



# Pinellas County

## Staff Report

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**File #:** 21-027A, **Version:** 1

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### **Subject:**

Resolution ratifying the County Administrator's approval of acceptance of award terms for the Emergency Rental Assistance payment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, and authorizing the County Administrator to take required action for Pinellas County to receive COVID-19 relief or stimulus funds for future programs.

### **Recommended Action:**

Adoption of a resolution that will: (1) ratify the County Administrator's acceptance of award terms for the Emergency Rental Assistance payment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021; and (2) authorize the County Administrator to take required action for Pinellas County to receive Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic relief or stimulus funds for future state or federal programs.

- Treasury required the acceptance of award terms by 11:59pm on January 12, 2021, to receive funds available to local governments with population exceeding 200,000 for the Emergency Rental Assistance program of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021.
  - a.) Not less than 90 percent of awarded funds must be used for direct financial assistance to "eligible households" that experienced financial hardship due to COVID-19.
  - b.) Direct financial assistance includes rent, rental arrears, utilities and home energy costs, utilities and home energy costs arrears, and other expenses related to housing (as defined by the Treasury Secretary).
  - c.) Remaining funds are available for housing stability services, including case management and other services intended to keep households stably housed, and administrative costs.
  - d.) Funds generally expire on December 31, 2021.
  - e.) Additional program terms are pending clarification and/or definition by Treasury.
  - f.) Staff will announce and implement the County's program(s) after development of the programs, in partnership with community partners, and confirmation that they are permissible uses of the Emergency Rental Assistance program payment.
  - g.) Projected payment from Treasury is \$21.3M and will be received by 11:59pm on January 26, 2021.
  - h.) A budget resolution may be brought forward at a future meeting to recognize and appropriate these funds in the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget.
- Resolution also authorizes the County Administrator to take required action, including signing certifications and/or accepting award terms, to enable Pinellas County to receive COVID-19 relief or economic stimulus funds for any future federal or state programs.
  - a.) Authorization enables the County Administrator to act within short timelines that have been experienced for these programs.
  - b.) Authorization remains effective throughout the ongoing State of Local Emergency.

### **Strategic Plan:**

Ensure Public Health, Safety, and Welfare

2.1 Provide planning, coordination, prevention, and protective services to ensure a safe and secure community

2.3 Be a facilitator, convener, and purchaser of services for those in need

2.4 Support programs that seek to prevent and remedy the causes of homelessness and move individuals and families from homelessness to permanent housing

Foster Continual Economic Growth and Vitality

4.2 Invest in communities that need the most

Deliver First Class Services to the Public and Our Customers

5.2 Be responsible stewards of the public's resources

### **Summary:**

Adopting the resolution ratifies the County Administrator's acceptance of award terms for the Emergency Rental Assistance program of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, and authorizes the County Administrator to take required action to enable Pinellas County to receive COVID-19 relief or economic stimulus funds for any future federal or state programs. This authorization will remain effective throughout the ongoing State of Local Emergency.

### **Background Information:**

On December 27, 2020, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, was enacted to, among other things, provide emergency rental assistance to households impacted by COVID-19. The Emergency Rental Assistance program makes available \$25 billion to assist households that are unable to pay rent and utilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funds are provided directly to States, U.S. Territories, local governments, and Indian tribes. Local governments with more than 200,000 residents were eligible to receive direct payments. Pinellas County and the City of St. Petersburg were eligible and accepted award terms. Grantees must use the funds to provide assistance to eligible households through existing or newly created rental assistance programs.

Amounts paid to States, the District of Columbia, U.S. Territories, and eligible units of local government are based on population based on the same provisions in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). Eligible local governments were required to accept award terms for the Emergency Rental Assistance program by 11:59 p.m. EDT on January 12 and Treasury is required to make direct payments by 11:59 p.m. EDT on January 26. Pinellas County is anticipated to receive approximately \$21.3M and the City of St. Petersburg is anticipated to receive approximately \$7.9M.

The Emergency Rental Assistance program terms require that not less than 90 percent of awarded funds be used to support "eligible households" with direct financial assistance, including rent, rental arrears, utilities and home energy costs, utilities and home energy costs arrears, and other expenses related to housing (as defined by the Treasury Secretary). Remaining funds are available for housing stability services, including case management and other services intended to keep households stably housed, and administrative costs. Funds generally expire on December 31, 2021.

An "eligible household" is defined as a renter household in which at least one or more individuals meets the following criteria:

(1) Qualifies for unemployment or has experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19;

Demonstrates a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability; and

Has a household income at or below 80 percent of the area median.

(2) Rental assistance provided to an eligible household should not be duplicative of any other federally funded rental assistance provided to such household.

(3) Eligible households that include an individual who has been unemployed for the 90 days prior to application for assistance and households with income at or below 50 percent of the area median are to be prioritized for assistance.

Additional information clarifying and defining program requirements will be posted by the Treasury as it becomes available.

Pinellas County, in partnership with 211 Tampa Bay Cares, implemented the Pinellas CARES Financial Assistance program in April, 2020, and made over 21,000 payments totaling approximately \$24.6M to assist over 8,600 households. Pinellas County also continues to support multiple local non-profit agencies in providing eviction mitigation assistance to residents through the Pinellas CARES Nonprofit Partnership Fund administered by the Pinellas Community Foundation. Both of these programs are funded with the \$170.1M CARES Coronavirus Relief Fund payment received by Pinellas County. Both programs align with the Emergency Rental Assistance program requirements.

**Fiscal Impact:**

The projected payment to Pinellas County from the Emergency Rental Assistance program is \$21.3M. Receipt of payment is anticipated by 11:59 p.m. on January 26. A budget resolution may be brought forward at a subsequent meeting to recognize and appropriate these funds in the FY21 Budget.

**Staff Member Responsible:**

Bill Berger, Director, Office of Management & Budget

**Partners:**

United States Department of Treasury

**Attachments:**

Resolution

Emergency Rental Assistance Program Award Terms

Emergency Rental Assistance Program List of Eligible Local Governments

Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Section 501 (Emergency Rental Assistance)