MAYOR LICASTRO:  Should we move right to Committee of the Whole?  Do we need a break?

Thank you.

So we have two items on the Committee of the Whole.  I'll call the meeting to order.

MS. COOKS:  Mr. Benjamin?

MR. BENJAMIN:  Here.

MS. COOKS:  Ms. Burke-Jones?

MS. BURKE-JONES:  Here.

MS. COOKS:  Ms. Hoefling?

MS. HOEFLING:  Here.

MS. COOKS:  Mr. McDonald?

MR. MCDONALD:  Here.

MS. COOKS:  Mr. Taylor?

MR. TAYLOR:  Here.

MAYOR LICASTRO:  So, Jeff, we're going to save you for last.  We're going to ask Kimmy to come forward.  She's with the Food Bank, which is our neighbor on 156th Street.  We had a Mayor's meeting there earlier this month.  And they shared some really startling numbers about how much they're lacking with cutbacks in SNAP and other factors.  Kimmy will give us a brief recap of those numbers and then we have a request for Council to consider.

So, Kimmy, what's your last name?


MAYOR LICASTRO:  Everyone calls her Kimmy.

MS. LOVANO:  That's right.  I tried to go by Kim for a while but I got overruled by my friends and family.

I do have materials for anyone here that's interested.

MAYOR LICASTRO:  You're not going through all this, are you?

MS. LOVANO:  No, I'm not.  I'll leave these right here.  Is there a best place for me to stand?

So my name is Kimmy LoVano.  I work at the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.  We are your neighbors right down the street.  We're actually building another facility, a new community food distribution center even closer to here.  It's at East 140th and Coit right behind the Federal Job Corp.  We'll be neighbors with the Federal Job Corp.

So I wanted to come and give a quick update on the Food Bank, our work, what we're seeing right now and what we're anticipating over the months to come, because right now what we're seeing is a perfect storm.  And that's something that we need help from everyone to respond to that storm that's coming.

So for folks who have not been to the Food Bank before, we operate as a hub and spokes model.  We have partners throughout Northeast Ohio.  We operate in six counties.  Cuyahoga is obviously our largest kind of geographic partner in terms of people.  We have more than 600 partners here in Cuyahoga County.  A lot of those partners are places like food pantries, hot meal sites, shelters, but also kids programs, places like libraries and schools, places where kids go after the school day or during the summer months when school's not in session.  We work with a lot of senior apartment buildings to get food to seniors who are in need.

And we work with just every organization that you can think of where there are already people there.  We try to find people where they are, instead of making everyone come to us to get...
help. Definitely that helps that spokesmodel.

Now, what we're seeing throughout the pandemic, we had to change the way that we operate. We've had to adapt. We've had to be creative. We've gotten a lot of those flexibilities from our partners at the federal level, from our partners at the state level, that allowed us to do things like providing grab-and-go meals to kids where we can give out three to four meals at once so that kids don't have to keep coming back to a site throughout the week.

I grew up with a single mom. When my mom was at work during the day, I couldn't necessarily leave the house at the age of 11 to walk to a site to get meals to pick up. It's very flexible. It's a great way to reach kids who do need the help. The reality is a lot of that flexibility is coming to an end with the end of the public health emergency this summer.

So what we're seeing at the Food Bank right now, we're continuing to see incredibly high numbers of people that need help with emergency food. In 2020, we served one in four people in Cuyahoga County at an emergency food program. That means they went to a food pantry or a senior market to get help. That does not include any of the kids programs where kids can go pick up a meal to take home. So one in four people turn to emergency food assistance.

We're still seeing, even though things have gotten better, about one in five people throughout Cuyahoga County that need help at some point during the year. Most people actually only get help about three or fewer times during the year from the Food Bank. It's just a way to get over a hurdle, somebody with lost wages, employment, et cetera.

So that is what we're doing right now.

If you've been on 90 on a Thursday afternoon, you've seen us at the muni lot. If you've ever not known what's happening at the muni lot on Thursday afternoons, that's the Food Bank. We're continuing to see very high numbers there. About 2,300 households are served there on every single Thursday. And that's in addition to all the work being done by our network of more than 1,100 partners. And those partners are throughout Northeast Ohio. I think I started -- we serve Cuyahoga County. We also go all the way out to the Pennsylvania border, out to Ashtabula, Lake and Geauga and then down to Ashland and Richland counties as well.

So one of the -- really what we talked about at our Mayors and City Managers meeting and what I wanted to share with everyone today is just what we're expecting to come in the months ahead. We have seen the expiration of the enhanced child tax credit. About four million additional kids fell into poverty in the month of January when that credit expired.

We are also looking at the loss of --

it's called SNAP Emergency Allotments. And SNAP Emergency Allotments have just given additional dollars for people to spend exclusively on food during the pandemic. Now, when the public health emergency expires this summer, in Cuyahoga County we're looking at a loss of about 54 million meals over the next year because that one benefit expires. And that's something that to be frank at the Food Bank, we will do everything in our power to respond, but it's going to be incredibly tough.

