



Community, Housing, & Human Services (CHHS) Board

March 27, 2020
Meeting Minutes

Meeting called to order at 3:03 PM.

Attendance

- **Board Members Present:** Adriane Leithauser (Chair), Anne Stuyvesant-Whigham, Kate Burke, Betsy Wilkerson, Barry Barfield, Jeri Rathbun, Bob Hutchinson, Dillon Thorpe, Melody Dunn, Jason McAllister
- **Staff Present:** George Dahl, Tim Sigler, Niki Madunich

Approval of the Agenda

Motion to approve agenda made by CHHS Board member Melody Dunn seconded by CHHS Board member Betsy Wilkerson.

➤ AGENDA APPROVED

Public Hearing: COVID-19 LMI Job Retention Project

Staff member George Dahl presented on the COVID-19 LMI Job Retention Project, thanking board members for their flexibility to meet during this unique time in order to help address community needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. To begin, attendees were instructed on how to access presentation materials on the city's website, should they be unable to view the presentation through the virtual meeting format.

The COVID-19 LMI Job Retention Project is an effort to respond to growing community need during the current pandemic. The City of Spokane is currently experiencing high amounts of job loss due to the mandated closing of certain businesses. This job retention project would act as a resource for business owners who employ low and moderate income individuals (80% AMI or lower). The funds available are CDBG and as such need to meet both a national objective, in this case an activity benefiting low and moderate income person, job creation or retention, and be an eligible activity, in this case special economic development activities.

The City proposes a partnership with Craft3 in order to offer business loans to higher risk businesses in our community. This type of assistance has previously been offered to small businesses during the North Monroe Street construction project to help ease the burden of businesses due to prolonged construction in the area. The current proposed iteration has an available \$100,000 allocation of city funds to help businesses retain jobs during this time. Craft3 will provide subsidized loans to small businesses to prevent loss of jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. CDBG funds will be used to buy down the interest rates of these loans to 6%. Total allocations will not exceed \$30,000 per FTE retained or created. Loans will be available to qualified borrowers and subject to underwriting by Craft3. Craft3 will match city funds at a 1:5 ratio; for every \$100,000 the city puts forward, Craft3 will contribute \$500,000.

The city requests that the board open a public comment period for the proposed COVID-19 LMI Job Retention Project. Information regarding the project and comment period has been posted to the city's website, Facebook, in the Spokesman Review and has been sent to local city councils in order to encourage public comment and participation. The presentation given during the public hearing should help to clarify how to make public comments and support transparent communication during this time. Public comments can be emailed to spokanechhs@spokanecity.org or called in to 509-625-6325. At this time, no in-person

comments will be accepted. The department asks that commenters consider email options for comments as staffing at City Hall is intermittent during this period. Any comments received will be considered and responded to no than 15 days after the comment period has ended and will be presented back to the CHHS board and reflected as applicable in the project scope. The 30 day public comment period will run from March 27-April 27. Responses to comments will be communicated on or before Tuesday, May 12.

Following the presentation, the board was asked for feedback and comments on the proposed program. The following information was clarified:

- The Special Meeting notice and all presentations related to this public hearing are available to share via social media platforms to help spread public awareness of the program. Board members can share any links on the city's website to their personal social media pages.
- Applications will not be accepted until after the public comment period, per regulations. Additional options, including utilizing general fund dollars are being investigated, but the outcome is unknown.
- Businesses will have discretion to use funds as they see best, including for payroll.
- At this time it is unknown how many jobs could be retained or created through this program, although in the future there will be success measures available based on required reporting for CDBG dollars. Program recipients will be required to report on funds useage, including the \$30,000 limit per FTE.
- There are no requirements as to the types of businesses who could apply for the program, although it is anticipated that small businesses will be primary applicants and perhaps mostly in the service industry. Applicants will have to meet underwriting criteria of Craft3.

Motion to open a public comment period regarding the COVID-19 LMI Job Retention Program made by CHHS Board member Dillon Thorpe and seconded by CHHS Board member Melody Dunn.

➤ COVID-19 LMI JOB RETENTION PROGRAM PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD OPENED

Motion to approve fund allocation for COVID-19 LMI Job Retention Program, barring public comments that would alter the scope of the proposal made by CHHS Board member Anne Stuyvesant-Whigham and seconded by CHHS Board member Melody Dunn.

➤ COVID-19 LMI JOB RETENTION PROGRAM FUNDING ALLOCATION APPROVED

Board member Betsy Wilkerson was present for the vote to open public comment period but due to a prior engagement was unable to stay for the vote on funding allocation.

Director Report

Staff member Tim Sigler provided the Director's Report including the following items:

- Tim has been assigned to the Inland Incident Response Team as Director of Community Care, Mass Care, Vulnerable Populations, Food Security and Economic Impact. As director, he will be working to assemble several task forces to assist with managing the current pandemic at a regional level and thus, may be difficult to reach via email.
- Tija Danzig has been assigned lead for the Vulnerable Populations Task Force and likewise may be difficult to contact for department business.
- In the interim, please contact George Dahl for all board business and Scott Rasmussen for any homeless program inquiries.

Staff member George Dahl provided additional information, regarding possible alterations to CDBG standard policies and procedures:

- There has been speculation that the 30 day public comment period requirement may be suspended or abbreviated during the current pandemic crisis, but it remains speculation.
- Should the comment period requirement be amended, an additional 30 minute board meeting will be called and the information will be relayed to both board and community.

Meeting Adjourned at 3:34 PM.

The next CHHS Board Meeting is scheduled for **May 6, 2020 from 4-6 pm.**