Minutes
Youth and Family Affairs Committee
Special Meeting
February 25, 2025 - 9:00 A.M.
Lawton City Hall – Banquet Room
212 SW 9th Street, Lawton, Oklahoma

I. The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM by Chairman Bob Weger. Upon roll call vote, a quorum was determined to be present.

Members Present: Bob Weger, Mary Ann Hankins, RL Smith, Taron Epps, Karen Bailey, Alternate 3

Members Absent: Jeff Elbert, Dianne Owens, Reshard Horne, Carl Fuqua, Bernita Taylor

Also Present: Tammy Branstetter, Sr Deputy City Clerk; Cynthia Williams, City Auditor; *Mark Cox, Alex Minter, United Way of SWOK

*Newly appointed member effective 03/09/2025

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

Mark Cox introduced himself to the Committee. He said he's excited to be here and be a part of what the Committee is doing.

III. Old Business

A. Consider approving the amended By-Laws of the Youth and Family Affairs Committee and take action as deemed necessary.

Chairman Weger asked Committee members to take a moment to review the amended By-Laws of the Youth and Family Affairs Committee. A copy of the amended By-Laws of the Youth and Family Affairs Committee may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Motion by Smith, **Second** by Epps, to approve the amended By-Laws of the Youth and Family Affairs Committee as presented. **AYE:** Epps, Smith, Bailey, Weger, Hankins. **NAY:** None. ***Motion Passed.***

B. Discuss adding additional required training for YFAC grant applicants and take action as deemed necessary.

Chairman Weger said at the last meeting we discussed about asking or looking at adding additional training requirements for the future. He asked Cynthia Williams, City of Lawton Internal Auditor, to share more information on this topic.

Williams said it was brought up at the last meeting that grant writing can be overwhelming. She said we need someone who is going to help the organization put it into plain English, because we want people to be able to apply for this grant opportunity. It has been recommended that we add a section to the required training that talks about how to find and apply for additional resources. Williams said she thinks this is a great idea, and she will include that in her next pre-training session that applicants must attend to qualify for the grant.

Williams said her training will include how and where to search for corporate foundations and other government grants, and she will cover the tips and tricks on how to pick up on key words that the grantor is looking for applicants to address. Williams said she will also be covering how to better read the notice of funding so the organization can tailor their scope of work with how the Committee wants to do their program.

Williams said another addition could be possible training classes with an outside agency such as Grant Writing USA or Career Training from OSU at OKC. However, Williams noted that one of the most valuable resources we can tap into is our local library. She said she reached out to the director, and the director said that right now they do not have a list of all open grants, but they will sit down one on one with organizations and help them find various grants to apply for as well as help them fill out the application.

Chairman Weger said that is excellent.

Hankins said this was a good presentation.

Cox asked Williams what her experience has been with grant applicants during the pre-application training regarding their level of knowledge of the grant application requirements and process.

Williams said she's experienced a little bit of everything. She said we've had some organizations in the past who have received money, and they wanted to just turn in a Word document that showed all the things they purchased without providing supporting documentation such as invoices, proof of payment and bank statements. On the other hand, Williams said we have some organizations that are right on top of things.

Hankins said we need Cynthia - she has been a valuable contribution to the Committee in making sure we get things done right.

No action was taken on this item.

IV. New Business

A. Consider approving the minutes of the January 28, 2025, meeting.

A copy of the minutes of the January 28, 2025, meeting may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Motion by Bailey, **Second** by Epps, to approve the minutes of the January 28, 2025, meeting. **AYE:** Epps, Smith, Bailey, Weger, Hankins. **NAY:** None. ***Motion Passed.***

B. Discuss changing the meeting location for the remaining 2025 regularly scheduled YFAC meetings and take action as deemed necessary.

Chairman Weger said scheduling conflicts with some other groups that will be using the banquet hall have been brought to our attention. He said we're looking at moving the location of future YFAC meetings to the 3rd floor conference room of City Hall.

