



# FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE STUDY SESSION

## RE: American Rescue Act Funding

County of Champaign, Urbana, Illinois

Monday, July 19, 2021 – \*6:00 P.M. \*PLEASE NOTE TIME

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Shields-Carter Meeting Room

Brookens Administrative Center

1776 East Washington Street, Urbana, Illinois

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### MINUTES – Approved as Distributed on September 14, 2021

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**Members Present:** Samantha Carter, Stephanie Fortado, Jim Goss, Stan Harper, Mary King, Jenny Lokshin, Jim McGuire, Emily Rodriguez, Jennifer Straub, Steve Summers, Leah Taylor, Eric Thorsland

**Members Absent:** Titianna Ammons, Lorraine Cowart, Aaron Esry, Jordan Humphrey, Diane Michaels, Brad Passalacqua, Kyle Patterson, Jacob Paul, Chris Stohr, Jodi Wolken

**Others Present:** Darlene Kloeppe (County Executive), Megan Robison (Recording Secretary)

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### Agenda Items

#### I. Call to Order

Chair Fortado called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

#### II. \*Roll Call

Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

#### III. Approval of Agenda

**MOTION** by Ms. Rodriguez to approve the agenda; seconded by Mr. Goss. Upon roll call vote, the **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

#### IV. Public Participation

None

#### V. Communications

- A. Additional community suggestions
1. Urbana Park District
  2. Stephens Family YMCA
  3. Village of Rantoul

Information only

#### VI. Discussion

Ms. Fortado began the discussion section by explaining that some groups could not make it to the beginning of the meeting and would be coming later. Therefore, the order of speakers would be slightly changed.

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A. Conversation with immigrants and immigrant rights groups about critical issues in Champaign County

1. The New American Welcome Center, University YMCA - Gloria Yen

Ms. Yen stated the Welcome Center's mission and how they complete that mission by explaining some of their services. She gave the Board several statistics regarding the socioeconomic reality for many immigrants. Ms. Yen stated the ongoing needs for the immigrant community are affordable and safe housing, job training, resources to increase English proficiency, childcare and mental health services in their home language.

Ricardo Diaz also spoke about the Welcome Center. He said the census will likely show 30,000 immigrants living within our community and pointed out that 40% of them have more than a master's degree. Mr. Diaz believes that housing and building credit are a great need for the immigrant community that does not have a credit history. Lastly, he believes voting rights need to be a high priority.

Ms. Rodriguez asked for more clarification about why landlords aren't cooperating with the rental assistance programs and what data needs they will have as the census data is released. Ms. Yen explained that many of the people applying for assistance are not on the lease and that causes problems. Mr. Diaz explained that they paid a company to collect the data so that it would not be a conflict of interest. Ms. Carter asked why the Congolese community was not included in their handout and it was explained that most of them were not here until after 2011. Mr. McGuire asked about reporting requirements and they explained how many programs just require an ITIN (Individual Taxpayer Identification Number).

2. Pixan Konob' Q'anjob'al Interpreters Collective - Kora Maldonado

Ms. Lucas Mateo introduced the collective and their mission. Ms. Maldonado explained that access to information is crucial especially during a global pandemic. She explained that they are working to develop a language use survey and a glossary of words. They would like to build a language access plan. They need surveys and training institutions for this plan. They want to find a way for everyone to be able to communicate in a meaningful way.

Ms. Rodriguez asked if they have any case studies and Ms. Maldonado explained that Seattle and California have some language access plans in place. Mr. Summers asked if they collaborated with CUPHD at all and what their specific request for funding would be. Ms. Maldonado said they did work with CUPHD and they do not have a specific request at this time.

3. The Refugee Center - Lisa Wilson

Ms. Wilson began by giving some background about the Refugee center. She also explained how COVID-19 has had a disproportionate affect on the immigrant community. Their center has seen hundreds of requests for direct assistance in the recent months due to layoff notices. She stated that the most important need for her clients is affordable housing. Other needs are a way to establish credit for low-income families, interpretation services and increased communication resources in other languages. Ms. Wilson introduced some staff members from her center that would like to share their ideas on current needs. They explained the need to convince the immigrant community to get vaccinated and a way to get the educational qualifications from their country to carry over to the United States so they can work for more appropriate wages.

Ms. Fortado asked if they have had a decrease in incoming refugees because of COVID. Ms. Wilson explained that it has been fairly steady.

4. Urbana School District - Lucia Maldonado

Ms. Maldonado, Latino Family Liaison for the Urbana School District, described everything she does in her position. She explained that she assists the unaccompanied minors, minors who live here alone and work full-time along with attending school. She went on to explain how COVID has affected the families in the Urbana School District. She would like to see funds provided for food pantries to receive culturally relevant foods, for home loan down payment assistance, for Latino small business owners, and bilingual mental health service provider. She wants to see assistance for these families to become independent, not dependent.

Mr. Summers left the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Mr. Goss left the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

5. Immigrant Services of Champaign Urbana – Amanda Gray, Ben Mueller, Luis Cuza, Nils Jacobsen and invited immigrant representatives: Susan Ogwal, Lina Ntambwe, Waheedullah Asmati, Mateo Sebastian, Susana Simon Pedro, Tony Mahe, Juan Cruz

A few members of the immigrant community came to give brief declarations about their situations. These members were from Afghanistan, Congo, Guatemala, and Uganda. They explained many things they have gone through and what assistance would be best for their community. Suggestions included:

- Tutoring
- Driving lessons
- How-to manuals
- Daycare assistance
- Affordable housing
- Affordable interpreters
- Affordable transportation to immigration appointments
- Dental/Healthcare assistance
- Assistance finding comparable work
- Legal resources
- Training and to establish a messaging system to report issues

Mr. Harper left the meeting during this discussion.

Dr. Jacobsen, Mr. Miller and Mr. Cuza shared a statement on behalf of Immigrants Services of Champaign Urbana. They highlighted three important topics that would benefit from ARPA funding. Those issues are housing, daycare centers and transportation services. They gave specific details on how to use the funds for these topics.

Mr. Cuza, Cuban Immigrant/Founder of Immigrant Services, gave a little bit of his background. He wants to see assistance for families to become self-sufficient.

Mr. Miller, Executive Director of Immigrant Services, thanked the Board for taking the time to hear the needs of the immigrant community. He stressed a few things: the role of oversight, the idea of cooperatives and the need for emergency assistance funds.

**VII. Adjournment**

Chair Fortado adjourned the meeting at 9:06 p.m.