OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENT

Minutes

October 22, 2025
10:00 am

Location: City Council Chamber

In attendance: Council Members Amaro, Arias, J. Carlucci, Clark-Murray (late arrival), Peluso, Salem

Also: Carla Lopera and Mary Staffopoulos, OGC; Phillip Peterson, Auditor's Office; Brandon Russell, Council Research; Brittany Norris, Administration

Meeting Convened: 10:02 am

Meeting Call to Order:

Chair Arias convened the meeting.

Introductions and Welcome

Chair Arias welcomed the group and called for introductions.

Public Comment:

Daniel Nunn, an attorney with Nelson Mullins representing the Together Eastside Coalition, spoke in support of the non-profit model, which leads to better community engagement and enables additional fundraising. He opposed a two-step model and stated that the first governing board should set the vision for the eventual organization. He also supported the representation of each of the five neighborhoods on the board.

Daniel Sanchez, Together Eastside Coalition, supported a two-step model, stating it best prepares the community to distribute CBA dollars responsibly.

Robyn Cenizal yielded her time.

Leslie Jean-Bart, Together Eastside Coalition, supported a two-step model, citing the need for a unique approach. She stated that the Cultural Council had existed for several years before becoming a City agency.

Latavia Harris supported the two-step model because of its higher level of structure, accountability, and reporting. She added that it was a blend of community engagement and structure.

Ariane L. Randolph supported the non-profit model for distribution of CBA funds, citing decades of broken promises. She provided examples of other cities' CBAs that use similar structures for dispersal of funds.

Maya Francis supported the Cultural Council (non-profit) model, which she believed would keep the community's voice a priority and afford greater flexibility. She also stated that the structure provided independence while aligning with City priorities.

Alice Nelson supported the two-phase model.

Michelle Braun, Chair of Lift Jax, asked the Committee to approve the non-profit model, as it provides greater autonomy while ensuring accountability. She also requested approval of a TIF.

James Matchett explained that the two-phase model will provide the community with guidance and accountability in the first phase, preparing them better for the more autonomous, community-led second phase.

Denise Hunt supported the two-phase model, expressing the need for accountability and transparency.

Nigelle Kohn, of Florida Avenue Main Street, spoke about misinformation that has led to division and disagreement.

Suzanne Pickett, President and CEO of Historic Eastside CDC, supported the Cultural Council model.

Kim Pryor supported a two-phase model because it provides more oversight and preparation for community members during the first phase to ensure a successful second phase.

Tina Worth supported the non-profit model, noting greater flexibility with significant oversight.

Dawn Curling, co-founder and executive director of the Melanin Market, supported the two-phase model.

Avery McKnight expressed his support for Travis Williams as a trusted leader.

LaWanda King-Butler expressed her support for the 501(c)(3) model and believes there is sufficient expertise in the community to make it successful.

Draft Legislation Establishing the Eastside Grants Programs Grant Process and Discussion

Brittany Norris from the Administration stated that there is no perfect model, but the Administration supports the non-profit model. She noted that the models share many positive aspects regarding oversight. She said that both also have associated administrative costs, with the non-profit having more flexibility. She also stated that the non-profit can offer a variety of grants. She noted the potential of subcommittees to provide the broad expertise needed to address the various issues that may come before the organization.

She stated that the board and their creation of bylaws would allow them to address their needs more responsively than a City board.

CM Peluso provided background on the Cultural Council/non-profit model. He stated he wants something that works well, and highlighted calls for a community-led process. He anticipates that the future CBA board will receive many grant proposals of differing dollar amounts. After reviewing the Opioid Settlement Grant (OSG) awardees, he noted that they are often larger organizations with more capacity to process grants. He expressed concern that using the OSG model would continue to reward larger organizations rather than smaller ones with less capacity. He also added that the OSG model would rely on the City processing grants, which could take longer. He continued, stating the Cultural Council model, in contrast, would be quicker and easier. He outlined some concerns that remain with the non-profit model and suggested a grant navigator for the eventual organization to assist grant seekers. He noted that the community desires a community-led process and is ultimately supportive of what the community wants. Still, he added that the OSG model appears to be more government-controlled than community-led. He expressed concern for what would happen at the end of the two years when the City board transitions to a non-profit board. He recommended pursuing the Cultural Council model.

CM Salem asked Mary Staffopoulous, Office of General Counsel, if the City can accept funds into an account for CBA purposes. She affirmed that it was true and added that there was no prohibition on the City fundraising for public purposes. He then stated that the CBA dollars are intended for core city functions, unlike the Cultural Council's funds; he asked whether that difference mattered to OGC in how the money is handled. She stated that she had had conversations with the Government Operations Department, which viewed the matter from a contract administration perspective. She noted that the OSG model provided greater oversight of funds to ensure the City met its obligations under the CBA.