Hankins said the 3rd floor conference room would be a better place to meet because there's so much echo in the banquet hall.

Smith said he agrees with moving the meetings to the 3rd floor conference room.

Motion by Smith, **Second** by Hankins, to change the meeting location for the remaining 2025 regularly scheduled YFAC meetings to the 3rd floor conference room of City Hall. **AYE:** Epps, Smith, Bailey, Weger, Hankins. **NAY:** None. ***Motion Passed.***

C. Discuss a request for funding from Teen Court, Inc in the amount of $47,000.00 for fiscal year 2025-2026 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit if necessary.

Chairman Weger asked Committee members to take a moment to look over the application for funding from Teen Court. A copy of the application may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Chairman Weger asked Williams to share her findings through her auditing of the application.

Williams noted that Teen Court does receive multiple sources of city funds. Under the new YFAC ordinance, it says that they are not eligible if they are receiving multiple sources of city funds. Williams said that Teen Court receives CDBG and LETA funding.

Hankins said she would assume that Teen Court would rather have this money than the CDBG money, because the CDBG money is around $12,000.

Williams noted that their budget included all these sources of funding.

Hankins noted that we're reviewing the CDBG funding right now, and she thinks Teen Court would rather have YFAC money.

Smith said the Teen Court program is very beneficial for youth.

Tammy Branstetter, City Clerk's Office, noted that LETA approved a grant request from Teen Court at their meeting last Wednesday. The grant was close to $17,000, and it's for beautification of their new building, to include landscaping and irrigation. Teen Court has been advised that they must spend all their LETA funding by June 30th of this year to be eligible for YFAC funding next fiscal year.

Bailey asked if the maximum amount of funding an applicant can be awarded is $35,000.

Chairman Weger said that's correct.

Bailey asked how much funding is available for the Committee to award to grant applicants.

Chairman Weger said we don't have the final numbers from Finance yet – the budget's not been approved. We've requested a total of $315,000, of which we have approximately $282,000 cash in hand. We requested additional funding so that we could fund three organizations at the maximum amount of $35,000.

Cox asked if "at-risk youth" has ever been defined.

Hankins noted that it can be hard to define.

Williams discussed Section 2-3-9-364 of Lawton City Code, which states that the Committee is to “identify and make recommendations to the city council on issues of concern relating to the youth of our community, with the focus on identifying ways to help the city's at-risk youth succeed, to include but not limited to: (1) staying in school, and (2) staying active in programs that foster youth development, all with the goal of preventing youth involvement in crime and helping the city's youth develop into productive adults”.

Cox asked how it’s determined if an organization is hitting this demographic.

Williams said this is sort of the second part to the required training. She noted that she doesn’t do this part of the training, but it includes how organizations are reporting their demographics. Williams said she’s not been involved in this training yet, but we will make sure that we get those questions answered.

Smith asked who does this training.

Williams said we haven’t established that yet. She thinks this is one of the things the Committee started working on last year and is still trying to establish this year.

Hankins said when we originally started, we were going to bring outside training in, but it was very expensive. The person that was on the Committee at that time said she would do the training, and it kind of got lost after that. Hankins said this needs to be corrected.

Williams noted that whenever it’s an established program applying for the grant, they do provide demographic breakdowns. For example, Teen Court’s application includes a demographics breakdown that can be found on page 6 of the application. Williams discussed this breakdown.

Hankins said she thinks YFAC funding fits Teen Court better than CDBG funding does.

Smith said he concurs.

Epps said he is comfortable with approving Teen Court’s application.

Chairman Weger said we can’t vote on the applications yet. We need to propose a time and date to conduct a site visit if the Committee wishes to do so.

Chairman Weger noted that one of the things the Committee has noticed in the past is that the same children were moving repeatedly through these programs. He noted that the Committee is trying to reach a broader scope of at-risk youth, not just the same circle of people.

