TODAY'S NEWS

Stung by cuts, homeless get aid

BY CATHARINE LAKNER

Stung by $6 million in cuts from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the executive committee of Miami-Dade County’s Homeless Trust voted July 7 to hire consultant Housing Innovations to help prevent such catastrophic cuts next year. The trust’s board of directors must vote on the decision at its next meeting.

Continuum-of-care organizations like the trust must file a yearly response to the government’s Notice of Funding Availability in order to receive their allocations of federal money, generally the majority of organizations’ budgets.

Housing Innovations helped prepare the 2015 application the Houston/Harris County Continuum of Care, which was the top scorer in that round. Now, assuming board approval, the trust will spend up to $25,000 to use the consultant’s technical expertise for its 2016-17 bid, which is due Sept. 14.

“Housing innovations principals have been leaders in homeless assistance planning and service delivery since the inception of efforts to address end homelessness, beginning with the McKinney-Vento Act [in 1987] and continuing through the US VHA [Veterans Housing] in 2012,” said a July 7 memo from Victoria L. Mallette, trust executive director. “As one of the largest counties in the United States, one of the largest continuums of care nationally, Miami-Dade is seeking to retain and grow its federally funded Notice of Funding Availability. In order to receive their allocations of federal money, generally the majority of organizations’ budgets...”

“We’ve gotten sort of a wink and a nod and a big and a hoo-hoo from HUD that, across the country, they are probably the most notable and most creative,” said Rumi Book, trust chair, at a June 30 meeting during which hiring the consultant was discussed. “We sought out the best and I think we’ve got the best. We will be moving forward with them.”

Seaport may reimburse US Customs

BY SEAN DANEYAK

A county committee is set to vote today (7/14) whether to recommend funding a local Restaurant & Entertainment Economy to reimburse Miami for the cost of the continuing threat of $5.7 million for one-time equipment upgrades, if necessary, and to recapture monthly service costs at its facility in the port’s rail intermediary yard. In the event that a third functioning T-1 circuit and equipment serving the intermediary facility needs replacement, the solution would require the port to repay CBF the estimated $57,192 for the upgrade as well as an estimated $65,000 for recurring data charges. The money for equipment and installation would be funded from port bond proceeds; the annual recurring cost would be funded from the port’s annual operating budget.

A new CBF security facility was constructed at the port as part of the intermodal yard facility developed under the 2010 US Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery II Grant, which reimburses counties for the cost of equipment and related infrastructure. The facility includes a radiation portal monitor that screens all cargo leaving to the federal, as required by federal law, and a new CBF booth facility for offices at the port.

According to Deputy Mayor Jack Osterholt, federal regulations and regulations require the port’s operators to provide upgrade, as required, “turn-key, high-level inspection service facilities at seaports and airports at no cost to CBF. That includes T-1 circuit upgrades for this new CBF security facility to continue to be fully functional, he wrote in a memo to commissioners.

The agreement, if approved, would further obligate the port to provide voice communication systems for CBF. Mr. Osterholt said the county won’t incur costs associated with the CBF service fees, such as equipment repairs and equipment replacement costs as required by federal regulations. CBF would have possession and control of the federal, and would be reimbursed as if it were a federal inspection services at the site.

However, Mr. Osterholt said, when CBF leaves the federal intermodal yard facility, all the equipment on the port grounds will remain as the port pays the lease payments.

“[It is important for CBF] to maintain these connections to efficiently handle the high volume of cargo traffic already seen at the port,” Mr. Osterholt said, “and the higher volumes expected to come as larger container ships continue to call more frequently at the port.”

Royal Caribbean port deals details

BY SEAN DANEYAK

County commissioners unanimously approved an agreement with Royal Caribbean Cruises last week to make South Terminal at PortMiami, which will bring Mi-

ami-Dade $7.5 million in annual rent, as well as an estimated $500 million in new economic impact of $500 million and about $4,000 jobs.

During a special meeting and discussions, the commission authorized the administration to execute a ground lease with a subsidiary of Royal Caribbean to design, finance, build, operate, maintain and transfer a cruise terminal facility at the port’s Terminal A, and to negotiate and amend existing operating agreements to reach terminal acreage.

As a separate item, commissioners approved an amended agreement with Royal Caribbean to increase its passenger-vehicle crossing to five in fiscal year 2016. The owner agreement was to expire Sept. 30, 2021, but negotiations extended the agreement to Sept. 30, 2026. The cross-lease will pay the county $10.5 million in fiscal 2016, rising to $14.8 million in fiscal 2026.