CM Salem noted that the current staff for the OSG program consists of two employees and agreed with CM Peluso's assessment that recipients of the program's grants tend to be larger organizations. He added that they have added smaller awards for that program in response, and the same could be done with whatever the Committee chooses for the CBA dollars. He stated that there are stringent requirements for the OSG model, and that they should be, since these are public dollars. He continued, stating that there could be multiple award cycles rather than one, as with OSG. He indicated his support for the OSG model, at least for now.

CM J. Carlucci stated he favored whichever model worked best for the community and stakeholders. Comparing the two models using the spreadsheet provided by the Administration, he said he was leaning more toward the Cultural Council model, though he agreed there were benefits to both. He asked Chair Arias whether the Committee was looking to build consensus around a particular model or was taking up amendments to either. Chair Arias stated his intent to vote on a specific model and then discuss changes. CM J. Carlucci stated he wanted to go with the Cultural Council model and had amendments to offer.

Ms. Norris noted that appropriations must go through the City Council, which could add time to any expenditure, making the Cultural Council model more efficient. She said the Administration was concerned about accountability and pointed out that there are multiple avenues for oversight through the Cultural Council. She suggested annual or quarterly reports from the non-profit organization. She noted the community's requests for training for the eventual board and provided examples of how those administering and requesting the grant funds can be trained. She also stated that there will be subject-matter experts from the City available to help. She concluded that, in either instance, the legislation can be amended to reflect the City Council's will.

CM Peluso questioned what a turnover in the two-phase model would look like, expressing doubt that it would occur. CM Amaro stated that he did not want to add another layer of bureaucracy to the City that would also slow the availability of the funds. He said that he desired accountability but disagreed with the two-year waiting period associated with the OSG model. He also considered administrative costs and was more sympathetic to the Cultural Council model. He also recognized the importance of having investors and other stakeholders contribute to the eventual non-profit organization's efforts.

Chair Arias stated that he was torn between the two models, noting the initial benefits of an OSG model. He said that the Cultural Council model would provide more assistance to those seeking to submit a grant proposal, which he supported. He was skeptical of the added bureaucracy of the OSG model and noted the City's additional administrative costs, particularly the cost of new staff. With the Cultural Council, the board of the proposed non-profit will make decisions and allocate funding for staff.

Regarding the proposed TIF, Chair Arias expressed his desire for those dollars to be controlled by the City since they are tax dollars. He asked Ms. Norris which model would disburse funds more quickly. She stated that the non-profit model would take longer to set up but could be more responsive once established; the OSG model would be quicker to set up but would be slower to distribute funds because of the layers of approval for each appropriation. Chair Arias stated that he was interested in a compromise where everyone wins, and initially, he believed the OSG model was the compromise. He added that there could also be a compromise with the board structure of the Cultural Council model. He stated that he would like to see attorneys representing both sides of the community's preferences provide names for the eventual board. Chair Arias asked for CM Peluso's input, since this will all occur in his district.

CM Peluso stated that there must be a compromise and that a number of names have already been provided for potential board members. He also added that he wants the eventual board offices to be in the community. He stated that they would need to coordinate with Garrett Dennis with the Administration to nail down the appointment process. Chair Arias stated he wanted four names from each side, plus the Jaguars board member, to constitute the nine-member board.

Ms. Staffopoulos reviewed the appointments as outlined in the Cultural Council/non-profit draft legislation—one mayoral appointment, two Council president appointments, one Jaguars appointment, and five members appointed by the Board of Directors from one of the five Eastside neighborhoods. She then outlined the appointments of the OSG model draft legislation—four Council President appointments, four mayoral appointments, and one from the Jaguars. She asked Chair Arias if he intended to adopt the Cultural Council model with the OSG model board structure, since that would strip the Board of Directors of the power to appoint the five representatives of the Eastside neighborhood. She added that, if that were the case, it would not mirror the structure of the Cultural Council, which decides its board.

Chair Arias stated that he liked the OSG model's appointment structure and added that they would consider the attorneys' suggestions for their appointments. Ms. Norris noted that the five board members selected from the community were a critical piece of the proposal and urged keeping the requirement that members be from the Eastside or have substantial business interests in the Eastside. Chair Arias said those will still be considerations of potential board members. Ms. Staffopoulos pointed out that the proposed change would constitute the Council dictating the structure of the board of an independent 501(c)(3), raising legal questions that require further research.

CM Amaro stated that vested interest in the community must be fundamental, as must representation from the neighborhoods, and asked how they ensure those voices are at the table. Chair Arias agreed and confirmed that those criteria will remain regardless of the ultimate board structure.
CM Salem noted he was in the minority in supporting the OSG model and conceded to move forward with the Cultural Council model, at which point changes to that model can occur through the committee process. Ms. Staffopoulos stated that the goal is for this Committee to craft and file a piece of legislation

that then moves through the legislative process. Chair Arias confirmed his intention to select one of the two models and then begin discussing amendments to the chosen model.