Chairman Weger asked Committee members for feedback regarding a time and date to conduct a site visit. He said last year, we broke the Committee up into groups of three or four to conduct the site visits.

Epps said he likes the group concept the Committee did last year. He said you can get more accomplished by breaking up into teams.

Chairman Weger said we’ll have a Team A and a Team B. Hankins, Bailey and Cox will be on Team A, and Weger, Smith and Epps will be on Team B.

Chairman Weger said that Team A will be responsible for conducting a site visit with Teen Court, and they will bring their report back to the Committee at the next meeting.

D. Discuss a request for funding from the FISTA in the amount of $14,961.05 for fiscal year 2025-2026 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit if necessary.

Chairman Weger asked Committee members to take a moment to look over the application for funding from FISTA. A copy of the application may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Chairman Weger noted that FISTA receives funding from the city in other areas. They've not had any previous funds received from YFAC, and they're in good standing.

Chairman Weger asked Williams to share her findings through her auditing of the application.

Williams said they're not requesting the full $35,000. However, they do not have an identified 20% matching funds source. They do not have any salaries included in the budget. Their mission statement is unclear on how it aligns with the YFAC objectives. The FISTA is not free from multiple sources of city funding – the FISTA receives $9 million annually through a limited support agreement. There is not a mechanism to limit access specifically for Lawton and at-risk youth. There was not a development assets list, which is required.

Epps asked if this funding would go specifically to the FISTA, or would if it go to the FISTA Foundation, because it doesn't specify. He said he could be mistaken, but he thinks the foundation is raising funds for a STEM Lab. Epps said that could untangle some of the funding that the FISTA is getting from the city.

Hankins said she has found that we can't say yes to everything - no is not a bad answer sometimes.

Epps said he agrees that there's no clear tie between the mission statement and what they're doing.

Cox said it's hard because you know what they're trying to do is a great thing, but he goes back to what we're here for, which is specifically targeting those that are at-risk. He said it's hard to get your finger right on those people who really need it.

Hankins said it's her understanding that we're just trying to come to a consensus today, because it's not a vote. She said she recommends the Committee set this application aside.

Chairman Weger asked Williams if she gives a report to the applicants of her findings.

Williams said her findings are just for the Committee, but if applicants want to ask what they were missing so they can improve for next time, she can consider setting a meeting with them.

Smith said from what he's seen at the FISTA STEM Lab, the kids were at-risk.

Epps said the STEM Lab is predominantly pushed by and participated through the STEM Consortium. The STEM Consortium consists of a number of entities that do have at-risk kids who will participate in the STEM Lab that's being built. He noted that the space currently exists, but they're in the middle of finishing it out. Epps said he thinks there's some clarity that needs to be made with this application just knowing what he knows with the FISTA, the FISTA Foundation and the STEM Consortium. He agrees with the recommendation to set this application aside.

Hankins noted that we have 7 applicants, and we can't do them all. We can handicap some of them by not giving them enough, or we can enhance a program by giving them more. She said if we set this application aside for now, there's nothing that says we can't go back to it.

Cox asked if this Committee reaches out to applicants to let them know what they were missing so they can improve their application for next year.

Chairman Weger said in the past, I don't think the Committee has been very clear with that. We want to rectify this.

Hankins said we need to clean things up and do them right.

Chairman Weger said we want to stay within our guidelines that the Committee has established. He said no one is questioning that FISTA STEM isn't effective, but we must stay within our guidelines. Otherwise, we'll get into having rules that no one follows, which breeds confusion, frustration and lack of clarity, of which we've seen in the past.

Smith asked who reaches out to applicants to notify them that they have a great program, but they did not meet the benchmark that we needed and to advise them what they should do differently next year.

Hankins said Cynthia probably could do this.

Hankins said the STEM Lab has potential for getting funding from other places, whereas Teen Court is an entity all of its own.

Chairman Weger said we'll set this aside with no action at this time. He said he thinks we need to clarify a couple of things. One of the things being the FISTA versus the FISTA Foundation. He asked Branstetter to look into this for Committee members. He said we will not setup a visitation with this organization at this time.

