



HEALTH, EDUCATIONAL, AND HOUSING FACILITY BOARD

**City of Chattanooga, Tennessee
MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES**

**John P. Franklin City Council Building
Council Assembly Room
1000 Lindsay Street
Chattanooga, TN 37402**

**for
September 20, 2021
12:30 p.m.**

Present were Board Members: Hicks Armor (Chair), Richard Johnson (Secretary), Charles D. Paty, Alexa LeBoeuf, and Johnika Everhart. Absent were Gregg Gentry (Vice-Chair) and Dr. John W. Schaerer.

Also present were Phillip Noblett (Counsel to the Board); Tony Sammons, Jermaine Freeman, and Sandra Gober (ECD); Rachel Howard; Charolette Brand; Carol Hunter; Bo Drake (Chattanooga State); Charles Wood (Chattanooga Chamber Foundation); and Debra Socia (The Enterprise Center).

Mr. Armor called the meeting to order, confirmed the meeting advertisement, and established that a quorum was present to conduct business with five members present.

MINUTES APPROVAL FOR THE AUGUST 25, 2021, MEETING

On motion of Mr. Paty, seconded by Mr. Johnson, the minutes of the August 25, 2021, meeting, were unanimously approved as submitted.

There was no person present wishing to address the Board.

APPOINTMENT OF BOARD SECRETARY

On motion of Mr. Paty, seconded by Ms. Everhart, the Board appointed Mr. Johnson as Board Secretary.

1. Mr. Armor presented the next order of business: **“A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CHAIR OR VICE-CHAIR TO EXECUTE A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE ENTERPRISE CENTER, CHATTANOOGA CHAMBER FOUNDATION, AMERICAN JOB CENTER CHATTANOOGA, AND CHATTANOOGA STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, IN SUBSTANTIALLY THE FORM ATTACHED, TO ASSIST ADULTS IN ACHIEVING A HIGHER LEVEL OF LEARNING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR INTELLECTUAL AND MENTAL CAPACITIES AND TO DEVELOP GRANT FUNDING PROCEDURES FOR HIGHER EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS THROUGH THE EMPACT WORKFORCE INITIATIVE.” (HEB2021-09)**

Mr. Noblett stated that this is a partnership between a number of entities in the City. When Volkswagen first came to Chattanooga many years ago, there was a Memorandum of Understanding with the State whereby there was a training facility established by Chattanooga State for people to learn how to operate on vehicles where there was not training before. This is an opportunity that will be provided for folks to learn more about google computer training for adults that may have that need.

Mr. Jermaine Freeman, Director of Economic Development, welcomed the Board and is joined by his colleagues with the City who work for the Office of Family Empowerment who have been working on this project. Mr. Freeman also introduced Mr. Tony Sammons, Administrator for Community Development; Mr. Charles Wood, Director of Economic Development for the Chattanooga Chamber Foundation; Bo Drake, Director of Economic and Workforce Development for Chattanooga State Community College; and Debra Socia, CEO and Executive Director of The Enterprise Center.

Mr. Freeman explained that the County Administration is extremely passionate about doing everything to skill and equip our workforce in our city to help wages grow and to help raise the overall skill level for our citizens. As part of that process and as part of that effort, one of the things they have done is to work with area community partners to identify programs and initiatives that can help people to gain skills, education, and credentials to then use and get a job that pays a livable wage and can potentially serve as the beginning of a long-term career. This is important to the Kelly Administration not only because of the benefit to the workforce but also because it serves as an economic development marker for us. We have the ability to use workforce development as a key tool of how we recruit companies and how we grow and target the companies that we want to have in our city. Building and equipping a skilled tech workforce is an extremely important component of that process.

As we are involved in the recruitment of companies and in trying to keep companies who are already in Chattanooga that are growing, workforce development, and the skills of the talents of workforce are becoming extremely important and becoming more and more involved in the conversation we have with employers. The initiative today from the Office of Family Empowerment is one of their first efforts and initiatives to move into that space and to begin to really skill and equip our workforce on the tech side. Our City Council approved the resolution last week for the funding coming from the federal government to be transferred over to the HEB which can then be used if approved today to launch the start in early October.

We have a partnership here with Chattanooga State, The Enterprise Center, and Chattanooga Chamber Foundation which is a part of the MOU.

Mr. Freeman stated this is a multi-cohort commitment which will take place over the span of potentially the next year to year and a half with an initial commitment between 30 and 40 participants. The funding the Board is being asked to approve today is for 30 participants to start the cohort. The first cohort would be 10 people because of COVID and because of social distancing reasons, we cannot put 30 people in a classroom at one time. The first cohort would be initially 10 people, followed by another cohort of 10, and another to take us through the first phase.

