

# Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Emergency Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

**Date:** May 21, 2020  
**To:** Board of Directors  
**From:** Benjamin H. Pingree, PLACE Director  
**Subject:** Summary Minutes to Emergency Board of Directors Meeting of March 25, 2020

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## **MEMBERS PRESENT**

<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>CITY</b>
Commissioner Bryan Desloge, Chair	Commissioner Elaine Bryant, Vice-Chair
Commissioner Kristin Dozier	Mayor John Dailey
Commissioner Nick Maddox	Commissioner Curtis Richardson
Commissioner Mary Ann Lindley	Commissioner Jeremy Matlow
Commissioner Bill Proctor	Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox
Commissioner Jimbo Jackson	
Commissioner Rick Minor	

## **I. AGENDA MODIFICATIONS**

- There were no agenda modifications.

## **II. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDAED ITEMS**

- Public comments were received by email to [Comments@BlueprintIA.org](mailto:Comments@BlueprintIA.org) through 9:00 a.m. on March 25, 2020. All comments received by that time were provided to the IA Board as part of the record.

## **III. GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **Consideration of COVID-19 Economic Disaster Relief Assistance Grant Program for Small Business**

IA Board Chairman Bryan Desloge called the emergency meeting of the IA Board to order and provided an overview of the meeting procedures and guidelines, given the requirements of the Governor's Executive Order, and urgent need for the meeting associated with the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Leon County Administrator, Vince Long, provided an overview of the Blueprint program and described how Blueprint 2000 helped the local economy recover more quickly during the Great Recession. The Blueprint program uniquely positioned Leon County to address economic challenges emerging from the global COVID-19 pandemic, which presented a particular threat to small businesses. The County

Administrator and City Manager, acting as the Intergovernmental Management Committee (IMC), tasked the Office of Economic Vitality to provide the IA Board with recommendations for local support of local small business owners. The County Administrator described the assumptions inherent in the recommendations, which were detailed in the associated agenda item. The proposed OEV program was intended to be a 'bridge to the bridge,' using local resources to bridge the gap to the availability of state or federal aid for local businesses.

Tallahassee City Manager, Reese Goad, addressed the approach to protecting the health and welfare of the local community. Under the direction of the IMC, OEV staff issued a business assessment survey, business resource guide, and began to develop options to assist local businesses. The City Manager recognized that substantial aid to small businesses and unemployed workers would be provided by the federal government, but locally there was a desire to support local businesses with local resources in the immediate future.

PLACE Director, Ben Pingree, described the request by the IMC for OEV to develop options for providing relief for local businesses in the face of the looming global health crisis. The proposal considered the following objectives: protect small business, avoid initial unemployment, laser focus on small business community as backbone of economy, do not duplicate any state or federal program but rather anticipate, align, and leverage those funds, fill the gaps to accelerate recovery, and continue to monitor the evolving global situation.

Sarah Vilms, with Squire Patton Boggs, provided an overview of the proposed federal stimulus package. Earlier Wednesday morning, March 25 2020, a deal was struck at 1:30 am by the US Senate regarding proposed CARES Act legislation providing relief to small businesses, non-profits, unemployed, healthcare, etc. but still was pending a final until a vote by Congress and signature by the President, which is anticipated for the end of the week. Mrs. Vilms focused her talking points on anticipated aid to be made available to small businesses by the federal legislation, addressed funding to be made available to states, cities with populations larger than 500,000 persons, unemployment, and direct benefits to individuals.

Commissioner Rick Minor asked Mrs. Vilms to summarize the benefits within the federal legislation for employees of small businesses. Mrs. Vilms described the small business loan program included in the federal legislation would provide forgivable and collateral-free loans to cover 2.5 times monthly payroll expenses, which would allow employers to continue to maintain pay for employees through June 30, 2020. County Commissioner Vince Long added that for employees that were previously laid off or let go, unemployment programs would provide benefits for up to four months.

