



## **OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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### **SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENT**

**August 27, 2025**  
**10:30 am**

**Location:** City Council Chamber

**In attendance:** Council Members Amaro, Arias, J. Carlucci, Clark-Murray, Peluso, Salem

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

**Meeting Convened:** 10:33 am

#### **Meeting Call to Order:**

Chair Arias convened the meeting

#### **Introductions and Welcome**

Chair Arias welcomed the group and called for introductions.

#### **Legislation Update: Eastside Governance Structure**

Chair Arias began the meeting, stating that within the upcoming budget, \$4 million is allocated towards the CBA for the Eastside. He said that they must now determine the composition of the previously discussed Board that will manage CBA dollars in the Eastside. He then called upon Mary Staffopoulos to explain where the Committee stands since the last meeting.

She explained that at the last meeting, they had discussed a governance structure for distributing the CBA funds on the Eastside. She stated that OGC had developed a draft ordinance based on discussions at the meeting and with the community, with the Cultural Council serving as the model for the legislation. Ms. Staffopoulos then provided an overview of the legislation. Section 1 of the bill contains the recitals, which will be solidified as the bill is finalized. She explained that Section 2 of the bill is where the new language begins, which would be part of the Code. She recommended placing it in Section 118 of the Code, which also contains language for City Grants, as well as Cultural Council and Public Service Grants.

She continued, stating that Section 118.901 would establish the creation and the purpose of the proposed Eastside Community Grants Program. This would be administered through the combined efforts of the Historic Eastside Revitalization Organization, Inc. (HERO, Inc.) and the Eastside Community Grants Committee. She stated that HERO, Inc. was the name of the 501(c)(3) organization that Mr. Nunn was attempting to establish. She noted that if that changes, then the language in the proposed ordinance could be updated to reflect that. She also clarified that the Grants Committee would serve to provide recommendations to the Board of Directors regarding the awarding of applicants, like the Cultural Council.

She then explained the map included in the proposed legislation, stating that it outlines the boundaries as specified in the original CBA legislation (2024-905-E). She recommended delineating the specific neighborhoods within the Eastside, especially if the Committee decides they want a representative from each neighborhood on the Board.

She stated that Section 188.902 outlines the responsibilities of the Board and details the composition of the Board of Directors. The Board consists of nine voting members: two appointed by the Council President and approved by the Council, one appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Council, and one current employee of the Jacksonville Jaguars, who does not require Council approval. The Council President and Mayor's appointees would serve two terms of two years, but Ms. Staffopoulos indicated that this could be changed by the Committee if desired. She then explained that Hero, Inc. shall ensure that the remaining five Board members, to the extent possible, reside in or have substantial economic interest in one of the five Eastside neighborhoods, with no more than two from a single neighborhood.

Subsection (b) designates HERO, Inc. as the agent of the city for determining and authorizing the allocation of a lump sum Eastside Grants Program appropriation that would be provided in the annual budget. She noted that the Committee could establish additional guardrails around how the Board distributes grants. She also stated that the proposed legislation renders recipients of Eastside Grants ineligible to receive funding from other City programs, as outlined in the draft of the bill.

She then explained Section 118.903, which details the process for the lump sum appropriation to HERO, Inc. The process follows the Cultural Council model and begins with HERO, Inc. submitting a letter of intent to the Mayor for review by the Mayor's Budget Review Committee, which then recommends a lump sum appropriation to be included in the annual budget that is reviewed and approved by the Council.

She then explained Section 118.904, which focuses on the Eastside Grants Committee and its coordination with the Board of Directors. She stated that the Grants Committee would serve as an advisory body, while the Board of Directors would make the final decision regarding the awarding of grants.

Ms. Staffopoulos moved to Section 118.905, which outlines the annual process for the Eastside Grants Committee as well as its composition. The Grants Committee would include one non-voting member, the Committee chairperson appointed by the President of the HERO, Inc. Board of Directors, and ten voting members. The ten voting members would include three other HERO, Inc. Board members selected by the Board President and the Committee chairperson. The remaining seven positions would be selected by the HERO, Inc. Board President, the Grants Committee chairperson, and the three HERO, Inc. Board members mentioned prior. The Committee would also have a Council member as a liaison and a representative from the Mayor's Office. Ms. Staffopoulos noted that this was also modeled after the Cultural Council. Members serve a three-year term and may be reappointed for one additional consecutive full term, all of which are approved by the Council. She then reviewed the responsibilities of the Committee listed in the draft legislation.