At that point, we can evaluate and determine whether or not this is something that we as the City should continue to support, and it gives us an initiative as achieving outcomes that we want to see. Mr. Freeman is also happy to report that many of the participants who expressed interest in being a part of the first cohort are residents that live in the College Hill Courts. It is one of our areas the City sees some higher unemployment as well as lower incomes. Having the ability to have folks and put them in a program like this to raise wages and help those individuals gain new skills is extremely important.

Ms. Rachel Howard, Director of Office of Family Empowerment, and Ms. Carol Hunter, Director of Operations for Community Development and serving as the Project Manager for the Empact Initiative introduced themselves. Ms. Howard stated they are the largest social services agency in Hamilton County. The types of services they provide include legal and grant assistance. They are a community action agency and have been in place for 40 years. They were first known as Chattanooga Human Services and was changed beginning of the Berke Administration to Social Services. In January 2018, the name changed to OFE to give them a new face and underscore their revamped approach to family stability. They are mission driven and all of their program and services derive from their community means assessment to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the community as identified. They recently completed strategic planning and revised their mission statement. Their new mission is to change the lives of Hamilton County residents by collaborating with their partners and to provide support and coaching to help individuals achieve well-being and economic resilience. This program exactly exemplifies every part of their mission statement.

Ms. Howard stated that as a part of their process, they adopted a belief that shapes our culture. They believe that from time-to-time people need support to reduce material hardship, improve conditions, and help them fulfill their potential. They believe that such support should be provided through high quality integrated services that are accessible, empowering, and that recognize people's humanity, individual capacities, and challenges. They believe their support should be provided in a manner that increases people's sense of control over the trajectory of their lives with dignity and respect. They believe that all are welcome and have the right to belong in society. Belonging includes treating everyone with dignity, value, and being seen in the community. They reject dehumanizing forms of marginalization and discrimination that treat people as "other". Belonging means everyone has a voice. They believe that voices of all community members, especially the marginalized members, should be heard, raised up, and used to guide our service delivery, our efforts to improve, and the results we are trying to achieve.

At the end of 2019, the Berke Administration was hosting a series of civic dinners throughout the community designed to get people around the table and have conversation about their community challenges they were facing, and what can make things better. A lot of these conversations focused on economic development in the workforce, and the pandemic took place and started to take shape. The economic recovery line was formed and out of those meetings came the idea for the education house throughout the community. OFE was nominated to take on the first one.

An action item that came as to planning was to create review analysis of the staffing structure and updated the structure for the programs. This resulted in a revised work chart divided

into four areas of work for family support and navigation in economic mobility. Ms. Howard spoke about the building program infrastructure and supports. They focused on the College Hill Courts community because the hub concept was for the programs to be community-based in order to remove the barrier of access. By targeting College Hill, they were able to eliminate the transportation barrier for participants because their offices and training room are directly across the street. The proximity of the site allows great access to participants helping to build strong relationships.

Ms. Carol Hunter spoke of partnership initiatives. When they received their CARES funding for COVID, they gave a huge amount to afford the financial resources. They knew that was not enough because they were only able to allocate about 25% of the amount of the COVID funds. Teamwork makes the dream work. They had to find a group of community partners that would have a similar passion and greater momentum to be contagious with hours because they were well on their way and needed solid commitments. For that reason, they had to be very strategic in terms of who they would seek out to be a part of their team.

The American Job Center has the resources to be able to help with tuition and other services such as child care for the participants that would have issues. Some participants may also need GED certifications to make it easier for them to be hireable. They work with their partners at the Tennessee Department of Labor to bring the educational process on the campus at the College Hill Courts because they know that getting over to Amnicola Hwy. is an issue when you look at transportation and child care. They try to remove every barrier possible.

The partners are:

- (1) The Enterprise Center;
- (2) Chattanooga State;
- (3) Chattanooga Housing Authority;
- (4) Chattanooga Chamber Foundation;
- (5) American Job Center;
- (6) Tennessee Labor and Workforce Development;
- (7) Adult education; and
- (8) Office of Family Empowerment.

These people have one goal in mind to help the community residents that will be participating. We know by offering this program we hope to position themselves to receive a livable wage, they not only change that family and household, they change legacy. They help move them in a totally different direction and give them hope and vision. This program is going to open new doors and give them the opportunity to live a life that all Chattanoogaans are entitled to live.

