



Legislation Text

File #: 0712-2024, **Version:** 1

BACKGROUND: This ordinance authorizes the Director of the Department of Development to execute a Grant Agreement with the Tony R Wells Foundation dba The Wells Foundation in an amount up to \$525,000.00 of federal Emergency Rental Assistance 2 (ERA 2) - Stable Housing Initiative funds to provide assistance as authorized by the federal Emergency Rental Assistance program. This funding is to provide assistance to individuals facing housing instability, emergency vacate orders, or potential homelessness with emergency rental assistance with an effective date of March 1, 2024 through February 28, 2025.

The Tony R Wells Foundation is a “Contractor” under federal uniform guidance rules and the agreement that will be used by the city is the Grant Agreement.

Ordinance 2275-2021 authorizes the City of Columbus to accept and appropriate up to \$39,109,001.91 of federal Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA 2) program funds, as passed by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

Of this amount, \$525,000.00 will be used for a grant agreement with the Tony R Wells Foundation to partner with The Broad Street Presbyterian Church of Columbus, Ohio and act as their fiscal manager to dispense funding directly to recipients of The Broad Street Presbyterian Church of Columbus, Ohio’s COMPASS-Rental Assistance program.

Through their COMPASS-Rental Assistance program, The Broad Street Presbyterian Church of Columbus, Ohio make program eligibility determinations (as defined by U. S. Treasury) to qualify residents of the local community for funding in order to ensure housing stability and they will, in turn, inform the Tony R Wells Foundation which applications are approved for funding and how much.

Funding for this program will focus on assisting displaced tenants from unsafe, unsanitary or inhabitable housing conditions. The Tony R Wells Foundation will make the payments directly to the recipients or other entities on their behalf. As such, funds will be advanced to the Tony R Wells Foundation. The U.S. Department of Treasury has encouraged jurisdictions to look at ways to expedite payments by centralizing payment processing as one of their best practices.

Under this agreement, funding is included for recipients’ needs and a fee for the Tony R Wells Foundation acting as the fiscal manager. Of the funds for the recipients, at least 60% of the funding will support households with an AMI at 50% or below and/or have a member of the household who has been unemployed for 90 days and up to 40% of the funding can be used for households with an AMI at 80% or below.

The Broad Street Presbyterian Church of Columbus, Ohio will manage a program to provide assistance to residents in the local area who qualify for the assistance as provided in the laws regulations and other current guidance provided by the U. S. Department of Treasury. Assistance may include: rent, rental arrearages, prospective rent, utility assistance, internet, security deposit, rental fees for storage unit, moving expenses, application fees, hotel or motel for displaced families, and/or eviction related court costs.

It is expected that the guidance from the U.S. Department of Treasury will continue to be modified while this contract is in effect and it is requested that the Director of the Department of Development be given the authority to modify the terms and conditions of the agreement without seeking additional Council approval in order to align with the most current version of the laws, regulations, and guidance. If additional funds are needed, Council approval will be requested.

Emergency action is requested in order to have funding available as soon as possible to assist residents who are displaced and need immediate assistance for transitional or new housing to prevent homelessness.

FISCAL IMPACT: Funding is provided to the City of Columbus from the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 passed by Congress and signed into law December 27, 2020, as authorized in Ordinance 2275-2021.

CONTRACT COMPLIANCE: the vendor's vendor number is as follows:

038668 Tony R. Wells Foundation expiration 06/22/2025

033793 The Broad Street Presbyterian Church of Columbus expiration 08/03/2025.

To authorize the Director of the Department of Development to execute a Grant Agreement with the Tony R Wells Foundation dba The Wells Foundation in an amount up to \$525,000.00 of federal Emergency Rental Assistance 2 (ERA 2) - Stable Housing Initiative funds to provide assistance as authorized by the federal Emergency Rental Assistance program; to authorize the Director of the Department of Development to modify the terms and conditions of the agreement as needed without seeking further City Council approval to align with federal regulations; to authorize the advancement of funds; to authorize the expenditure of up to \$525,000.00 from the Emergency Rental Assistance Funds; and to declare an emergency. (\$525,000.00)

WHEREAS, the Director of the Department of Development desires to execute Grant Agreement with the Tony R Wells Foundation dba The Wells Foundation in an amount up to \$525,000.00 of federal Emergency Rental Assistance 2 (ERA 2) - Stable Housing Initiative funds to provide assistance as authorized by the federal Emergency Rental Assistance program; and

WHEREAS, the Tony R Wells Foundation will partner with The Broad Street Presbyterian Church of Columbus, Ohio to provide this assistance with The Broad Street Presbyterian Church of Columbus, Ohio making the eligibility determination and the Tony R Wells Foundation providing aid directly; and

WHEREAS, it is expected that the guidance from the U.S. Department of Treasury will be modified while this agreement is in effect and it is requested that the Director of the Department of Development be given the authority to modify the terms and conditions of the grant agreement without seeking additional Council approval in order to align with the most current version of the laws, regulations, and guidance; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in much needed assistance when low income households have seen significant decreases in personal income due to COVID-19 and the public health emergency; and

WHEREAS, expenditure of ERA funding to provide low income households with financial assistance is necessary to address reduced income needed to pay housing stability expenses caused by the COVID-19 public health emergency or they have been displaced due to the impact of COVID-19 on the property owner; and

WHEREAS, such expenditure of funds has not been previously accounted for in the 2024 Budget; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists in the usual daily operation of the Department of Development in that it is immediately necessary to authorize the Director to execute this grant agreement in order to have funding available as soon as possible to assist residents who are displaced and need immediate assistance for transitional or new housing to prevent homelessness, all for the immediate preservation of the public health, peace, property, safety and welfare; and **NOW THEREFORE**,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. That the Director of the Department of Development is hereby authorized to execute a Grant Agreement with the Tony R Wells Foundation dba The Wells Foundation in an amount up to \$525,000.00 of federal Emergency Rental Assistance 2 (ERA 2) - Stable Housing Initiative funds to provide assistance as authorized by the federal Emergency Rental Assistance program; and is authorized to modify the scope of services of the agreement as needed without further City Council approval in order to align with the evolving federal guidance; and is authorized to advance funds to the Tony R Wells Foundation with a contract effective date of March 1, 2024 through February 28, 2025.

SECTION 2. That the expenditure of \$525,000.00 or so much thereof as may be needed is hereby authorized in Fund 2208 (ERA Fund), Dept-Div 44-10 (Housing Division), in object class 05 (Other) per the accounting codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

SECTION 3. That this agreement is awarded pursuant to the relevant provisions of Columbus City Code related to executing grant agreements.

SECTION 4: Funds are hereby deemed appropriated and expenditures and transfers authorized to carry out the purposes of this ordinance and the City Auditor shall establish such accounting codes as necessary.

SECTION 5: That the City Auditor is authorized to make any accounting changes to revise the funding source for all contracts or contract modifications associated with this legislation.

SECTION 6: That for reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this ordinance is declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and approval by the Mayor, or ten days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.