



## Kent County Community Action Governing Board

### Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 23, 2023

10:30 am

#### 1. Call to Order-

- a. Vice Chairperson Milinda Ysasi called the informational meeting to order at 10:35 am. Chairperson Wooden called meeting to order at 11:11 am.

#### 2. Welcome, Roll Call, and Introductions

- a. Present: Milinda Ysasi, Kelsey Perdue, Stephen Wooden, Ivan Diaz
- b. Absent: Tony Baker (excused)
- c. Staff: Gustavo Perez, Ashley Huey, Sherrie Gillespie, Brenna Kotchka, Bobby O'Connor, Chad Coffman, Stephen Stratton

#### 3. Review and approval of August 28, 2023 Meeting Minutes --- **Action Item**

- a. Motion from Commissioner Ysasi, support from Commissioner Perdue. The minutes are unanimously approved.

#### 4. Director's Report --- **Information Item**

- a. Staff & Program Updates
  - i. Gustavo shared that he and program managers had a meeting with HR's new recruitment specialist, Liliana. They are working with her to revamp our job postings to attract more people to apply. We had a good response for our driver position with 14 applications in a week where we typically only receive three to five. The goal is to make these positions more than just a job; we want to market it as a position that is making an impact for our community. It also proved beneficial to advertise that there are no nights or weekends with flexibility for family time. Managers have started interviews with candidates who said they were attracted to the job description. We are working with HR to do the same thing for our Weatherization positions as well. We want people to be drawn to the culture and the work that we do. There are a couple more positions that will be



posted, and Gustavo asked the Board to share those within their networks.

- ii. Gustavo shared that as a department we are continuing to work on our culture. Earlier this year the County did an employee engagement survey. KCCA received the results for our department and the Leadership Team looked at the trends in the responses and saw that staff wanted to build trust, increase and improve communication, and reduce stress. We did an additional follow up survey with staff about those trends to get feedback and ideas on how to improve on these subject areas. To help deal with stress, staff is planning an annual picnic, decorating for the holidays, and having board games in the lounge for staff to play on their breaks and lunches. Leadership has made it a priority to increase and improve communication. We have developed an internal newsletter that is shared monthly to ensure staff is informed of current program and department happenings.
- iii. Gustavo said he recently attended an Executive Director Orientation in Indianapolis with other Community Action leaders from across the Midwest. It is a 4-part series put together by the Minnesota Community Action and they had great speakers for the attendees. Many of the directors are within 3 years of their position. Gustavo left energized and was happy to build a network and learn from other organizations.
- iv. October is Energy Awareness Month and KCCA has been promoting it through our social media campaign. Gustavo has been doing interviews to promote awareness and has also been sharing about the contractor networking event on November 1. Staff put together a flyer and it was shared with contractors to generate more interest. Gustavo is scheduled to give opening remarks and both Chad and Sherrie will be there speaking with contractors about the benefits of working with KCCA. A link to the event is posted on the County website and people can still register to attend. KCCA is in need of contractors for all of the projects we work on, plus lead abatement coming in 2024. We are partnering with Allegan County to use some of their auditors to do quality inspections for our projects, which will help us get through the Weatherization process quicker.
- v. KCCA was selected by UMSI for an impact data visualization project. Gustavo and Ashley have started working with a group of students, one of whom is from our area. We have shared initial data files with the student group and are excited about this project. The dashboard that is created will help us show the impact we are making in our community. The project is a two-semester long endeavor, so we should have something to share by the spring. Commissioner Ysasi



asked if other Community Actions applied. Gustavo said he did not have a list of who else applied, but the opportunity was shared by Brian McGrain, the MCA director.

