



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

DRAFT
MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
HOMELESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HAC)
FORT LAUDERDALE EXECUTIVE AIRPORT
RED TAILS CONFERENCE ROOM
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2023 – 1:00 P.M.

July 2023 – June 2024

Attendance

Paula Yukna, Chair	P	2	0
Lilli De Lucca, Vice Chair	P	2	0
Fiona Johnson	A	0	1
Robin Martin	P	2	0
Amy Schimelfenyg (arr. 1:08)	P	2	0
Barry Somerstein	P	2	0

Staff

Luisa Agathon, Neighbor Support Manager
Battalion Chief Ariel Alvarez, Fort Lauderdale Fire Department
Officer Brian Blount, Fort Lauderdale Police Department
Officer Scott Hageman, Fort Lauderdale Police Department
Marie Joseph, Homeless Initiatives Coordinator
Captain Terry Maylor, Fort Lauderdale Fire Department
Monique Young, Community Health Coordinator, Fort Lauderdale Fire Department
Carla Blair, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communication to the City Commission

None.

I. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m.

II. Determination of Quorum

Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present.

III. Election of Board Chair / Vice-Chairperson

Motion made by Mr. Somerstein, seconded by Ms. De Lucca, that Ms. Yukna be Chair. In a voice vote, Ms. Yukna was elected Chair.

Motion made by Mr. Somerstein, seconded by Ms. Yukna, to nominate Ms. De Lucca as Vice Chair. In a voice vote, Ms. De Lucca was elected Chair.

IV. Public Sign-In

Ms. Agathon requested that any members of the public present at the meeting sign in at this time.

V. Agenda Items:

a. Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Mr. Somerstein, seconded by Ms. Martin, to adopt the minutes. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Ms. Schimelfenyg arrived at 1:08 p.m.

b. Meeting Location Update

Mr. Somerstein stated that meeting space has been offered at either Parker Playhouse or the Broward Center for the Performing Arts. Ms. Agathon added that United Way has also offered meeting space. Staff is looking into these options.

c. Taskforce Fore Ending Homelessness Presentation

Mikal Cartier and Jacob Torner, CEO and Vice President of the TaskForce Fore Ending Homelessness, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the continuum of care within Broward County. The continuum of care consists of outreach providers, affordable housing providers, transitional housing providers, and shelters.

Mr. Torner reviewed the TaskForce's funding sources, as well as their operation of the regional coordinated entry system. The TaskForce focuses on three major goals:

- Make sure that homelessness in the community is rare
- Make sure that homelessness is brief
- Make homelessness a one-time occurrence

Mr. Torner reviewed the Point in Time Count, which is an annual census and data collection process for people experiencing homelessness. Similarly, a Housing Inventory Count looks at an agency's permanent housing stock and who is living in it. Broward County has decided that they will not sponsor a Point in Time Count for 2024. The TaskForce will still lead an unsheltered count, focusing on the municipalities that have requested this effort be continued.

Mr. Torner reviewed other health challenges that homeless individuals may face, as well as the percentage of elderly persons and families experiencing homelessness, the widespread nature of homelessness in Broward County, and locations in Fort Lauderdale where there is a saturation of the homeless population.

Mr. Somerstein asked if there is a system by which persons in need of shelter and supportive services can be transported to these services through the bus system. Mr. Torner replied that this is at least partially possible: a significant number of services are located in Downtown Fort Lauderdale. There are also service providers in other areas of the County, although they may have fewer options.

Vice Chair De Lucca asked if the TaskForce partners with other nonprofit entities which offer behavioral health services. Mr. Torner advised that the TaskForce is one of approximately 30 to 40 organizations that are part of the continuum of care. All of these organizations refer individuals to other services. The challenge, however, is that there are more people who need to get off the streets immediately.

The Fort Lauderdale Housing Navigation Program, which began in 2022, was founded as a result of the City's request to dedicate services to address the needs of neighbors, law enforcement, and fire/rescue professionals. They not only collaborate on bringing new resources into the City's Neighbor Support Programs but facilitate coordination of services as well.

Chair Yukna commented that many homeless individuals do not want housing. Mr. Torner stated that this was not the case. Mr. Somerstein estimated that this description applied to approximately 5% to 10% of the homeless population, not the majority.

Mr. Somerstein asked what the TaskForce would recommend that the Homeless Advisory Committee (HAC) focus on. Mr. Torner stated that the Committee could work to ensure that the Fort Lauderdale community is able to better incentivize property owners to rehabilitate or redevelop their housing stock to provide affordable housing. While not all homeless persons are ready for rehousing, the TaskForce's experience has been that if engagement continues, those individuals may become interested.