We are facing a lot of the same challenges that folks here are facing, that I face when I go to the grocery store, the increase in food costs. We are seeing food prices up by about 25 percent. And since we buy food by the millions of pounds, that adds up really quickly. Things like peanut butter, it used to cost us about $1 per pound, I believe. Now it's up to $1.50. When you buy food, again, by the millions of pounds, it adds up very fast.

So that's something that we're working to prepare for at the same time that we've seen our federal food, which is American grown food from farmers across the country, we've seen that food go down by 70 percent. And that's at the same time we're having to purchase more and more food. Our money is not going as far. And as you can imagine, there is a level of donor fatigue.

A lot of people have been giving and giving and with inflation and rising food and fuel costs, a lot of folks just don't have as much to give.

So that is what we're seeing in the months ahead. For the folks who have the packet, I just printed out some additional information that I wanted to be sure that I shared with you today. There is a map in that packet that shows where people live that are accessing emergency
HSF has $200,000 of ARPA funds to donate.

MR. MATTY: The only thing I would like to advise Council of and Kim did, she hit on it, but I don't know that she stress it enough. From my office window in the North Point Tower on Thursdays, if you think this pandemic and food issue is done, when they start to distribute food, people -- it's either 12 or 1:00 that you start. People start to line up two hours ahead of time. When they start to distribute food from that muni lot on the South Marginal, all the way down to South Marginal to the bridge that people have to cross to come off the freeway onto the

12

1 freewrap ramp, cars are backed up to collect food.
2 MR. MCDONALD: All the way to 55th Street.
3 MR. MATTY: All the way to 55th Street.
4
5 And then on the ramp coming off the freeway, on the freeway themselves, they have to post police cars there so people don't hit the people that are standing in that line. That's how bad the situation is in our community.
6
7 MAYOR LICASTRO: 54 million meals short.
8
9 All right. Any further discussion on the motion?
10 All in favor of the motion?
11
12

MS. LOVANO: Thank you. It was an honor. Thank you so much. If you have any questions or if you want to come see our new facility that we're putting up in your backyard, please reach out directly to me. The Mayor has my information. I would love to share our project with everyone. I really think, as you said, I mean, it's heartbreaking to see the line of cars and we need all the help we can get, so I
questions, of course.

That's a quick update of where we are. Open for start our community meetings in May sometime. Tuesday actually, the 26th. We are hoping to that. Our next steering committee is this high school at Bratenahl Center, so we're doing evaluating this facility and evaluating the old two. We're also doing that.

We're now looking at what's absolutely needed so we can have a comparison between the two. We're also doing that.

Our engineers are in the process of evaluating this facility and evaluating the old high school at Bratenahl Center, so we're doing that. Our next steering committee is this Tuesday actually, the 26th. We are hoping to start our community meetings in May sometime. That's a quick update of where we are. Open for questions, of course.

MAYOR LICASTRO: Let me reiterate, we're...
Having several different visual listening opportunities at that, so we'll be taking a lot of input. I always say -- I think I said this in this group, we are here to challenge the administration, the police department, the community center, the people that work here. We're here to hear the community, because ultimately this documents we're putting together will make a direct recommendation. And that document needs to speak to the community.

Without the community involvement, it cannot speak to the community, so it's very important they're involving. We're waiting for the right timing.

MAYOR LICASTRO: For example, what dropped off the radar are things that just were not affordable, were just too costly or they weren't practicable. They didn't address the needs, so those were low-hanging fruit, but we're determined to do this right and be definitive in what we do with these facilities going forward.

Mr. Orel, you had a question?

MR. OREL: Yes. When you first came here, you said there were going to be -- I think you said there were going to be three public meetings. Is that still your plan?
MS. HOEFLING: Congratulations.

MAYOR LICASTRO: We're thrilled to have you. He did that after we started the process, so he must have liked something about us.

MR. MEYERS: Well, one of the steering committee members asked me why I didn't live in Bratenahl yet, said I know of a house. We went and looked at the house and eight days later we closed on the deal.

MAYOR LICASTRO: Congratulations. That's putting your money where your mouth is.

MR. MEYERS: We weren't even looking for a house.

MAYOR LICASTRO: That ends this agenda.

MS. COOKS: Approval.

MAYOR LICASTRO: I need approval of the minutes from last month if someone will make a motion to do so.

MR. McDONALD: So move.

MR. TAYLOR: Second.

MS. BURKE-JONES: Second.

MAYOR LICASTRO: Discussion? All in favor of the motion?

AYES: 4. Nays: 0.

MR. BENJAMIN: Abstention. I was absent.

MAYOR LICASTRO: Thank you, Mr. Benjamin. So we're actually on time. I'll ask for adjournment of the Committee of the Whole.

MR. McDONALD: So move.

MR. BENJAMIN: Second.

MAYOR LICASTRO: All in favor?

AYES: 5. NAYS: 0.

(Meeting adjourned at 6:29 p.m.)

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