They also have an amazing instructor who is google IT certified who will walk with them five days a week over an eight-week period. The first week of their training will involve home training classes that The Enterprise Center is responsible for helping to make sure that happens and will also get some financial literacy training. Every participant will get their own chromebook and help with WiFi. They have a dedicated training room at their 12th Street location which is

directly across the street from the College Hill Courts so there will not be a transportation issue. Chattanooga State is setting up computers in the room so they can learn how to take computers apart. They have a waiting list of people.

Mr. Johnson stated that this is the perfect use of money. Ms. Hunter stated that in terms of the applicants that with the CARES funding there were certain criteria to be met in order to use that money. They had to have an impact from the COVID situation.

Ms. Charolette Brand is the Economic Mobility Program Coordinator for the Empact Project. Ms. Brand stated that they have over 100 names, they do an interview process, and register. There is an assessment process with the American Job Center which determines who can apply.

Mr. Freeman stated that the Chamber Foundation is going to help with reimbursing The Enterprise Center for some of their costs. The Enterprise Center will be administering the stipends to the participants.

After further discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Johnson to approve the resolution, seconded by Ms. LeBouef, and the resolution was unanimously approved.

2. Mr. Armor presented the next order of business: **“A RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT FUNDING FROM THE CITY OF CHATTANOOGA CSBG-CV FUNDS FOR AN AWARD TO THE ENTERPRISE CENTER, FOR EMPACT WORKFORCE STIPENDS TO ASSIST ADULTS IN ACHIEVING A HIGHER LEVEL OF LEARNING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR INTELLECTUAL AND MENTAL CAPACITIES, IN THE AMOUNT OF ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$135,000.00).” (HEB2021-10)** After further discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Johnson to approve this resolution, seconded by Ms. Everhart, and the resolution was unanimously approved.

Mr. Paty wanted to know the amount of the stipend and what frequency. Mr. Freeman stated the participants will make \$12.50 per hour and be paid weekly for 40 hours a week. Mr. Armor asked if any of the applicants were physically or mentally challenged. This is a higher education, lift-up effort for mentally and physically challenged. Mr. Freeman stated this is more of a higher education, credentialing program. Part of one of the workforce development challenges is making sure to get people’s skills faster. Mr. Armor asked once they come out of the program, will there be jobs for them? Mr. Freeman stated they are in the process of working with area employers to make sure there will be jobs. Mr. Armor stated we are basically building a program and at the same time doing a placement opportunity? Mr. Freeman said yes. Mr. Johnson asked about an internship program associated to be placed with a local company as well? Mr. Freeman stated that their goal is to get people into full-time employment.

Mr. Bo Drake stated that it is their goal for everyone to get a job. They do not want to create a training program for the sake of having one. This is let’s change your family tree kind of opportunity. The uniqueness about this program is that they are knocking on every door where they can locally where they think there could be a need for their IT. The City uses a contractor for

some of IT services. That contractor may have an interest in hiring folks from this program. The beautiful thing about partnering up with google on this program is that they hired a company to work with each and every individual student who earns the certificate as part of this program. Google has tasked that company with finding these individuals employment. One of the conversations Mr. Drake has been challenged with from others in the City and people he has talked to, any questions that you would even have would be where will these individuals go to work if it is not local. The pandemic has made us to be able to do work from our kitchen table. There is a chance we could have Chattanooga residents working anywhere in the country but doing it here and having an economic impact along the way.

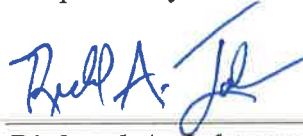
Mr. Drake stated the number of IT jobs we have in Chattanooga is not at the volume we would like it to be. Students who have successfully earned their certificate will be able to walk into Chattanooga State and be awarded 12 college credit hours in the IT program. That is one full-time eight-week course that when completed is worth 12 college credit hours. They are trying to line up as many levers and mechanisms of success in growth because this is not the one done. It is a step in the learning process. Mr. Drake is particularly excited about those of the friends at the City who have been able to uncover from College Hill. It is really about creating an access to opportunity. Mr. Drake appreciates the Board's vote of support for this program and these great partners. Mr. Johnson stated that the Board shares its success. Ms. LeBouef stated that it is remarkable and incredible how intentional how this program seems to have been built around tackling systemic barriers to opportunity and success. Mr. Armor stated that when we put our education system with our businesses with the City, we have a winning combination of needs and capabilities. Mr. Armor applauded The Enterprise Center, Chattanooga Chamber Foundation, Chattanooga State, along with the City and County for coming together.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Noblett stated that the discussion item regarding CNE's application withdrawal for Affordable Housing Funds will be discussed at the next meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard A. Johnson, Secretary

APPROVED:



Hicks Armor, Chair