



## General Government & Social Services Committee

November 9, 2021

### Summary and Motions

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Committee chair, Council Member Susan Lamb, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Committee members Vice Mayor Steve Kay and Council Members Richard Moloney, James Brown, Hannah LeGris, Liz Sheehan, Fred Brown, Whitney Baxter, Jennifer Reynolds, and Kathy Plomin attended the meeting.

#### I. Approval of October 12, 2021 Committee Summary

Motion by Sheehan to approve the October 12, 2021, General Government & Social Services Committee summary; seconded by Baxter. The motion passed without dissent.

#### II. Creation of a Juvenile Treatment Court Update

Judge Melissa Moore Murphy, Fayette District Court, first explained that district court judges handle juvenile criminal cases, which remain confidential unless the individual is charged as an adult. They hope the Juvenile Treatment Court (JTC) will reduce recidivism and increase public safety. The council approved \$100,000 for this program in December 2020. They have a steering committee made up of 68 people, including folks from other communities, one of which has contributed grant funding to JTC. Murphy provided background about the creation of the nonprofit, *You Matter, Kentucky!*, whose only purpose is to maintain the funds for JTC. Without losing sight of how best to serve our kids, they created a partnership between local and state government and Fayette County Public Schools. FCPS agreed to hire the staff person, who will spend half their time in the schools and half in the courthouse looking for proactive ways in the school system to keep these kids out of the court system. Kivvi Figgs was hired in October to lead the program. Murphy said JTC will accept referrals from Court Designated Workers, Fayette Family Court, and Fayette Juvenile Court. The program has four phases and includes an individualized treatment plan for each child. She explained how JTC kids would graduate in the fourth phase and their charges would be dropped. They plan to start working with kids in January, focusing on mental health. That concluded the presentation.

Sheehan talked about the importance of youth intervention programs in our community. She and Murphy discussed the steering committee and the assessment team that is working to identify mental health care providers in the community that are willing and able to be a resource. Murphy emphasized finding people to “walk life” with the kids; they are creating a list of people who are willing to help. Moloney mentioned possible opportunities with the state’s ARPA funds and connecting with Keith Jackson, Deputy Secretary of the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet. Murphy is having those conversations now.

Reynolds talked about a rise in juvenile crime, particularly involving guns. Murphy explained violent crimes will not come through JTC, however, a charge of possession of a gun could. They discussed the process for a JTC participant (first meeting with the family to confirm they want to participate, followed by an assessment of the kid (conducted by Figgs), and then JTC would start assigning resources). Reynolds described it as case management.

Baxter established that there are about 70 kids between the Division of Youth Services (50) and the Department of Juvenile Justice (20) that could be eligible to participate. The JTC will have a caseload of 20 kids (with one staff person; more cases would require another staff person). There is a maximum age

of 17 to participate in the program; they are not eligible for juvenile court after 17. The youngest that could be eligible right now is 11.

J. Brown confirmed that a kid could not continue in JTC if they committed a crime during their participation in the program but that they hope to help those kids through other options. In the discussion of mentorship being a necessary component of the program, Murphy stressed the importance of the kids having someone they can count on all the time to provide consistency. It was established that half of Figgs' salary is paid by FCPS, the other half is funded by LFUCG. They continue to work on other funding sources; Murphy mentioned the new senate bill that passed, which gave money to fund social workers and mental health support within schools and pointed out the importance of doing this in tandem and partnership.

Plomin and Murphy discussed how this program is just getting started, confirming graduation will be one by one because participation in the program is confidential. Murphy said they hope to find resources for the kids' next steps as well. Plomin pointed out how mentorship will help sustain what they learned in the program. J. Brown talked about *You Matter, Kentucky!* and asked how the board can be more supportive. As an example, Murphy mentioned raising funds for an end-of-the-year event to show the kids something outside of being in the court system. JTC's first full board meeting is in December.

Motion by Baxter to make this committee item an annual update; seconded by Sheehan. The motion passed without dissent.

### **III. Housing Rehabilitation Program**

J. Brown said he put this item in committee to review some recent enhancements to the Housing Rehabilitation Program based on recommendations from the Task Force on Neighborhoods in Transition and the Mayor's Commission on Racial Justice and Equity. Charlie Lanter, Director of Grants and Special Programs, first explained HRP, which provides loans and deferred loans, up to \$35,000, to rehabilitate homes. Some of the eligibility requirements to participate in the program include owner-occupied homes and properties that don't exceed \$187,000 in value. Funds can cover projects like roof replacements and repairing Code Enforcement violations; there are a few types of repairs that don't count towards the \$35,000 investment limit.