Commissioner Kristen Dozier asked Mrs. Vilms to discuss benefits and the application process for nonprofits. Mrs. Vilms stated that the funding available for businesses through the Small Business Administration (SBA) would be available for nonprofits. As soon as bill was enacted, it was anticipated the funds would be available within 30 days, if not sooner, through the local SBA. Commissioner Dozier also requested information on support through the federal legislation for operating costs for

nonprofits, including program and service activities. Mrs. Vilms stated that she would need to look into this further to determine the answer.

Commissioner Jeremy Matlow advocated for finding ways to support local nonprofits. Commissioner Matlow inquired about assistance through the federal legislation for sole proprietors and gig economy workers. Mrs. Vilms stated that sole proprietors were eligible for the federal loan program to be administered through local SBAs.

Mrs. Vilms stated she would send a document summarizing the federal legislation to date. Regarding the global pandemic, Mrs. Vilms noted that at least two more federal legislative actions were anticipated. Chairman Desloge noted that the summary document that Mrs. Vilms would develop would be made available to the public.

Commissioner Curtis Richardson inquired as to how information regarding the federal legislation would be disseminated to local business owners. Ben Pingree described the Business Resource Guide developed by OEV, which is updated regularly with key programs and resources as they became available. OEV was amplifying that resource constantly and uncovering every stone.

Commissioner Diane Williams-Cox inquired about previously furloughed or laid off, but could be added back onto the payroll and noted the importance of getting people back on the payroll. Mrs. Vilms could not provide an answer at that time.

Mr. Pingree summarized the anticipated benefits from the federal legislation, and presented the OEV program proposal for the COVID-19 Economic Disaster Relief Program (CEDR). Mr. Pingree discussed the CEDR program requirements as detailed in the agenda materials. Once applications were received, Mr. Pingree committed to a three to five day turnaround from application to payment for CEDR grant applicants.

Commissioner Mary Ann Lindley noted importance of long-term projects in helping revive the economy, and expressed hope that conversation would be specific to the \$1 million as proposed. Commissioner Lindley also expressed concern about relief for local nonprofits and utility relief.

Mr. Pingree acknowledged that \$1 million could have a large impact and deferred to the City regarding utility relief. Mr. Pingree acknowledged CEDR grant program was only available to local for-profit businesses, but federal resources were available to assist nonprofits.

Mayor John Dailey expressed concerns similar to Commissioner Lindley regarding nonprofits and the need for utility relief. Mayor Dailey expressed support for the \$1 million CEDR grant program and proposed a similar \$1 million program for individuals and nonprofits to provide utility relief. Mayor Dailey suggested using \$1 million in funding from the Blueprint 2000 Headwaters of St. Marks project to fund the new \$1 million grant fund for individual and nonprofit utility relief.

Mr. Pingree clarified that the \$1 million proposed for the CEDR program was from the 12% economic development portion of the sales tax. Under current laws, ordinances,

and regulations of the Blueprint IA, there was not an option to mix funding for economic development and infrastructure without a substantial amendment.

Commissioner Richardson expressed support for maintaining commitment to the Blueprint program and projects and concern for local nonprofits. He questioned how OEV staff would respond to large influx of calls coming into the office regarding these programs. Mr. Pingree stated OEV was leveraging every stakeholder, chamber of commerce, and that there was the ability to handle the incoming calls through collaboration with PLACE departments and through the City Manager and County Administrator.

Commissioner Minor noted that nonprofits account for \$3 million of local economy and that he was interested in seeing the CEDR program adapted to make nonprofits eligible. He also requested the requirement to have a utility account in good standing be relaxed to have an account not outstanding past 60 days. Regarding the clawback provision of the CEDR grant, Commissioner Minor proposed strengthening that portion to hold businesses accountable. He noted that taxpayer dollars should be used for keeping businesses in business and keeping employees on payroll. Lastly, he noted that he had heard from the business community that \$2,500 was not sufficient to be a 'bridge to the bridge' and he proposed a larger amount of money or tiered system for larger businesses. Commissioner Minor suggested grant amounts be increased as well as tiered to have the most impact.

