



**Minutes
Youth and Family Affairs Committee
Regular Meeting**

April 16, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.

Lawton City Hall First Floor Conference Room (Banquet Hall)
212 SW 9th Street, Lawton, Oklahoma

- I. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by Chairman Rick Lowe. Upon roll call vote, a quorum was determined to be present.

Members Present: Rick Lowe, Mary Ann Hankins, *Willie Smith, Dianne Owens, Bob Weger, Taron Epps (Alternate 3)

Members Absent: Jeff Elbert (excused), Brenda Myers (excused), Davison Virgil (excused), Lisa Shaw (excused)

Also Present: Christine James, City of Lawton Internal Auditor; Donalynn Blazek-Scherler, City Clerk; Jennette Hutchinson, Harvest Plenty House of Prayer; Bernita Taylor, MIGHT CDRC; Onreka Johnson, The Next Step TLP; Opal Hall, New Hope C.O.G.I.C.

*arrived at 5:50PM

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH OKLAHOMA OPEN MEETING ACT, 25 O.S. 301-314

The notice and agenda for this meeting were posted by the City Clerk's Office as required by law.

II. Introduction of Guests

Jennette Hutchinson, Harvest Plenty House of Prayer, introduced herself.

Bernita Taylor, MIGHT CDRC, introduced herself.

III. Old Business

- A. Review and discuss a request for funding from Harvest Plenty House of Prayer in the amount of \$43,970.00 for summer 2024 youth programs within the City of Lawton and make a recommendation to the City Council.

The funding application for Harvest Plenty House of Prayer was provided to Committee members. A copy of this application may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Chairman Lowe noted that the City changes fiscal years in the middle of this program. He said Harvest Plenty House of Prayer (HPHOP) will need to differentiate between how much money they would need to get them through June 2024 and how much they would need from July 2024 until the end of their program.

Chairman Lowe said a site visit was conducted by Hankins and Owens.

Hankins said she liked this facility and their organization. She said it was in a good location, and they had

competent staff.

Owens agreed.

Motion by Owens, **Second** by Hankins, to recommend to the City Council approval of a request for funding from Harvest Plenty House of Prayer in the amount of \$43,970.00 for summer 2024 youth programs. **AYE:** Epps, Owens, Lowe, Weger, Hankins. **NAY:** None. ***Motion Passed.***

James said the HPHOP funding request will be considered by the City Council on May 14th, 2024. She noted that a budget amendment will need to be presented to Council as well.

- B.** Review and discuss a request for funding from MIGHT CDRC in the amount of \$75,000.00 for summer 2024 youth programs within the City of Lawton and make a recommendation to the City Council.

The funding application for MIGHT CDRC was provided to Committee members. A copy of this application may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

James noted that MIGHT's current contract expires at the end of May 2024.

Chairman Lowe said a site visit has been conducted.

Weger said he participated in the site visit, and he was very impressed with the program. He asked Ms. Taylor how many students repeat the program.

Ms. Taylor said many kids participate in the program multiple years – they are separated by grade, so each year has different curriculum.

Motion by Owens, **Second** by Weger, to recommend to the City Council approval of a request for funding from MIGHT CDRC in the amount of \$75,000.00 for summer 2024 youth programs. **AYE:** Epps, Owens, Lowe, Weger, Hankins. **NAY:** None. ***Motion Passed.***

James said the MIGHT CDRC funding request will also be considered by the City Council on May 14th, 2024.

IV. New Business

- A.** Consider approving the minutes of the February 20, 2024 meeting.

Motion by Weger, **Second** by Hankins, to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2024 meeting. **AYE:** Epps, Owens, Lowe, Weger, Hankins. **NAY:** None. ***Motion Passed.***

The Committee skipped to new business item D – The Next Step TLP.

- D.** Discuss a request for funding from The Next Step TLP, Inc in the amount of \$82,200.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

The funding application for The Next Step TLP was provided to Committee members. A copy of this application may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Onreka Johnson, The Next Step TLP, said they've been doing this program since 2001. Ms. Johnson said this program used to only accept girls, but for the last four years they've extended participation to both

girls and boys. She said this program has been housed in various locations, but it is currently housed at SW 10th Street and SW B Avenue. This program offers STEM education and life skills activities. This year, they are focusing on behavior modification as well as reading. Ms. Johnson said they have a partnership with various organizations, to include Teen Court.