Action: CM Salem moved to establish consensus to move forward with draft legislation for the OSG model; no second was called.

Action: CM Peluso moved to establish consensus to move forward with the draft legislation for the Cultural Council model, which CM Clark-Murray seconded.

Ms. Staffopoulos clarified the motion on the floor and summarized the key differences between the two models for CM Clark-Murray, who arrived late at the meeting. She also reiterated to the committee that they would need to act on the motion to move forward with one of the options before discussing potential changes to the legislation.

Action: The motion to move forward with the Cultural Council model is approved, 5-1 (Clark-Murray, J. Carlucci, Peluso, Arias, Amaro in favor; Salem opposed)

Chair Arias asked if they had officially adopted the draft legislation establishing a Cultural Council. Ms. Staffopoulos stated that they have not adopted any legislation but have reached a consensus to follow the Cultural Council model and can begin making changes to the draft legislation.

CM J. Carlucci, referring to page 5 of the Cultural Council model draft legislation, asked why Public Services Grants (PSG) were not listed among the other ineligible grant programs for recipients of Eastside grant awards. Ms. Staffopoulos said that the draft was in line with how other code provisions are written, but there was no specific reason for its exclusion.

Action: CM J. Carlucci moved to add PSG to the list of ineligible grant programs.

Ms. Staffopoulos asked the Chair if he would prefer to act on each of the recommended changes as a motion or to allow each member to present their list of changes and entertain motions afterwards. He indicated his wish to take each up as a motion and seconded CM J. Carlucci's motion to add PSG to the list of ineligible grant programs.

CM Peluso expressed concern about the entire section that contains the list of ineligible grants and intended to propose an amendment to strike it. Chair Arias decided to hear from each member at this point, as some may have conflicting or complementary amendments. Ms. Staffopoulos stated that, since there was currently a motion on the floor, the committee could discuss those issues through the motion, but ultimately it was at the discretion of the Chair. She also clarified that this section of the draft legislation was adapted from similar provisions in other parts of the Code, which the City Council often waives.

Action: CM J. Carlucci moved to withdraw his motion.

Ms. Norris asked if the list of ineligible grants applied to an organization or to a specific program managed by an organization. Ms. Staffopoulos stated that the restrictions apply to the same program applying for funding from multiple sources. She added that waivers come into play when a program seeks funding from multiple sources.

CM Peluso stated that he thought a consensus had been reached to remove the separate grants committee from the legislation. Ms. Staffopoulos affirmed, adding that the grants committee's function was incorporated into the board of directors' language.

Motion: CM Peluso moved to reduce the one-dollar cash match required in the application process to 25 cents per dollar granted. Chair Arias seconded the motion.

Ms. Staffopoulos clarified that the referenced language was not about reimbursement but rather part of the application process to ensure organizations have sufficient funds to match what they are requesting. CM Amaro called for a point of order and suggested that going through each item one at a time makes sense, beginning with the Board's structure.

Action: CM Peluso tabled his motion on cash matches.

CM Salem suggested that Ms. Staffopoulos compile a list of amendments and changes discussed by the Committee for discussion and action at a future meeting. Chair Arias agreed to compile a list of amendments and stated that the Committee will not take any action on items except the board's structure.

Ms. Norris stated the Administration would be willing to facilitate meetings with Eastside community members to inform them of the board selection process. CM Peluso explained that, under the current structure, there are appointed members, and those appointed board members then decide the remaining board members, like the Cultural Council. He added that one of his recommendations was to require every board member to go through Council approval for their first two years. After those two years, the five board members representing the Eastside neighborhoods are selected by the board. Then, a fellowship or membership committee would be established to ensure that members of that community choose board members from within it.

Action: CM Peluso moved to have the entire board approved by City Council for the first two years and thereafter have the five board members representing the Eastside selected by the appointed Board of Directors, which CM Clark-Murray seconded.

CM Amaro opposed that motion. He expressed his preference for the OSG model's board structure, namely the staggered terms of board members. CM Peluso requested that community members share their thoughts. CM Salem pointed out that the City will turn over millions of dollars to this organization and thinks appointments should go before the City Council. CM Peluso stated he was amenable to his fellow committee members' suggestions and was open to withdrawing his motion.

CM Clark-Murray asked if the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization's selection process for its Citizens Advisory Committee is codified and if it can be applied here. Ms. Staffopoulos stated she was not familiar with that process. CM Clark-Murray was wondering if there was a way to use their selection process to ensure board members are properly vetted. Ms. Staffopoulos reiterated her earlier concern about the City Council appointing the entire board of an independent 501(c)(3). She also stated that they could add language to the legislation directing the board to establish a vetting process with the level of detail they see fit.