No action was taken on this item.

E. Discuss a request for funding from Harvest Plenty House of Prayer Chisholm Trail Reading STEM Summer Camp in the amount of $35,000.00 for fiscal year 2025-2026 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit if necessary.

Chairman Weger provided time for Committee members to look over both applications for funding from Harvest Plenty House of Prayer. A copy of the application from Harvest Plenty House of Prayer Chisholm Trail Reading STEM Summer Camp may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Epps asked if they have two applications.

Chairman Weger said yes, they do. He said one application is for their Chisholm Trail Reading STEM Summer Camp, and the other is for their Reading PLUS After-School Program. Right now, we're looking at the application for the summer camp.

Hankins asked Chairman Weger if this is an organization they visited last year.

Chairman Weger said yes, it is.

Hankins noted that we didn't fund this organization last year because we ran out of funds. She said this organization presented a good program – it's located in a church within a neighborhood.

Cox asked if applicants have to reapply every year.

Hankins said they shouldn't keep applying – we'd like for them to be financially stable, but that's a good question.

Chairman Weger said to reapply, applicants have to have turned in their current audit to the City of Lawton. He said Williams has classes put in place so that the applicants understand exactly what type of format we want things in so that it meets city expectations. Applicants must be in good standing with the city, to include no debts being owed.

Hankins said that the Committee requires grant recipients to report on measurable outcomes. She noted that some organizations who have received YFAC funding in the past have not turned in their paperwork to the city.

Smith said he likes the program. He asked for input from Williams.

Williams said that based on the application only, they lacked financials. The did not submit the required financial documentation. She noted that 53% of their budget is going towards salaries.

Hankins said this was a problem last time.

Chairman Weger said that's correct.

Williams said they also do not have established "SMART" goals. They do not have a clear mechanism to measure criteria that is in line with the YFAC goals. There is no clear goal for years 2-10 of how they're going to continue on with the program and then to become self-sufficient.

Epps asked if they meet the 20% matching funds requirement.

Williams said their overall budget was $43,750, so they do have some matching funds.

Smith asked if the applicant attended the required training.

Williams said yes.

Smith said his concern on both applications from Harvest Plenty House of Prayer is the enormous amount of money going towards salary. He said he knows you have to have people there to make it work, but $23,000 of the $35,000 going towards salaries is high.

Chairman Weger said it's important to stay true to the YFAC mission, which is reaching at-risk youth.

Hankins said that while she likes program being in the neighborhood easily accessible to the kids, she looks to Williams as a guide on all the rest of it.

Chairman Weger emphasized that Williams has had the opportunity to train to show applicants what's expected of them, and the Committee appreciates that.

Smith said ideally you want the money to go towards the kids.

Hankins reminded Committee members that we not voting on the applications today, we are only discussing them.

Chairman Weger asked Committee members if they'd be okay with setting the applications from Harvest Plenty House of Prayer aside, along with the application from FISTA.

Epps and Smith said yes.

No action was taken on this item.

F. Discuss a request for funding from Harvest Plenty House of Prayer Reading PLUS After-School Program in the amount of $35,000.00 for fiscal year 2025-2026 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit if necessary.

Chairman Weger provided time for Committee members to look over both applications for funding from Harvest Plenty House of Prayer. A copy of the application from Harvest Plenty House of Prayer Chisholm Trail Reading PLUS After-School Program may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

No action was taken on this item.

G. Discuss a request for funding from United Way of Southwest Oklahoma in the amount of $35,000.00 for fiscal year 2025-2026 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit if necessary.

Chairman Weger provided time for Committee members to look over the application for funding from United Way of Southwest Oklahoma. A copy of the application from United Way of Southwest Oklahoma may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Chairman Weger asked Williams to share her findings through her auditing of the application.