Commissioner Williams-Cox discussed her desire to increase the amount of local grant funding and proposed at least \$2 million be made available for local businesses. She also suggested levels for grant funding dependent on the size of businesses to ensure very small businesses, such as sole-proprietors, were not competing against larger businesses. Commissioner Williams-Cox also discussed the need to focus on minority and women-owned businesses.

Commissioner Maddox supported Commissioner Richardson's comments, and supported Mayor Dailey's statement regarding nonprofits. He expressed his support for maintaining the commitment to voters regarding the use of sales tax funds for the intended projects.

Commissioner Bryant questioned the requirement regarding an active utility account. She noted that for very small businesses, utility services could be shared and some businesses might not have a utility account in their name. Mr. Pingree noted there was flexibility in the interpretation and they would ascertain where the utilities were.

Commissioner Bryant also questioned whether faith-based organizations qualified for the grant. Mr. Pingree stated that OEV researched that and, according to the Florida Constitution, they did not believe that faith-based organizations qualified for the grant. Blueprint Attorney Susan Dawson referenced Article I, Section 3 of the Florida Constitution. Commissioner Bryant stated that the City of Tallahassee previously provided support to faith-based organizations. She also expressed support for including nonprofits in local relief efforts. Commissioner Bryant also expressed support for increasing the grant amount from \$1 million but that funding did not need to come from Blueprint.

Commissioner Matlow noted that resources were available to increase the grant funding available to help local businesses. He noted that his businesses would not be applying for local funding but that local businesses and restaurants needed assistance to help survive in the near-term. Commissioner Matlow agreed with Commissioner Minor that \$2,500 was not enough to help most small businesses and suggested a \$5,000 grant amount. He also agreed with previous suggestions for a tiered structure to the grant amounts. Commissioner Matlow also supported Mayor Dailey's suggestion for utility relief. Noting that some small businesses might not be interested in taking on additional debt, he questioned the grant requirement regarding the state/federal loan application, as well as the utility account in good standing requirement. Commissioner Matlow also stated that he supported future phases of support for local businesses, including grants and loans.

Commissioner Dozier expressed support for the current grant proposal and noted that additional staff might be needed to assist with grant application and getting the word out. She noted that she wanted to see current commitments upheld, such as Project Juggernaut, but did not want to make any further large dollar commitments. Commissioner Dozier also expressed support for grant amount tiers, increasing grant amounts to \$5,000, and providing flexibility. She requested details on the loan review committee, which could be provided via email by staff later. Commissioner Dozier questioned whether the City was developing a program to provide utility relief. She also suggested the IA Board meet again in the coming weeks to continue the discussion and monitor relief efforts.

Mr. Pingree stated that OEV was focused on leveraging state funds and had substantial resources to assist with this effort. He noted that he would work with the IMC to schedule a future IA Board meeting. Mr. Pingree noted that staff, and not a committee, would review the grant applications and that training was scheduled for the following morning, with speed being of the essence for the program.

Commissioner Proctor supported an additional \$1 million for 'Phase 2' of grant funding and noted that additional funds might be necessary depending on the length of the pandemic impacts. Commissioner Proctor suggested the Leon County community deserved a response to the federal government relief stipulation that only communities over 500,000 people qualified for aid per the federal stimulus. He also discussed his records from a January 2014 meeting, which noted the discussion regarding the percentage allocation from the sales tax for economic development. He expressed a need for flexibility regarding local relief using economic development dollars, and noted additional funds would likely be necessary. Commissioner Proctor also proposed a 50/50 Corona Relief utility bill relief program, which would reduce utility bills by 50% for qualified applicants. Commissioner Proctor noted that he spoke with, and received a letter from, the leadership at Bond and Neighborhood Medical Center regarding the impacts of the Covid-19 virus. He requested the City and County agenda them to hear their requests as these organizations support local efforts to battle the health crisis.

