currently six people on waiting list, but the waiting list is not kept open all year - only when Connections is about to begin a new cohort.

All referrals for the TBRA program come through school districts 65 and 202. There are approximately 400 students from both districts combined that qualify as homeless under McKinney-Vento.

Question about the short waitlist. Connections doesn't keep waitlist open year round. Usually opens up in spring, and there are certain eligibility requirements. There is a narrow definition of eligibility for this program, but despite that demand is growing.

Commissioners requested a snapshot of the program since its inception. The first TBRA grant had rolling enrollment, so provided quarterly reports to the City Council Human Services Committee. Staff can send a previous TBRA report to the Commission.

Question about what Connections is doing to prevent other issues down the road with tenants and landlords. Connections does not dictate how people should live, but works with the families to help make good decisions. What consequences are there if tenants aren't paying rent? How will tenants learn if Connections comes in and helps? Connections tries to provide as much coaching and guidance as they can. They use evidence-based practices. When issues come up, case managers meet with families more often to figure out and address barriers. Connections does hold clients accountable, but it is not punitive.

Question about referrals - people could be shelters and told about the program, but have to be referred through schools. Individuals are not eligible for TBRA program, only families.

Connections does offer financial literacy. What else is Connections doing to prepare families for successful exits from the program? The focus of case management conversations is often on budgeting, and Connections has funded a savings incentive program to help families save and prepare to exit the program.

Is Connections promoting trade programs? Yes, sterile processing and other training programs are offered to families.

Is Connections doing anything around behavioral health? Connections is pursuing a grant to have someone onsite to provide therapy to families. Connections works in partnership with Trilogy and other mental health providers.

Question about whether there have been issues between Connections and other landlords. Betty Bogg said no, there have not.

Mark Kruse motioned to renew funding, Alderman Reville seconded, Moika Long voted no, and Larry Donoghue recused himself because he is on Connections' board. The motion was approved 6-1.

### **Emergency Solutions Grant funding allocations**

Sarah Flax provided background and overview of the Emergency Solutions Grant allocations. She said that ESG is very proscriptive regarding how it is used - it is capped on outreach and prevention expenditures. The federal government has prioritized the

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bulk of the money for rapid re-housing. Any agency that receives ESG funds has to be a part of the Continuum of Care, and must have the capacity to administer the funds. The number of households served annually has gone down because households now receive longer subsidies (12 months from six months).

The Commission asked what other organizations apply for ESG funding? Sarah said that none have because only certain organizations have the capacity to deal with all of the compliance that comes with administering ESG. The Commission asked if there has ever been a request for proposals for ESG allocations? Sarah said no, but that doesn't mean other organizations can't get help for their clients with ESG funds. Family Promise and YMCA refer clients to Connections for ESG assistance. Administration of the program is very extensive and compliance heavy for the amount of money.

Question about how many households were served with ESG. Rapid Re-Housing - seven households were served.

Monika Bobo moved to approve the funding recommendation, Noelle Gilbreath seconded, Larry Donoghue recused himself because he is on Connections' board. The motion was approved 7-0.

**Affordable housing plan scope of work**

Commissioners like the principles, the idea of working with an outside agency or consultant, the HHC's role, and the sub-regional approach proposed in the scope of work. Commissioners are concerned about the rushed timeline proposed. Sustainable funding should be a goal in the plan.

Renee Phillips proposed putting together a letter to attract private small landlords to work with housing programs.

Commissioners asked: What's City Council's buy-in? Staff said will know more after July 30th City Council meeting. Staff would like get some kind of technical assistance for the plan.

What does City have in mind regarding Steering Committee? Separate from HHC, but would have some HHC members.

Commissioners think community engagement information sessions will be crucial to the plan. The Steering Committee and/or Commission could collect feedback from residents and include it in the plan's recommendations.

One suggestion is to provide a deadline to know whether or not the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) can assist with developing the plan. If CMAP cannot help, then develop a timeline for hiring a consultant. Commissioners recommended the City form a steering committee by a certain date.

**Staff Reports**

Staff provided updates on affordable housing work.

**Chair's Report**

Chair Ellen Cushing appreciates the feedback from commissioners on the previous City housing plans.

**New/Other Business**

No new business.

**Adjournment**

Ald. Revelle motioned to adjourn, Mark Kruse seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

The next scheduled meeting of the commission is Thursday, September 6, at 7:00 p.m. in room 2402.

Respectfully submitted,  
Savannah Clement, Housing Policy and Planning Analyst