Ms. Staffopoulos detailed Section 118.906, which outlines the application process for securing grants from the Eastside Grants Program. She stated that HERO, Inc. must publish a notice that they are accepting grants in a newspaper of general circulation at least one month before the last day to submit grant requests. They must also have a written procedure for submitting operations or capital appropriations requests by eligible agencies and provide an opportunity for oral or written presentations justifying the requests. She also noted that requesting agencies cannot be denied this opportunity, even if they have never submitted a request before or have been denied in the past. Meetings of the Eastside Grants Committee must be noticed and open to the public.

A member of the public requested copies of the draft legislation so that those in the audience could follow along. Chair Arias directed that copies be provided.

Ms. Staffopoulos continued with a description of Section 118.907, which detailed the eligibility requirements for organizations requesting grants. Organizations must have existed as a Florida Corporation for at least three years with three years of filed tax returns. They must have a track record of delivering outcomes outlined in the Eastside Strategic Focus. Organizations should also have broad community representation in management and membership, with members of their board of directors not receiving compensation for their service on the board. They should also have a method of selecting the board of directors that periodically subjects the directors to the possibility of replacement by other qualified persons. She also stated that the legislation requires organizations that have previously received grants from the City to have submitted all necessary reports for those grants.

To receive operating support, the organization must provide programs, services, or activities related to affordable housing, workforce housing, economic development, and homelessness mitigation. If an organization receives capital funding of \$25,000 or more, it must enter into a restrictive covenant agreement with the City to ensure the dedicated use of the funded facilities or properties for a public purpose for a period of at least 10 years. She noted that when such provisions aren't in place for grant awards, the Auditor's Office would usually flag it as an opportunity to provide protection for the City's dollars to ensure they go to public use. Ms. Staffopoulos also mentioned language in the section wherein recipients of grant funds must prove they can provide at least a one-dollar match. She stated that the provision regarding matching could be something the Committee may want to discuss along with any other requirements beyond what is presently in the draft legislation.

Ms. Staffopoulos then moved to Section 118.908, which lists proposed criteria for judging applicants for grants. These include quality of programs, community outreach and service to culturally diverse communities, management capability, community impact, addressing community needs, and exploring innovative ideas and programming.

Ms. Staffopoulos then described Section 118.909, which provides restrictions on the use of Eastside Grants Program grants. Ms. Staffopoulos reiterated that grants may only be used for the priorities identified in the CBA. The organizations must ensure funds are used in accordance with Section 118.301. Grant funds must also be kept in a separate account to ensure accurate accounting and auditing.

She then explained Section 118.910, which talks about the City contract, its review, and oversight. She stated that the City would contract with HERO, Inc., as it does with the Cultural Council, to impart the obligations and responsibilities upon HERO, Inc. to administer the program, adhering to any expectations and limitations prescribed by the City. HERO, Inc. would then contract with organizations that receive grant funds. This section also establishes a quarterly reporting system for funded organizations, along with the requirement that HERO, Inc., provide the Auditor's Office with an annual audit.

She concluded with the Definitions section and explained that the definitions are derived from the original CBA.

CM Salem stated that he had gone through a similar process when establishing the City's Opioid Program and said that Madelaine Zarou, who manages the program, could be an asset for the establishment of the Eastside Grants Program. He also stated he thinks people should be able to be re-appointed after two terms. He asked if there would be a specific person responsible for overseeing the programs, as with the Opioid program, highlighting that the funds for such a position could come from the \$4 million allocated for the Eastside Grants Program. Ms. Staffopoulos explained that the Finance Department would oversee the program but did not specify which division would be responsible. She also stated that if a new position is needed, that request would come before the Council.