Commissioner Jackson noted that 11% of Leon County is employed by nonprofit organizations and that at some point the City and County Commissions needed to consider these organizations. He acknowledged that small business owners were the

backbone of the Leon County community and that any resources that could be made available would be valuable. Commissioner Jackson agreed with Commissioner Lindley that this was a step in the right direction.

Commissioner Desloge suggested scheduling an IA Board meeting sooner than 30-days but noted that the current situation changed daily. He suggested the IA Board consider the current grant program proposal, which could act as a catalyst in the near term and reconsider additional measures as necessary in the future.

City Manager Reese Goad noted that the City of Tallahassee was the first in the state to suspend disconnection of utility accounts for 60-days; since that time, more structure was added, including repayment options. Regarding utility relief, the City Manager discussed that the City was not the only utility provider in the community and the proposal should be fair for all service providers. The electric utility funds had a requirement to be used uniformly, meaning the City could not provide relief to one household without providing it to all. However, funds from other sources could be applied in such a manner as a relief program. Currently, the City Manager stated that the City was working with any persons or businesses that needed help or relief due to the health crisis.

County Administrator Vince Long noted that staff would need three to four weeks to analyze the federal legislation and determine local benefits and gaps. Regarding resources available at OEV, he noted that revenues at OEV have only accrued for the past three months. Bonding was an option to provide additional dollars for local relief, but it was not an expeditious option.

**Commissioner Jackson moved, seconded by Commissioner Desloge, approval Option 1.**

**Option 1: Approve the COVID-19 Economic Disaster Relief (CEDR) Assistance Grant Program for Small Business in the amount of \$1 million and approve the allocation of funds from the City/County payback to the CEDR grant program.**

Regarding the next meeting date, Commissioner Dozier suggested three weeks and expressed support for City and County Commission meetings prior to that date to provide the opportunity to discuss their own efforts prior to reconvening as the IA Board. The City Manager noted the City Commission was meeting on April 8, and the County Administrator noted the County Commission was scheduled to meet on April 28. Commissioner Desloge expressed support for a meeting in the near term, on April 14 for the County Commission and a meeting of the IA Board within 30 days. He also requested a daily update from OEV on grant progress.

Commissioner Dozier requested OEV staff address comments regarding grant requirements, such as strengthening the clawback provision. She also requested the program include tiers.

**Commissioner Dozier offered a substitute motion, seconded by Commissioner Matlow, to increase the CEDR grant amount to \$5,000.**

Commissioner Matlow expressed support for increasing the grant program amount to \$2 million, as well as a tiered structure for future consideration. He also expressed support for Utility relief and nonprofit support.

Commissioner Proctor expressed support for a Phase 2 or potentially a Phase 3 for relief efforts. He also expressed support for increasing the grant program amount to \$2 million. He noted that applications were dependent on utility relationships, which extends to residential customers, and he hoped the City recognized the needs of individuals during this crisis. Commissioner Proctor requested the Mayor and Commissioner Williams-Cox put their earlier suggestions on paper so Commissioner Proctor could review prior to the next meeting.

County Administrator Long noted that staff had considered tiered options, noting that with \$1 million there was the possibility to accomplish two requests of the IA Board: to tier awards and increase amount to \$5,000. Tiers could be structured as follows: 1-10 employees: \$1,500, 11-25 employees: \$2,500, and 25 – 50 employees: \$5,000.

Commissioner Dozier clarified her suggestion was not for tiered amounts, but rather different categories for types or sizes of businesses. She noted that a business with five employees could need \$5,000.

Commissioner Bryant expressed support for increasing grant awards to \$5,000 and supported a tiered approach, as offered by Commissioner Williams-Cox. She noted her desire to disburse funds quickly to local businesses. Commissioner Bryant suggested the three local chambers of commerce become part of the effort to get word out about this grant opportunity.