Owens inquired about the staff and how they are compensated.

Ms. Johnson said some of their staff members are volunteers who are also graduates of the program. She said they also have certified teachers and counselors working with the kids.

Ms. Johnson said they also extend help to the families of their students when there is an issue at home.

James said that while it is great they help with families, The Next Step TLP may only be reimbursed for money they use towards youth.

Chairman Lowe said it is his understanding this organization is receiving grant funding from other entities for not only this program, but other programs at the same facility. He asked if this causes any overlap (e.g. with rent, utilities, etc).

Ms. Johnson said that while The Next Step TLP operates in the same suite as Lawton Teamwork Makes the Dream Work, the rent and utilities are split in half between the two organizations – they are not paid twice. Ms. Johnson noted that Embrace Hope Collaboratorium is on the other side of the building.

Chairman Lowe asked approximately how many students are referred to this program from DHS, OJA and Teen Court.

Ms. Johnson said she is currently working with three kids referred to the program through Teen Court, and she believes they will soon receive an additional referral.

Ms. Johnson noted that they also have students that have been suspended and they attend virtually. These students can come to this facility and use the computers to complete their homework.

Chairman Lowe suggested a site visit be scheduled for The Next Step TLP on May 7th at 5:00PM.

The Committee skipped to new business item F – New Hope C.O.G.I.C.

- F. Discuss a request for funding from New Hope C.O.G.I.C. in the amount of \$51,500.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

The funding application for New Hope C.O.G.I.C. was provided to Committee members. A copy of this application may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Opal Hall, New Hope C.O.G.I.C., introduced herself.

Chairman Lowe asked if this is a summer program or a year-round program.

Ms. Hall said the program takes place six weeks in the summer, but it will also carry over into the school year. She said her staff keeps in close contact with the school principals and counselors to ensure their students are succeeding and have everything they need.

Ms. Hall said they accept students from all schools, but their primary focus is on Lincoln Elementary School. She said approximately 40 students participate in the summer, and 20-30 students participate during the school year.

Hankins asked where they go for the overnight trips.

Ms. Hall said Houston, TX and Tulsa, OK.

Chairman Lowe asked how it was determined that \$6,000 would be needed for rent/utilities.

Ms. Johnson said this includes compensation for the church for letting them use their facility as well as a portion of the utility bills.

Smith suggested a site visit be scheduled.

Chairman Lowe suggested the site visit be done on May 7th at 7:00PM.

The Committee skipped to new business item J – Harvest Plenty House of Prayer (FY24-25).

J. Discuss a request for funding from Harvest Plenty House of Prayer in the amount of \$62,240.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

The funding application for Harvest Plenty House of Prayer was provided to Committee members. A copy of this application may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Chairman Lowe said the Committee has already conducted a site visit at this location. He does not believe another site visit is needed.

James suggested the site visit be waived.

Chairman Lowe said the Committee will be voting on this application at the next Committee meeting, and he encouraged HPHOP to attend the meeting.

The Committee skipped to new business item E – Lawton Teamwork Makes the Dream Work/Greenwood S.T.E.M.

E. Discuss a request for funding from Lawton Teamwork Makes the Dream Work/Greenwood S.T.E.M. in the amount of \$64,300.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

The funding application for Lawton Teamwork Makes the Dream Work was provided to Committee members. A copy of this application may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

James said this would be the fourth year of funding this organization.

Chairman Lowe said the Committee has done site visits at this facility in the past. He encouraged Committee members who are unfamiliar with the organization to participate in the site visit this year.

Weger asked if this site visit will also be conducted on May 7th.

Chairman Lowe said yes – this facility is in the same building as The Next Step TLP. This site visit will be done around 6:00PM (after The Next Step TLP).

Weger asked if organizations that have received funding in the past have been turning in their annual reports to keep them accountable. He said he would be hesitant granting additional funding to an organization who has been funded in prior years and has failed to submit an annual report.

James said unfortunately, the Committee has not had great success in obtaining annual reports. However, she said this requirement will be stated in the contract and claim form going forward.

James emphasized that one of the best ways to hold these organizations accountable is to have the grant money distributed through a reimbursement process. Organizations will be required to submit claims for reimbursement that will also require appropriate documentation. She noted that the contract specifies quarterly reimbursement.

James said so far, she's only been through the reimbursement process with Teen Court.