CM Salem also suggested assigning dollar amounts or percentages of the total amount appropriated to specific categories, such as the four priorities outlined in the CBA. He also recommended adding language specifying the number of grants an organization may receive, along with a potential limit on the dollar amount of grants. He questioned the need for a Grant Committee in addition to the HERO, Inc. Board of Directors. Ms. Staffopoulos explained the rationale for the two bodies, stating that the Cultural Council model holds the 501(c)(3) as the administrative entity. The Grants Committee would exist to address the disbursement of the City's appropriation and provide the City with some control over the process. She also added that the 501(c)(3) organization may also receive and distribute private dollars.

CM Salem expressed his concern that Board members are receiving money for expenses and that grant funds are being used for capital purposes. He added that he thinks matching should be considered but should not prevent organizations from applying.

CM Peluso agreed with most of CM Salem's comments, stating he doesn't see the need for a Grants Committee and that a new process could be created for private dollars. He also agreed with the notion of having dedicated staff to oversee the program and suggested restricting the amount of CBA funds that can be used for that purpose. He asked CM Salem to elaborate on his concerns about using funds for capital projects, highlighting potential opportunities for the funds to be utilized for such projects. CM Salem stated he would rather it go to services. CM Peluso agreed that CM Salem had valid concerns but still saw an opportunity for economic development through funding capital projects in the area. In response to the idea of establishing categories for funding, CM Peluso was more in favor of giving as much deference to the Board as possible.

Ms. Staffopoulos pointed out that two of CBA's priorities are affordable housing and workforce housing, which are capital-intensive, and limiting capital dollars may hinder work in those categories. CM Clark-Murray suggested defining which type of capital projects would be permissible to address the concern raised by CM Salem.

CM Peluso asked if individuals could apply for grants, using a hypothetical example of seniors 65 and older requesting assistance with property tax increases due to new development in the area. Ms. Staffopoulos stated that if the Board created a program or offered services with private dollars, there was nothing prohibiting them from doing that. She further explained that the draft legislation limits city dollars to grants for organizations to ensure protection of city money, noting that is what the Cultural Council and other grant programs do.

CM Peluso asked if it was okay for an organization to provide awarded grant dollars to individuals for tax abatement purposes. Ms. Staffopoulos stated that the scenario presented by CM Peluso raises an issue, as the funds are intended for a public purpose. Mr. Peterson concurred that the specific example might not meet a public purpose of city dollars. Chair Arias also reiterated that the money must be allocated to the

four categories outlined in the CBA and stated that CM Peluso's example would not fall under those. CM Peluso argued that it qualifies as a mitigating factor for homelessness and explained that property values are expected to increase with the new stadium, while noting that the City already has similar programs in place with Jax Legal Aid and United Way.

Ms. Staffopoulos stated that city dollars cannot be used to pay property taxes. She explained that legal services, eviction diversion, and other programs could be categorized as mitigation or prevention of homelessness. She urged specificity when allocating city dollars toward home improvement or renovation to ensure the City is compliant with its responsibilities and obligations under the CBA. CM Peluso inquired about private funds from the Jaguars that would be disbursed later and whether they could be used differently. Ms. Staffopoulos stated those funds would have to go to the same four categories.

Chair Arias noted that some of the money from the Jaguars would be allocated toward youth activation; however, those funds would not be administered through the City. Mr. Peterson confirmed that the Jaguars' contribution to the Eastside will support economic development, job creation, affordable housing, homelessness initiatives, and workforce development.

CM Peluso agreed with removing the match requirement. He also disagreed with the requirement that a Board member represent each neighborhood, suggesting instead that representation be made a priority to ensure a quorum can be established well into the future. He also encouraged Council approval for Board members' first term, but to then allow a potential membership committee to approve terms after that.

Ms. Staffopoulos returned to the point about dedicated staff to oversee the program and noted that 10% of the annual appropriation can be allocated toward administrative costs. She also pointed out that at least 76% of the receiving organizations' operating revenue must come from sources other than the Eastside Grants Program to ensure that organizations are not totally reliant on City funds.