Commissioner Maddox expressed support for the substitute motion and reiterated need for local assistance for businesses to navigate local, state, and federal funding opportunities. He supported adding staff to support this effort.

Commissioner Williams-Cox supported increasing the grant program funding to \$2-million.

Commissioner Minor proposed increasing the grant program funding to \$2 million and doubled the tier amounts offered by the County Administrator: 1-10 employees: \$3,000, 11-25 employees: \$5,000, and 25 – 50 employees: \$10,000. Commissioner Desloge noted that the IA Aboard needed to dispense with the current substitute motion before another could be offered. Commissioner Minor reiterated that he felt his proposal was a strategic use of sales tax dollars that would allow more businesses to survive.

Commissioner Richardson reiterated the need to get the word out about the current grant opportunities. The current OEV proposal was a 'first come, first serve' and in his opinion, some people may not find out about it until after all the money was allocated. He expressed the desire to address support for nonprofits in the near-term. Commissioner Richardson supported the original motion and the tiered approach.

Mayor Dailey requested clarity as to the motion on the table, and it was clarified that Commissioner Dozier's motion was the current motion on the table. He noted that the City had to provide utility relief to all individuals to comply with applicable laws. Mayor Dailey disagreed with the interpretation that faith-based organizations could not qualify for financial aid, stating the City provided support to faith-based organizations for decades. He expressed his support for the motion on the table, but after that motion was dispensed of by the IA Board, he would proposed an additional \$1-million be allocated to provide \$250,000 in relief for non-profits and \$750,000 in individual relief for people who have lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic.

Commissioner Lindley thanked Commissioner Matlow for his perspective and service an affected business owner, and reminded the IA Board that Leon County was the first county in Florida to consider relief for local businesses as the 'bridge to a bridge.' She noted she would support the substitute motion for \$5,000 and liked the County Administrator's approach for tiers. She did not support adding another \$1 million to the CEDR program. Regarding non-profits, Commissioner Lindley hoped they could be assisted with utility relief and that the IA Board would take up the issue in the future.

Commissioner Desloge noted his support for the substitute motion and the tiered structure. He also agreed with Commissioner Richardson that communication needed to be swift and broad reaching. He asked Commissioner Dozier to clarify her opinion regarding the tiered approach. Commissioner Dozier that noted she was more focused on reducing competition between businesses through the intention of having categories of businesses. However, she was willing to consider that at a future meeting. She noted that \$1,500 seemed low to assist businesses and recommended a \$2,500 base and \$5,000 maximum.

Commissioner Desloge asked the County Administrator to provide information on the tiered structure. County Administrator noted that the number of grants might be reduced with the two-tier approach. Commissioner Desloge asked Commissioner Dozier to reconsider the three tiers as previously described by the County Administrator.

Commissioner Dozier noted that six commissioners expressed support for increasing the grant amount to \$5,000 and she wanted to move forward on this issue. She also supported coming back to meet in two to three weeks. Commissioner Desloge asked the IA Board to discuss further the tiered approach.

**Commissioner Jackson withdrew his original motion and noted his support for increasing the amount to \$5,000.**

Commissioner Williams-Cox expressed her support for increasing the amount to \$5,000 and noted that her intention was to have a mixture of different sized businesses receiving grant funding, not sole proprietors competing against larger businesses. Commissioner Desloge noted that increasing grant amounts to \$5,000 would limit the number of businesses that would receive assistance. Commissioner Williams-Cox noted that made it incumbent on them to get the word out regarding the availability of grant funds.

Commissioner Minor stated that the goal of the grant program was to help as many businesses and their employees as possible survive the current crisis until state and federal funds are available. He supported the tiered structure.

Commissioner Lindley noted her support for the tiered structure to ensure the grant dollars went to as many people as possible.

