



Richland County Council  
Coronavirus AD Hoc Committee Meeting  
**MINUTES**  
September 19, 2023 – 2:30 PM  
Council Chambers  
2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Gretchen Barron, Chair, Jason Branham, and Chakisse Newton

OTHERS PRESENT: Michelle Onley, Sarah Harris, Leonardo Brown, Anette Kirylo, Patrick Wright, Dan Cole, Stacey Hamm, Dante Roberts, Abhijit Deshpande, Jennifer Wladischkin, and Ashiya Myers

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairwoman Gretchen Barron called the meeting to order at approximately 2:30 PM.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
  - a. June 27, 2023 – Ms. Barron moved to approve the minutes as distributed, seconded by Mr. Branham.  
In Favor: Branham, Barron, and Newton  
The vote in favor was unanimous.
3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** – Mr. Branham moved to adopt the agenda as published, seconded by Ms. Barron.  
In Favor: Branham, Barron, and Newton  
The vote in favor was unanimous.
4. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/ACTION**
  - a. Small Business Category Considerations – Ms. Barron stated in the past several months, this committee, along with Council, put out \$16M to local non-profits and small business owners. All categories except Small Business, Youth and Recreation, and Affordable Housing have been awarded. Regarding Affordable Housing, those funds have been disbursed in another portion of our budget. We will come back at a later date to discuss the plans for those funds and how we want to disseminate them. We will also have to come back and revisit how we would like to move forward with the Youth and Recreation Services category. At today's meeting, she is requesting staff to update the committee on what we received and the recommendations we received from Guidehouse. After that, a discussion about potential opportunities to disburse the funds. When we get into the specifics of the businesses, we will go into Executive Session.

The Assistant County Administrator, Lori Thomas, stated when Guidehouse began the process, we had approximately 140 applicants in the Small Business category that requested over \$10M. However, in Guidehouse's process, there were two components. First was a risk stratification. The risk stratification was based on Guidehouse's requirements to ensure the County would not put itself at significant risk by affording specific projects. The scale was 1 – 25, with 25 being the best you could get. The lower the score, the riskier it was for the County. In the risk stratification, we only had 14 applicants in the Small Business category that were 15 or greater. When the scores were compiled, based on the scoring rubric, the scores in this area were somewhat low. Since then, we have been trying to determine another methodology to stratify these results. Based on that, Guidehouse recommended reimbursement for a portion of lost revenue could be a consideration for the businesses. Most of the applicants on file did not disclose their lost revenue or enough information to disseminate the lost revenue. So, we started looking for other resources to come to a determination.

Ms. Barron indicated the committee has been provided with a list of potential applicants/grantees that could be considered. At this point, she believes it would be appropriate to go into Executive Session to discuss the private information regarding the specific businesses.

Ms. Newton moved to go into Executive Session, seconded by Ms. Barron.

In Favor: Branham, Barron, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

***The Committee went into Executive Session at approximately 2:39 PM  
and came out at approximately 3:14 PM***

Ms. Newton moved to come out of Executive Session, seconded by Ms. Barron.

In Favor: Branham, Barron, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

Mr. Branham moved to advance Caughman and Co, LLC and Thrift Store of Greenville, Inc. (dba Sunshine Thrift) to Council with a recommendation that the entities be able to move forward in the desk review process. The maximum award to each entity would not exceed \$25,000. Ms. Barron seconded the motion.

Ms. Barron stated when we look at the risk factors, the higher the risk, the greater exposure to the County, which means if this applicant defaults, the County would be responsible for paying those funds back through the General Fund. If that were to happen, the County would have to raise taxes. She maintained she was adamant about awarding something in this category. She indicated that she would have applied if she had not been on Council. She wants to ensure that we put forth the effort to get the funds back into the hands of the community.

Mr. Branham inquired if the amounts requested by the entities are public information.

Ms. Thomas indicated the amounts requested were not a part of the public agenda packet.

Ms. Barron stated Caughman & Co. requested \$60,000, and Thrift Store of Greenville, Inc. requested \$49,920.

Mr. Branham indicated the suggested funding amount in his motion reflects the amounts the entities requested and their risk score.

Ms. Newton noted for those businesses that did not receive funding, the County has to adhere to strict guidelines. She requested staff to speak about how the desk review process will work.

Ms. Sarah Harris, Director of Grants, indicated the County has worked with the third-party vendor Guidehouse to establish guidelines, which are strictly based upon U. S. Treasury standards. She welcomed businesses to contact her as she understands it has been a complicated process. She noted we did not reach a lot of the scores necessary for this particular process; therefore, it has been refined. Once the selected candidates move to the desk review process, Guidehouse will evaluate the criteria of additional supporting documentation for financial purposes. We will be looking for if the business lost significant amounts of funding during this time. They will move on to see if the business is qualified to manage a grant. The final guideline is complex; therefore, Guidehouse has assisted the County with that process.

In Favor: Branham, Barron, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

5. **NEXT STEPS** – Ms. Barron noted the committee’s recommendation on this item will be forwarded to Council for action. She indicated at the committee’s next meeting, they will begin to discuss how to move forward with the Affordable Housing and Youth and Recreation categories.
6. **STAFF UPDATES** – Ms. Harris stated there have been two rounds of desk reviews. There are currently 26 desk reviews in progress with Guidehouse. The desk reviews are intense, and there is a bit of back and forth to acclimate the entities to the grant process and gather information. Her goal is to complete the desk reviews in the next 5-6 weeks.

Ms. Barron inquired about the next step after the desk reviews are completed.

Ms. Harris replied once the desk reviews are completed, we will execute contract agreements with the applicant. We walk through an informational guide for each applicant. Even though she provides oversight, ARPA has its own set of conditions for reimbursement processes.

Ms. Barron noted the County is operating under federal guidelines. These are not rules the County created; therefore, we have to adhere to those things. Whereas it does appear to take a long time, she believes once the funds get into the hands of the non-profits, it will be worth it.

7. **ADJOURNMENT** – Ms. Newton moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Branham.

In Favor: Branham, Barron, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:31 PM.