CM J. Carlucci inquired about the reason behind establishing a Grants Committee in addition to HERO, Inc. Ms. Staffopoulos reiterated that a separate Grants Committee was not necessary and that the Committee could utilize various models. She recalled that the Cultural Council model was generally agreed upon in prior meetings. CM J. Carlucci asked which model provided the most flexibility and efficiency. Ms. Staffopoulos stated that complete City control was arguably the most efficient when fewer people were involved but conceded that there were other types of efficiencies to consider with different models. CM J. Carlucci stated that he was open to whatever was efficient, while also providing flexibility to the community to seek solutions that fit their needs. He also supported money going to capital projects. He also agreed to forgo the Grants Committee.

Ms. Staffopoulos also suggested allowing the 501(c)(3) to gather applications and come before Council with the organizations they wish to fund with grants, providing flexibility while also ensuring Council oversight.

CM Peluso stated that the Cultural Council model provides the most long-standing freedom and noted that there is sufficient oversight from the Council through the budget and auditing process. CM Amaro asked if the filing for the 501(c)(3) had occurred. CM Peluso stated that it has not occurred. CM Amaro asked if it made sense to require matching for capital projects. CM Peluso indicated that it could work for capital projects.

CM Clark-Murray suggested using a brief legal description to delineate neighborhoods on the Eastside map. She also agreed to streamline the process by establishing only the HERO Inc. Board. She recommended specifying that organizations requesting grant funds be in the Eastside neighborhood. CM Salem conceded to fund capital projects and noted the percentages for administrative costs were too high.

Chair Arias asked about the definitions. Ms. Staffopoulos offered to meet with each committee member to work on the draft rather than making motions and deliberating, in the interest of time. She stated that there seemed to be a consensus on eliminating the Grants Committee and would use the meetings with individual members to discuss areas where there was no consensus. Chair Arias asked if the 501(c)(3) filing could proceed. Ms. Staffopoulos said they could proceed.

CM Peluso asked where the Board could meet. Ms. Staffopoulos stated that the Sunshine requirements applied to the Grants Committee, but that ultimately the HERO Inc. Board would have to determine whether to operate in the sunshine. CM Peluso encouraged ensuring the meetings are publicly accessible and noticed.

The Committee agreed to meet again on October 8<sup>th</sup> at 1 PM

**Public Comment:**

Larry Swink of Jackson Electric Supply expressed his desire that the Board be composed of people from the Eastside community.

Dennis Sanchez expressed his concern that the current proposal does not address displacement. He also stated that organizations with community backing should be considered, regardless of how long they have been in operation.

Dawn Curling was surprised by the proposed ordinance because she and her organization, Together Eastside, were not notified. She wanted to ensure that any work is community-led and wanted that reflected in the ordinance. She also claimed that workforce housing and homelessness were not part of the original CBA.

Latavia Harris expressed her disappointment because the information was not communicated. She stated that Together Eastside now has a board with five individuals from the Eastside and displaced Eastside residents, and offered it as an alternate organization to HERO, Inc. She also stated that Mr. Nunn does not represent the community due to a conflict of interest. She offered to have the documents scanned by Legislative Services.

Pat Bryant encouraged the Committee to seize the opportunity to transform the Eastside. He noted an imbalance in stakeholder participation in the process, where it was driven by the Council rather than the community. He encouraged considering water and sewer.

Jackie Lattimore stated she was working on a \$21 million project, the 8<sup>th</sup> and Phoenix Retail Hub, which will be a workforce development shopping center with 22 apartments above. She also shared the story of Brian Gillis, who was recently murdered in the neighborhood. She said there should be money for mental health.

Nigelle Kohn, Florida Avenue Main Street, stated that the CBA and governance structure will be critical to revitalize the Avenue. She noted a lot of work has been put in by the community and urged the Committee to keep the community in mind.

Bishop Harry Williams expressed his support for the organizations on the Eastside and urged against slowing down the process.

Ariane L. Randolph advocated for a community-centered Urban Redevelopment and Investment Authority and a timely distribution of the revised legislation draft to allow the community time to process. She also supported a full public comment session before final approval.

Travis Williams echoed the sentiments of the last speaker. He stated that he thinks the proposed Board should operate in the sunshine to ensure accountability and transparency. He also agreed with the match removal and stated that capital projects should be allowed to be funded with the grants.

**Meeting adjourned:** 12:00 pm.

Minutes: Brandon Russell, Council Research  
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