Williams said this is an existing program. They were able to provide demographics on who they've helped. The percent of the budget going towards salaries is 7.77%. They have "SMART" goals, and they have clear goals for moving forward for years 2-10. They do have a mechanism for limiting their program to Lawton's at-risk youth. They do comply with all the developmental assets. Williams said this is a complete application.

Chairman Weger said that Team B will be responsible for conducting a site visit with United Way of SWOK.

Alex Minter, United Way of SWOK, said she is the director of this program. She requested that the site visit be scheduled for March 6th, if possible, as she will soon be out on maternity leave.

Smith asked Minter what time would work best for her on March 6th.

Epps said he is available from 12:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M. that day.

Minter suggested 2:00 P.M. on March 6th.

Chairman Weger said we'll get this meeting set up for 2:00 P.M. on March 6th.

Chairman Weger advised that item I will be considered next to allow time for staff to make additional copies of material related to item H.

I. Discuss a request for funding from Lawton Teamwork Makes the Dream Work in the amount of $35,000.00 for fiscal year 2025-2026 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit if necessary.

Chairman Weger provided time for Committee members to look over the application for funding from Lawton Teamwork Makes the Dream Work. A copy of the application from Lawton Teamwork Makes the Dream Work may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Hankins asked Williams to share her findings through her auditing of the application.

Williams said they did not submit a formal application – they submitted an email.

Hankins said she believes this is their third year.

Williams said that is correct.

Hankins asked Williams to describe the program a little bit.

Williams said she can only read from their description – she cannot imply anything.

Smith asked if they failed to submit an application.

Chairman Weger said they didn't supply an application according to the city's standard application – they sent an email.

Williams said the email did have most of the components in there, so she did evaluate the email that they sent. Williams said they did not include any financials. She noted that this is an existing program. Williams said they've paid back some money, so they are in good standing.

Williams said they have a total budget of $37,200, so they do have the matching portion. Of the total budget, 16.13% is in salaries. Williams noted that there is no mission statement, therefore she cannot judge the application based upon a mission statement that aligns with YFAC. She said they do not receive funds from any other City of Lawton sources.

Epps said he's not confident that their outcomes listed on page 4 of the application align with the YFAC mission, but he also knows the demographics of the audience that participates in this program.

Smith inquired about the demographics.

Epps said the participants are definitely low-income and/or at-risk youth, but they don't discuss that in their application.

Chairman Weger said he would like to remind the Committee that a standard has been established.

Cox asked if this applicant went through the required training.

Williams said they did attend the required training, and they were provided a link with the application along with its requirements.

Hankins said this was one of the programs where the same children were being served repeatedly.

Williams noted that according to City Code, it is her duty as the City's Internal Auditor in the YFAC grant process to conduct a pre-award financial review for each application.

Section 2-3-9-367: Duties Of The City Of Lawton Internal Auditor In The Youth And Family Affairs Committee Grant Process

C. **Pre-Award Financial Review:** Prior to the disbursement of any YFAC grant funds, the Internal Auditor shall conduct a comprehensive financial review of the grant applicants, which shall include, but is not limited to:

1. **Verification of Financial Documentation:** Ensuring that all financial documentation submitted with the grant application, including budgets and matching fund declarations, are accurate, complete, and comply with the financial guidelines established by the City.

2. **Assessment of Prior Year Compliance:** Reviewing the applicant's performance in previous grant cycles (if applicable) to confirm compliance with reporting obligations, reimbursement protocols, and any audit requirements.

3. **Debt and Liability Verification:** Confirming that the applicant does not have any outstanding debts, financial obligations, or unresolved financial discrepancies with the City of Lawton.

Williams said she was not able to do her duty with this application because the financials were not submitted.

Hankins said one of the largest things this program did is take a trip to Tulsa to the Greenwood District, which is a good thing. However, Hankins said she thinks this has been done three years in a row.

Smith asked if this is another application the Committee should set aside for now.

Chairman Weger said yes – he would recommend that to the Committee.

No action was taken on this item.