The transactions were expedited, according to Deputy Mayor Jack Osterholt.

The reason is that the negotiations, including approval by Royal Caribbean’s leadership, was in time necessary for construction, he wrote in a memo to commissioners. Mr. Osterholt warned that delays in the authorization could interfere with the desired completed date of December 2018.

PortMiami is the second largest economic engine in Miami-Dade, contributing $27 billion each year to the local economy, and support about 207,000 jobs, according to Mayer Carlos Gimenez, Royal Caribbean is the world’s second-largest cruise operator, with nearly 25% of the world’s market, and has home-ported for more than 50 years. “However, passenger volumes and vessel sizes at the port have fluctuated substantially over the years,” Mr. Gimenez said in a written statement after the commission vote. “Fortunately, all of that has changed with today’s approval from the board.”

Mr. Gimenez said the partnership includes a $300 million extension to the private sector and will make PortMiami Royal Caribbean’s largest cruise port.

“This partnership will also generate an estimated $50 million in new economic impact to the country of $500 million and will create approxi-

mately 4,000 jobs,” he said. “Completing the new terminal, Royal Caribbean will be able to accommodate 1.8 million passengers, 30% of the port’s projected passenger traffic through 2025. We are committing approximately $1 million more per passenger every year which will also create more than 100,000 additional passengers.”

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Seaport Modernization

BY JUAN ZAPATA

A June order by Miami-Dade commissioners to develop a trust fund for each of the county’s largely undeveloped projects to be augmented through tax revenue contributions from the county’s Economic Prosperity Council. The action would grant $27.5 million to the Village of Palmetto Bay to revitalize downtown, in southwestern area by transforming Franjzo Road into a pedestrian friendly corridor, and the future phase would build a transit station. The county anticipates making the money available in the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, 2017. The action got the funding set aside for the land by 2018, the commissioners had already spent $27.5 million on the land purchases and has now aligned with new grants for the 1,000-foot plus observation tower to rise in Biscayne Bay belting a Biscayne Bay Northeast

Pipes in Homestead: County commissioners unanimously approved last week local financial support up to $6,000 so a national pipeline fabrication business would take on an 11-employee manufacturing plant in Homestead’s Community Redevelopment Area would be recognized by the state as a qualified target industry tax refund business. The project is called Colonial Project Extension by the Bureau of Consulate, and because the company is considering other locations as well. The project was reviewed by the Board of County Commissioners, which requested the additional $27.5 million a central surplus of $34,685.

With you in spirit: Miami-Dade County would support in concept Resilient Miami, a three-year grant program awarded by the Kresge Foundation in January, under a resolution by county commission chairman jeans Montellano that is to be held today (7/14) by the commission’s Economic Prosperity Committee. Resilient Miami, according to its motion, “sets out to invest in creating resilient community infrastructure through increased education and awareness to build upon a resilient city and to ensure the establishment of essential relationships and to develop community initiatives.”

The grants program is based on a proposal by Catalyst Miami, Urban Impact Lab and the Florida Institute of Health Innovation. The resolution specifies that the county is not issuing any funds to the effort.

Tax aid for FIU: At least $300,000 of Miami-Dade’s share of the Local Business Tax would go to a Florida International University small business initiative under a proposal before the county’s Economic Prosperity Committee today (7/14). The measure by Chairman Jean Montellano would require Miami-Dade County to sign an agreement with the university before the county budget that’s effective Oct. 1. The money would go to the Small Business Development Center at FIU. The legislation specifies that payments to FIU would not come from the Biscayne Cruz’s share of the tax. FIU is designated an official host institution for the Florida Small Business Development Center Network.

South Dade Solutions: Commissioners Danielle Levine Caro and Donato C. Mess are hosting the second annual South Dade Scholars Summit from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. July 14 at the Westin Doral, 6005 SW 88th Ave., Miami. Community leaders are invited to help design a new plan to effectively market South Dade’s recreational and tourism assets, quality neighborhoods and schools and business development opportunities. The summit will be an interactive, round-table workshop led by Dr. Turkel, CEO of Turkel Brands.

Gas price dips: Gasoline prices fell 2 cents in the past week to about $2.52 per gallon in Miami-Dade County, according to GasBuddy’s price-tracking service. National prices fell 3.4 cents a gallon to average $2.23. A year ago Miami’s prices were 42.2 cents per gallon higher than they are now, GasBuddy said.