Ms. Schimelfenyg observed that affordable housing in Fort Lauderdale can assist households that make up to \$80,000 per year, which is not the same as the homeless population.

Vice Chair De Lucca advised that there is an influx of homeless persons in South Florida in the winter, as it is less cold than elsewhere in the U.S. She added that many individuals are living with illnesses and/or using substances that may disqualify them from using a shelter. Mr. Torner noted that many individuals do not trust shelters' processes.

Ms. Schimelfenyg stated that she has participated in several Point in Time Counts and noted that the number-one reason many people told her they were homeless was because their rents increased. She also did not agree that many homeless persons do not want to live in a home, pointing out that the rules at shelters may be difficult for some individuals to follow, nor are the conditions at shelters always acceptable.

Mr. Torner continued that another potential factor on which the Committee could focus is the lack of coordination of resources throughout the Broward community. He emphasized that this is not an issue specific to Fort Lauderdale.

Mr. Torner continued that another area of focus for the Committee could be why more has not been done by agencies from the local to the federal level to assist individuals who want to exit homelessness. He recommended looking at the City's budget allocations to determine whether or not more funds could be made available to homeless persons.

Chair Yukna asked who the Committee would talk to regarding allocation of funds. Mr. Torner advised that there are millions of dollars coming into the community from various funding sources, but there is little efficient coordination between agencies or entities on its use.

Vice Chair De Lucca asked if the TaskForce follows up with the individuals it has helped place into housing. Mr. Torner replied that this is tracked through the program's Housing Navigation Program. The TaskForce continues to monitor individuals to ensure they do not fall back into homelessness.

The Committee briefly discussed how to assist individuals in obtaining the identification they need to seek help, including increasing access to drivers' licenses or other forms of ID. Mr. Torner explained that most housing navigators take their clients to get ID and/or replacement forms of identification and documentation.

Ms. Schimelfenyg asked if the TaskForce has enough housing navigators. Mr. Torner replied that to ensure individuals have the level of support they need to be successful, case management professionals' workloads are typically maintained at smaller levels, such as 15 clients.

Mr. Somerstein asked if the City has a directory of the various service providers in the area. Ms. Agathon replied that she would send the Committee members a link to the City's website, where different resources for homeless persons are listed.

d. City of Fort Lauderdale Presentation

Ms. Agathon introduced several Staff members who are involved with efforts to assist homeless individuals in Fort Lauderdale, as well as two of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department's Homeless Outreach Officers and two members of the Fort Lauderdale Fire Department's Mobile Integrated Healthcare System Program.

Captain Terry Maylor of the Fort Lauderdale Fire Department explained that the City wished to create a program that would address high-frequency users of services for homeless persons. The Mobile Organizers Orienting Resources for Empowerment

(MOORE) program is intended to connect many of the resources mentioned by Mr. Torner in the previous presentation.

Captain Maylor stated that the MOORE program includes civilian positions teamed with Firefighters, which provides the opportunity for two subject matter experts to bring different levels of expertise to address issues. These teams make contact with the homeless population and determine the services to which they can be connected.

Monique Young, Community Health Coordinator, advised that the MOORE teams identify an individual who is unhoused and connects them with community resources. They connect with individuals through the Community Court program as well as through local hospitals.

Mr. Somerstein asked if the MOORE teams evaluate homeless individuals' need for health care, including whether or not they need to go to a hospital. Captain Maylor replied that while there are costs associated with the program, it is essential to connect individuals to the services they need in order to ensure that the system functions efficiently.

Mr. Somerstein asked if the MOORE teams interface with the Fort Lauderdale Police Department. Ms. Young advised that Firefighters keep a list of the individuals with whom they are working, and cross paths with others who are providing services to the same individuals, such as Police Officers. Captain Maylor added that when the MOORE program makes contact with an individual, they may need to refer that person to other outreach providers who can connect them with the services they need.

Battalion Chief Ariel Alvarez stated that the original intent of the MOORE program was to connect individuals to resources, including bringing them into hospitals. He noted that the teams' time and resources are divided between assisting Firefighters with operations and addressing calls to individuals in need of help.

Fort Lauderdale Police Officer Brian Blount, who is one of the Police Department's Homeless Outreach Officers, stated that this program operates on a tiered system. Outreach Officers visit all the City's "hot spots" for the homeless population and meet with the individuals they see regularly.

The second approach used by the Police Department is response to complaints, which often come through the City Commissioners' offices and are passed on to the Department. Officers try to make contact with the individuals noted in these complaints and work with other providers, such as the TaskForce, to assist them. Officer Blount advised that there are only three Homeless Outreach Officers working the entire City, which can be overwhelming due to the number of people in need of services.

The main focus of the outreach program is Community Court. Officers look for individuals who are committing minor violations who may be more resistant to services.