- vi. The Walk for Warmth event is coming up on Saturday, February 10, 2024. Consumer's Energy has agreed to come on as a sponsor with a \$2,500 donation. Gustavo has asked the Advisory Board to help fundraise and find sponsors and staff are focusing on the logistics of the event. Commissioner Ysasi asked if we could send a calendar invite and if we have a goal for this year. Gustavo said we would like to raise \$10,000-20,000 and increase that goal each year. Some Advisory Board members are inquiring about sponsors at different companies in the area, so we hope to have a good amount of participation.
- vii. We avoided the government shut down, but there is a potential it will happen again on November 17. We have spoken to our funders to determine what the impact of a shut-down would be on our department. There were concerns about TEFAP and CSFP. We worked with Fiscal to understand the challenges we may face and come up with a contingency plan. We should have about 30 days of coverage if there is a shut down without problems.
- b. Monitoring Updates – KCCA had our annual Organizational Standards monitoring. Gustavo thanked Sherrie, Ashley, Rachel K. and Rachel A. for their hard work gathering all the documentation needed for the review. We met 100% of the Standards with only some recommendations, which we will take into consideration for next year.
- c. Assistance Activities and Potential Conflicts of Interest – There was one COI in August, which was an employee who requested assistance with water.

## 5. Financial Reports: *Org. Standard 8.7*

Bobby O'Connor, Financial Analyst --- Information Item

- a. Bobby O'Connor provided the Financial update and started with the One Time Funding Grants on page 7 of the packet. He informed the Board that CDBG CARES continues to be spent at a good pace, and HOME ARP is currently out for RFP. ESG CARES has been spent out and will be removed on future reports. Bobby noted that we are coming up on the end of CARES funding. Next discussed were the 12/31 ending grants. The Senior grants with the asterisks changed from 12/31 to 9/30 end and will be moved to 9/30 page after this report. Bobby is still in the process of closing out and journaling the grants that have closed. The GRICB program has been running in conjunction with LIWACA grant, so not as much has been spent as in years past. However, the LIWACA grant is finishing up so we should be able to have GRICB get back to where it has been in previous years. The Senior grants are



unit based, and we have lost some drivers, so we have had a tough time spending that out and getting all our miles in for the contracted units. The MDOT grant is used to buy busses. That money is earmarked for those vehicles and will be used once they are received, but the supply chain issue has delayed the process. The state has worked with us to hold that funding until we can acquire the vehicles. Next, Bobby discussed the 6/30 ending grants. These are similar to CDBG CARES; Chad has had a steady flow of projects so we shouldn't have any issues spending out CDBG and HOME grants. CGRS gets spent out every year. DOE has been slower to spend, but with the new connections and auditors, we should be able to increase expenditures. Lastly, Bobby reviewed the 9/30 ending grants. The CSBG grant runs through 2024, so we have until next year to spend out. With the fiscal year closing, Bobby is working through these grants, journaling, and closing them down. MEAP will be close to zero, but not 100% spent out. There was some funding left in supplies and admin dollars. MEAP needed to be submitted early so we were unable to spend all the remaining dollars. LIHEAPWAP has been difficult to spend. NSIP, ITP, and LIWACA have all been spent out. BIL is a rolling 5-year grant and will continue to be spent.

6. Programmatic Report: *Org. Standard 5.9*

Sherrie Gillespie/Rachel Kunnath/Chad Coffman --- Information Item

- a. Emergency & Specialized Services – Sherrie noted that Compassionate Care, Walk for Warmth, and MEAPSUPP are all unrestricted funds that we use to help clients with gas and electric. Compassionate Care can be used for anything that is an unusual circumstance. Clients who are not eligible for other programs are able to access these funds. The utility assistance for LIHWAP has been spent out, and that had been a two-year grant. GRICB is for water assistance for City of Grand Rapids water customers. We are probably not going to spend that fund completely, but we have until December to continue assisting eligible clients. BCAEO MEAP helps with gas and electric accounts. Clients first must be determined eligible from DHHS. KCCA also offers affordable payment plans for clients who choose this program rather than one-time assistance. It is a two-year program where they make a payment consistently and we pay off a portion of their arrears. Currently we have 6 clients enrolled for Consumers, and none in DTE. We expect to start spending CSBG Homeless Prevention funds again in the next couple weeks. KCCA is entering into a pilot project with Community Rebuilders to assist individuals to get housed by covering the security deposit and up to two months' rent. The next TEFAP food distribution is scheduled for 12/5 at the Eastern Avenue location from 1-6 pm. The next CSFP senior food distribution will be held here at the Kent County Human Services Complex on 11/17. Staff and volunteers distributed over 1,100 boxes last month and over 11,000 this year so far for the CSFP program. For the Weatherization program, Sherrie's