Chairman Lowe said Teamwork Makes the Dreamwork has submitted an annual report in the past.

Smith noted that the annual report requirement needs to start being enforced.

Weger also asked that organizations be required to list *potential* funding sources, so the Committee can see if they are actively seeking funding from other sources.

Hankins said she is concerned about the potential overlap between The Next Step TLP and Teamwork Makes the Dreamwork because they operate out of the same building.

Weger suggested the Committee limit or eliminate funding for salaries to ensure the funding is being used for youth.

Chairman Lowe said the Committee is not obligated to award the full amount of each funding request. The Committee may find that a lesser amount would be appropriate to award.

The Committee skipped to new business item C – Embrace Hope Collaboratorium, Inc

- C. Discuss a request for funding from Embrace Hope Collaboratorium, Inc in the amount of \$97,500.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

The funding application for Embrace Hope Collaboratorium, Inc was provided to Committee members. A copy of this application may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Chairman Lowe said this is a new entity. They operate from 3:00PM - 6:00PM on school days, and the projected number of students served is 20.

Smith said the Committee may want to consider funding the program for the summer, but not during the school year. He also noted that they're asking \$51,000 for salaries, which is more than half of their total request.

Hankins said she is also concerned there may be some overlap between this application, the one for The Next Step TLP and the one Lawton Teamwork Makes the Dream Work.

Chairman Lowe suggested this site visit be done at 7:00PM on May 7th.

- B. Discuss a request for funding from Marie Detty Youth and Family Services Center in the amount of \$100,000.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

The funding application for Marie Detty Youth and Family Services Center was provided to Committee members. A copy of this application may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Chairman Lowe said this is a repeat applicant, and a site visit has already been done. He suggested the Committee waive the site visit but request that a representative from Marie Detty attend the next meeting.

- C.** Discuss a request for funding from Embrace Hope Collaboratorium, Inc in the amount of \$97,500.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

- D.** Discuss a request for funding from The Next Step TLP, Inc in the amount of \$82,200.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

- E.** Discuss a request for funding from Lawton Teamwork Makes the Dream Work/Greenwood S.T.E.M. in the amount of \$64,300.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

- F.** Discuss a request for funding from New Hope C.O.G.I.C. in the amount of \$51,500.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

- G.** Discuss a request for funding from Joshua Empowering Survivors Unique Servants, Inc (J.E.S.U.S.) in the amount of \$48,500.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

The funding application for Joshua Empowering Survivors Unique Servants, Inc (J.E.S.U.S.) was provided to Committee members. A copy of this application may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Chairman Lowe said this organization received funding last year. A site visit was conducted last year. He said this is both an after-school program as well as a summer program. He believes they offer boxing.

James noted that this organization failed to submit an annual report.

Hankins said she likes the location of this program – the facility is located within a neighborhood.

Chairman Lowe said he believes this is a good program, but he'd like to see an annual report turned in before the Committee considers awarding additional grant funding. He said he will reach out to Pastor Llanos about turning in a report and attending the next Committee meeting.

- H.** Discuss a request for funding from MIGHT Community Development & Resource Center in the amount of \$75,000.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

The funding application for MIGHT Community Development & Resource Center was provided to Committee members. A copy of this application may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Chairman Lowe said a site visit was recently conducted at this facility. He suggested the Committee

waive the site visit but request that a representative from MIGHT attend the next meeting.

- I. Discuss a request for funding from Teen Court, Inc in the amount of \$65,000.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

The funding application for Teen Court, Inc was provided to Committee members. A copy of this application may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Chairman Lowe said this would be the second year funding this organization.

James said the current grant they're receiving is for \$45,000.

Weger asked if Teen Court has cooperated with providing necessary documentation for their claim forms.

James said yes.

Chairman Lowe suggested the Committee waive the site visit but request that a representative from Teen Court, Inc attend the next meeting.

- J. Discuss a request for funding from Harvest Plenty House of Prayer in the amount of \$62,240.00 for fiscal year 2024-2025 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit.

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

V. Reports/Comments from Chairman and Committee Members

None

VI. Reports/Comments from Staff

None

VII. Audience Participation

None

VIII. Adjournment

Motion by Hankins, **Second** by Smith, to adjourn the April 16, 2024 meeting. **AYE:** Epps, Owens, Lowe, Weger, Hankins, Smith. **NAY:** None. ***Motion Passed.***

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:16 P.M.