**Commissioner Lindley offered a substitute motion, seconded by Commissioner Minor, for \$1 million grant program, based on the number of employees, with tiers structured as follows: 1-10 employees: \$1,500, 11-25 employees: \$2,500, and 25 – 50 employees: \$5,000.**

Commissioner Matlow stated that \$5,000 was the minimum he felt businesses needed to survive the current crisis, especially the hospitality industry. Noting that the program, as proposed, was too detailed when the focus should be getting money in the hands of local businesses. He inquired about the number of employees required to qualify and whether it was specific to part-time or full-time. Commissioner Matlow stated he did not support the tiered structure and that he would support an amount of \$5,000 for impacted businesses.

Commissioner Desloge restated the substitute motion and called for a vote.

**The substitute motion made by Commissioner Lindley, passed 8-4, with Commissioners Matlow, Williams-Cox, Proctor, and Dozier dissenting.**

**Mayor Dailey moved, seconded by Commissioner Matlow, to allocate \$1 million specifically for individuals and nonprofits seeking utility assistance, \$750,000 available for individuals and \$250,000 for nonprofits, with grant amounts for individuals to be set at \$250 and \$500 for nonprofits.**

**Commissioner Richardson called the question, seconded by Commissioner Matlow. The calling of the question passed 8-4, with Commissioners Matlow, Lindley, Proctor, and Dozier dissenting.**

Commissioner Maddox noted that he was the executive director of an area nonprofit and inquired as to whether or not he should declare a conflict and abstain from voting. The Blueprint Attorney directed that if Commissioner Maddox felt there was a conflict, or the appearance of one, he should not vote.

County Administrator Vince Long spoke to Mayor Dailey's motion to add \$1 million in grant funding. He noted that OEV staff could provide the analysis showing that the funding would need to come from previously approved projects. Referencing page 71 of the agenda item, he noted that OEV staff could walk the IA Board through the line items and have the Commissioners specify where the additional funds would come from.

Mayor Dailey requested confirmation that \$2.5 million was available from the Blueprint 2000 program line item for the Headwaters of the Saint Marks Project.

County Administrator Long noted that the capital project funds were not statutorily authorized for economic development purposes. Mayor Dailey stated that he had no objection to the funds coming from OEV budget.

Commissioner Maddox recused himself from the discussion and any vote due to the appearance of a conflict.

**The motion failed 7-4 with and Commissioners Lindley, Proctor, Dozier, and Desloge dissenting; Commissioner Maddox recused himself from the vote.**

**Ben Pingree clarified that the vote failed due to the weighted voting structure used by the IA Board. The five members of the Tallahassee City Commission had a weighted vote of seven each. The seven members from the Leon County Board of County Commissioners had a weighted vote of five each. Simply stated, a successful vote required four affirmative votes by County Commissioners for a motion to carry.**

Commissioner Dozier stated she would support an agenda item for utility relief and other support at a future IA Board meeting. She requested that the County Administrator provide additional information on Community Human Service Partnership and other operational dollars to the County Commissioners prior to the April 14, 2020, Board of County Commissioners meeting. She also inquired as to the method for following up on comments, questions, and suggestions raised throughout the IA Board meeting. Commissioner Desloge stated the IA Board would receive the minutes, which encapsulated those comments and suggestions of the March 25, 2020, meeting at the next IA Board meeting.

Commissioner Matlow stated that he thought it important that when making budgetary decisions, the IA Board direct staff to bring back options for IA Board consideration. Commissioners should not be selecting specific budget line items but rather to direct policy. He also noted that many restaurants in Tallahassee have fewer than 25 employees, have been severely impacted.

**Commissioner Matlow moved, seconded by Lindley, for staff to prepare an agenda item for the next IA Board meeting (date to be determined) to include a staff summary of the economic impacts to local restaurants in the hospitality industry with fewer than 25 employees and possible funding opportunities to assist them through the current challenges.**

**The motion passed 12-0.**

#### IV. **ADJOURN**

**The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.**

*The next Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Board of Directors Meeting  
is scheduled for:*

**Wednesday, April 15, 2020, at 1:00 p.m.**