Lanter said the program is federally funded with Community Development Block Grant and HOME funds. He showed a breakdown of program funding since FY19, which separated direct benefit funds from operating expenses. Only eight homes were completed in FY21 (due to the pandemic). Lanter reviewed the status of 13 homes that are nearing completion or in process; \$1.25M remains available for direct assistance. Participants on the waitlist currently have to wait six to eight months. Code Enforcement violations are suspended for applicants on the waitlist and applications that involve Code Enforcement violations are prioritized. Lanter reviewed outreach and challenges for the program, which include limited interest from contractors and managing third-party relationships between them and homeowners; federal compliance also slows down the process. He showed before and after pictures of some projects, which concluded the presentation.

Plomin talked about 62 applications on the waitlist and the possibility of incentivizing contractors. Lanter said they have explored some options like changing the purchasing process and bidding projects together to make them more lucrative. Federal funding requires each project to have three bids. They

discussed the idea of collaborating with groups like Habitat for Humanity or churches; Lanter said this can be difficult because of federal compliance requirements, particularly for small nonprofits. He expects the backlog of applicants to come down in the coming months.

Sheehan asked about the waitlist and prioritizing applications, confirming code enforcement violations is the only factor that prioritizes applications. Lanter explained another common way people get in the program is when they have an emergency, for example, their water heater goes out. Those situations can be resolved under the Emergency Repair Program (a program designed to repair one issue, up to \$5,000); many participants who participate in this program also participate in HRP. They discussed how the current wait time is up slightly from the recent past but it has been as long as one to two years at times.

Moloney asked about the funds reaching everyone on the waitlist. Lanter explained this program receives a new award every year, including \$1M in the spring; he is not concerned about having enough funds. They reviewed preliminary steps to determine eligibility before a property is added to the waitlist. Moloney talked about mixing HOME and CDBG funds, which Lanter said those funds are mixed now and projects are assigned to the most appropriate fund. They discussed situations when \$35,000 won't cover the costs of all the repairs needed and the possibility of rebuilding a new home on the lot. This was explored a while back with Habitat for Humanity but it would come with a significant cost and therefore program would serve fewer homes. Lanter said the appraised value cannot exceed \$187,000 in the HOME program, which is becoming a challenge in Lexington.

J. Brown talked about how recently added funds to the program hasn't put a dent in the waitlist or the wait time, largely due to the pandemic, supply chain shortages, and contracting the work. Lanter said they can look into the possibility of bundling projects to make the jobs more appealing for contractors. LFUCG sets the maximum amount that can be invested. The ceiling for the appraised value post-rehabilitation for HOME funds is set by HUD. J. Brown talked about increasing the maximum investment amount per home to \$50,000, which Lanter explained you have to be careful and consider the total property value. Lanter experienced his first case where a home did not qualify because it was over the maximum appraised value. The discussion shifted to complaints about the program; J. Brown questioned if there is a way to lift the burden on LFUCG by partnering with other agencies. Lanter compared LFUCG to the bank in this program, who provides the financing. They do their best to educate homeowners and contractors but Lanter isn't sure partnering with an agency will resolve those issues.

Kay established that there are roughly 300 homes with a property value under \$125,000, which the division mails letters to about HRP. This made him question how we continue to house people at the lower end of the economic spectrum. He said we need to think differently about what's possible in homeownership programs. Moloney mentioned that the Department of Local Government distributes CDBG and HOME funds to local nonprofits. He agreed we should look into partnering with other agencies since we have a hard time getting contractors. J. Brown said he would like to leave this item in committee.

#### **IV. Items Referred to Committee**

Motion by Plomin to remove the *overview of CASA of Lexington (current and future projects)* item from committee; seconded by J. Brown. The motion passed without dissent.

Motion by Moloney to remove the *on-call/call-back policy* item from committee; seconded by F. Brown. The motion passed without dissent.

Motion by Moloney to remove the *creation of an arts and entertainment authority and amendment to KRS 67a* item from committee, seconded by F. Brown. The motion passed without dissent.

Motion by Plomin to adjourn (at 2:10 pm); seconded by LeGris. The motion passed without dissent.

Meeting materials: <https://lexington.legistar.com/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=903797&GUID=DBFC94DB-F073-4D40-B8F5-E55931535582&Options=info|&Search>

Recording of the meeting: [https://fucg.granicus.com/player/clip/5470?view\\_id=4&redirect=true](https://fucg.granicus.com/player/clip/5470?view_id=4&redirect=true)

HBA 1/4/22