report shows the number of units weatherized. However, one home could use all three sources of weatherization funding. Commissioner Wooden inquired how much money would be left over for ICBAP. Bobby responded that it would be about \$150,000 out of the \$214,000. The Commissioners and staff discussed the issues with the eligibility gap and the work being done with the City of Grand Rapids to overcome the barriers to spending these funds. Commissioner Perdue asked a follow up question about KCCA's role in the community discussions and planning for homelessness prevention. Gustavo shared with her that KCCA has been actively involved with these efforts and is leading those conversations. The largest challenge is that there are no more assistance dollars out in the community, so they are thinking of creative solutions. One of those solutions is advocating for a more intensive case-management approach. The dollars alone aren't going to help, we need a more holistic approach to make sure people stabilize long term. We are working with United Way to connect on resources. Gustavo is the co-chair of the Eviction Prevention Committee, which includes local courts, other nonprofits, community stakeholders, and even landlords.

- b. Senior Services – Gustavo provided the update for Senior Services. He noted that Rachel has been working on meeting the contracted units, but we have had staffing issues. Gustavo reemphasized the changes to recruitment efforts for open staff positions and how we have made those job descriptions more appealing. We don't pay the most, but we have had conversations with Human Resources about changing that going forward. Our seniors are doing well. We are now offering exercise and wellness classes here and have also partnered with the Hispanic Center to offer additional services and programming. KCCA received a small donation and with those funds we purchased an animatronic cat who has been a hit with our seniors. It has brought them a lot of joy and happiness. We are still looking for more funding for transportation from the Area Agency on Aging and other sources to be able to operate at full capacity and meet our contracted units.
- c. Community Development – Chad Coffman noted that at the last meeting he shared with the Board that our new Contract and Compliance Administrator had started. She just got back from a weeklong conference in Atlanta for CDBG training. She will monitor the contracts that we have with our grant sub-recipients and our construction projects. Chad will be focusing on HOME funding and projects with our ARP dollars. We put out an RFP for our HOME ARP grant. The grant will focus on helping people outside the City of Grand Rapids that are at risk of homelessness. We received six responses from nonprofits to develop a program to fulfill the program guidelines and the top two applicants have been identified. We will have \$500,000 that will be committed towards projects. KCCA will be putting out another RFP for ESG eligible programming. In other news, the affordable housing construction and



home rehabilitation projects that were in the works are now up for sale. These projects were done in partnership with LINC UP and ICCF. Eligible homeowners receive about \$75,000 worth of assistance to purchase the affordable units. The lead remediation program is still in the works, and we expect to see that roll out sometime in 2024. The County will put out an RFP to assist with developing the program in partnership with the Health Department. Gustavo noted that we will need more contractors to do this work. On November 1, there is a contractor networking event at the Devos Place. We will be there speaking with contractors, letting them know about the types of work we need done and will explain the benefits of working with KCCA. Commissioner Perdue said we have heard of the need for contractors. Is there a training and pipeline development program with GRCC and other workforce development organizations? Gustavo answered there are already contractors out there, they just don't know about us. We need to have events like this on a regular basis and continue to advertise the need for contractors. The focus for us is to show how much funding we have for projects for years that will provide steady work. We will be marketing this the same way we did with the driver position noting that people can make an impact in their community.

7. Information Items- none

8. Other Business- none

9. Public Comment- none

10. Meeting Adjourned

a. Meeting is adjourned at 12:05 pm

**Next Scheduled Governing Board Meeting**

**December 18, 2023**

**10:30 am**