Chair Arias invited Mr. Nunn to the podium to confirm if the three placeholder board members, who were required to establish the non-profit organization, would be temporary and removed once appointed positions were selected and confirmed. Mr. Nunn confirmed they would be. He added that he shared Ms. Staffopoulos's concern with a board entirely appointed by Council. Chair Arias stated that the Council will appoint new board members and reiterated that this was part of the compromise to go with the Cultural Council.

CM Clark-Murray invited Ms. Jean-Bart. She explained that they wanted the community to be part of the board selection process to avoid politically motivated board appointments. CM Clark-Murray asked Ms.

Jean-Bart which parts of the recent discussion caused her angst. She stated that the creation of the 501(c)(3) and the selection of the initial three board members came as a surprise to her and many in the community. She also highlighted that many of the transparency and accountability measures from the OSG model could be adapted to the Cultural Council Model. She also stated that she had provided a list of seven recommended names, none of whom were selected as one of the three initial board members.

Chair Arias told Ms. Jean-Bart that he had received the list of names from her and would consider them for the final board. CM Peluso asked if the City could create its own 501(c)(3). Ms. Staffopoulos stated that the City could create its own organization, but the Cultural Council was not an example of one made by the City. CM Peluso asked if it would be a burden for the City to create its own organization for the Eastside CBA. Ms. Staffopoulos said she would need to do more research and added that a city-created organization would not have the same level of independence.

CM Salem stated his main issue was accountability and thought any structure that afforded greater government control was a great compromise. CM Peluso clarified that, though the City could create the organization, the legislation they were currently discussing would grant the organization sufficient independence. He also stated that there were many safeguards for tax dollars, regardless. Ms. Staffopoulos stated that pursuing that route would take additional time and cautioned against losing momentum by seeking a third option for which there was no precedent. Chair Arias said he did not think this was a new model. Ms. Staffopoulos clarified that it would still take time to establish a legal corporation and that she was unfamiliar with that process, which is where momentum would be lost. Chair Arias asked whether CM Peluso's proposed amendment for a City-created non-profit could be added to the list of amendments being compiled; Ms. Staffopoulos confirmed she would add it to the list for later review.

CM Amaro asked if there was a time by which the Committee was supposed to conclude. Ms. Staffopoulos stated that it exists until the beginning of the next Council year, at which point the new Council President could decide to continue its work. Chair Arias stated he wanted the legislation approved by the end of the year so they can begin distributing funds to the eventual organization at the start of next year.

CM Salem asked if Ms. Staffopoulos could meet with each member to gather their proposed amendments. Chair Arias encouraged each member to submit those amendments to her and proposed a future meeting to discuss and act on those amendments. Chair Arias asked Ms. Staffopoulos to put the committee in the correct posture for the remainder of the meeting. She stated there were no motions on the floor and that she had been compiling a list of proposed changes throughout the meeting. She said they would ultimately need to tweak and approve a draft piece of legislation, which would then be filed at the special committee's direction.

Action: Chair Arias moved to amend the board structure to include four members chosen by the Council President, four chosen by the Mayor, with community feedback and final approval by the City Council, and a member selected by the Jaguars, which was seconded.

CM Peluso asked Ms. Staffopoulos whether the tax structure would be affected by the City Council's selection of board members. She stated she would need to research that further to provide an answer. She also clarified the motion and asked whether they still wanted to include the requirement that board members reside in or have substantial economic business interests within the Eastside, with the intention that they come from each of the five neighborhoods, with no more than three members from the same neighborhood. Chair Arias affirmed.

CM Salem asked how the terms were structured. Ms. Staffopoulos stated that the Mayor and Council President appointments had staggered three-year terms. Ms. Norris expressed concern about the residence requirement being applied to all eight board members, as it could preclude subject-matter experts from serving on the board. CM J. Carlucci asked whether the Jaguars only wanted one representative on the Board, provided they contributed a substantial amount of money. It was confirmed that they only wanted one.

CM Peluso stated that residency should be a goal with board membership rather than a requirement that there be one from each neighborhood. Ms. Staffopoulos reiterated that the current language of the legislation states that the board shall endeavor to have a representative from each neighborhood, with no more than three members coming from the same neighborhood. CM Clark-Murray stated that most of the board should come from the Eastside.

Chair Arias stated that the next meeting will be on November 13, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. Ms. Staffopoulos repeated the motion on the floor regarding board structure, which was seconded.

Action: Chair Arias's motion to amend the board structure passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned: 12:00 p.m.

Minutes: Brandon Russell, Council Research
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