H. Discuss a request for funding from the Last Frontier Council – Scouting America in the amount of $64,008.00 for fiscal year 2025-2026 youth programs within the City of Lawton and propose a time and date to conduct a site visit if necessary.

Chairman Weger provided time for Committee members to look over the application for funding from the Last Frontier Council – Scouting America. A copy of the application from the Last Frontier Council – Scouting America may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Chairman Weger asked Williams if everything was submitted with this application.

Williams said they did attend the required training, and they did complete all the associated documentation. The percent of the total budget that would go to salaries is 47.35%. Williams said it is unclear how the mission statement aligns with YFAC's goals. She said they do have an itemized budget. They do not have a "SMART" goal. They do not have clear performance measures and criteria that aligns with the YFAC goals. They do not have clear goals for years 2-10 with regards to how they will continue the program and move on to become self-sufficient. Williams noted that they are free from multiple sources of city funding. They do have a mechanism to limit access to Lawton and at-risk youth, and they do have the required developmental assets.

Cox said it's not clear to him how they're specifically targeting at-risk youth. He said they're a great organization, but he can't see how the application aligns with YFAC's goals.

Epps said if they had a clear path to target at-risk kids, he thinks it would be excellent.

Bailey recommended the Committee set aside this application for today. She asked if there will be a response to all the applications.

Chairman Weger said yes.

Bailey said she thinks this is a smart move.

Cox asked Williams if she thinks there is enough clarity, and that people understand the specific goals of the Committee. He said we want people to apply, but there's got to be a breakdown of people understanding what it is that we're doing. Cox said it seems like some people are missing the Committee's hard purpose. He asked if there is a mechanism the Committee can use to help key this down.

Chairman Weger said he believes the way the Committee corrects this is by holding each applicant accountable to the standards set forth by the Committee. He stressed that we are using taxpayers' funds. There must be an accountability factor, and the Committee has established guidelines for this. If the applicant cannot meet the guidelines, there is no funding.

Williams said she does think that she can bridge the gap. She said within her position, she cannot assume, persuade or give her opinions on any of the applications. However, Committee members can establish exactly what it is that they're looking for. Williams said the more detailed the Committee makes their requirements, the easier it makes her job. Williams noted that she can cover certain keywords during the training that applicants are required to attend. She said she can also advise applicants of what falls within the Committee's scope of work and advise applicants to make sure what they're trying to do falls within this scope of work. However, Williams said she cannot make these criteria or lead them in a certain direction – all she can do is present information.

Smith asked how much money we currently have compared to what we'll be giving out.

Chairman Weger said currently, we have approximately $289,000, with some carryover. We have requested an additional $17,500, which would bring us up to $315,000. We do not have $315,000 right now – the budget is not approved. If we do get the extra $17,500, it will give us enough money to fund three programs at $35,000 each. If we do not receive the extra $17,500, it would give us the ability to fund two programs at $35,000.

Hankins noted that we don't have to fund each application at the full $35,000.

Smith said for clarification, the Committee has two applications that we are moving forward with, and the other ones are being put on standby. He asked who will be calling applicants to inform them of their application status and to inform them what they might need to do differently when applying for funding next year.

Branstetter said she will contact the applicants.

Chairman Weger said it's his understanding that the Committee does not wish to proceed further with scheduling a site visit for the Boy Scouts at this time.

No action was taken on this item.

V. Reports/Comments from Chairman and Committee Members

Chairman Weger thanked members for serving on the Committee, and he said he appreciates their input. He noted that reaching the children is the Committee's ultimate goal.

VI. Reports/Comments from Staff

A. Receive a report from the City Auditor.

Williams had nothing additional to report.

VII. Audience Participation

None.

Adjournment

Motion by Smith, **Second** by Epps, to adjourn the February 25, 2025, meeting. **AYE:** Epps, Smith, Bailey, Weger, Hankins. **NAY:** None. ***Motion Passed.***

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:23 A.M.