These individuals are given notice to appear before Community Court, where they have the opportunity to meet with service providers and speak with a judge.

Ms. Agathon showed a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee to provide an overview of what the City is doing to address homelessness. The presentation included statistics on Broward County's homeless population, as well as the percentage of emergency calls which were related to homeless individuals or issues.

There have been approximately 1200 visits to Community Court in FY 2023. Community Court is the central point for the City. Roughly 40% of individuals who are cited by Police Officers attend Community Court, which is a voluntary program. It is up to the individual whether or not they want to be part of this program.

Mr. Somerstein requested additional information on the types of violations that would bring an individual to Community Court. Officer Blount replied that these are typically minor violations; more severe violations are addressed in a different manner.

Ms. Agathon continued that one in three individuals attending Community Court has been there before. The program connects with approximately 70% of the City's homeless population. With regard to housing navigation, there was a housing success rate of 65% in FY 2023.

The City Commission has prioritized housing accessibility in FY 2024. This includes addressing congregation intersections, better coordinating physical and mental health services, and improving the feeling of safety for neighbors. The Homeless Outreach team will address congregation intersections through a "hot spot" deployment program. Housing navigation teams will visit these locations to make contact with individuals and identify how they can be assisted through housing plans.

Other resources include Community Court, the Fire Department's MOORE team, and the housing navigation program discussed by the TaskForce. Other program funding, including HUD dollars, runs through the Housing and Community Development Department.

Mr. Somerstein asked if there is a breakdown of how funding is divided among these programs in FY 2024. He noted that any recommendations the Committee may make will need to be within these fiscal constraints. Ms. Agathon advised that the Committee may also choose to look ahead to FY 2025 when making recommendations.

Regarding the improvement of safety, the City makes presentations to homeowners' and civic associations to share information. There are three new Officers added to the Homeless Outreach team in FY 2024, who will begin working nights and weekends in calendar year 2024.

The City also works with the CoC and its board. It was noted that Committee member Mr. Martin is a member of this board.

The City also participates in a number of advisory boards which address homelessness, which helps ensure that they know what is happening with various service providers. The Police Department and City have been tasked with working more closely with other municipalities in improving the existing jail discharge system.

The Homeless Advisory Committee (HAC) was created to help the City move forward and create a framework for how to address homelessness in Fort Lauderdale. The Committee was created with a 24-month timeline.

Ms. Agathon read the Committee's purpose, which is to create a strategic plan to identify funding and best practices to raise awareness in the community of what the City is currently doing. They are also asked to identify gaps in programs and help develop performance indicators.

Ms. Agathon advised that she would share strategic plans created by other municipalities, including Jacksonville, Boston, and Hollywood, so they can discuss these proposals. Mr. Somerstein suggested that Orlando's plan be included as well.

Chair Yukna asked if there are other advisory boards throughout Broward County. Ms. Agathon stated that Pompano Beach has just launched an advisory entity or working group. The CoC has also asked that the HAC share their activity with them.

Mr. Somerstein asked if information is available from other cities of similar size to Fort Lauderdale, such as Nashville or San Diego. Ms. Agathon replied that more research can be done to provide information from other cities.

Vice Chair De Lucca asked if more information is available on how referrals are handled, including how these are linked to the hospital systems. Chief Alvarez clarified that there are no direct links to hospitals: referrals show how many times an individual has been transported. Captain Maylor added that the Fire Department has implemented a system which allows them to filter high-frequency homeless contacts from others.

Mr. Somerstein asked if the next Committee meeting would begin to focus on an outline or approach to the Committee's mission. Ms. Agathon confirmed this.

Mr. Somerstein asked if Staff could include the Committee members' phone numbers and email addresses when sending copies of today's presentations. It was clarified that the Sunshine Law prohibits Committee members from speaking with one another on Committee business. Mr. Somerstein explained that the information could be shared with others who are interested in similar subjects.

Chair Yukna asked if the Committee's 24-month timeline is common. Ms. Agathon advised that this timeline was established by the City Commission and noted that there are other advisory bodies which have specific lifetimes.

e. Feedback

Mr. Somerstein asked how the Committee members should give their input to the City Commission. Ms. Agathon stated that there can be communications to the City Commission. There can also be a joint workshop between the Committee and the City Commission. She recommended that the Committee first establish a framework on how to move forward, then schedule a meeting with the Commission at which this framework can be shared.

Mr. Somerstein asked if the Committee could request meetings with or presentations from other committees, municipalities, or agencies, possibly resulting in a coordinated effort. Ms. Agathon confirmed that Staff has already been tasked with this.

VI. Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 2:27 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.

Next Meeting: December 14, 2023

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]