



DRAFT
MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
HOMELESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HAC)
UNITED WAY OF BROWARD COUNTY
COLKER CONFERENCE ROOM
1300 SOUTH ANDREWS AVENUE
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33316
THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2024 – 1:00 P.M.

July 2023 – June 2024

		<u>Attendance</u>	
Paula Yukna, Chair	P	4	0
Lilli De Lucca, Vice Chair	A	3	1
Fiona Johnson	A	0	3
Robin Martin	P	4	0
Amy Schimelfenyg	P	4	0
Barry Somerstein	P	4	0

Staff

Lisette Palmero, Staff Liaison, Homeless Initiatives Program Manager
Luisa Agathon, Neighbor Support Manager

Communication to the City Commission

None.

I. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. Determination of Quorum

It was noted a quorum was present.

III. Public Sign-In

IV. Approval of Nov./Dec. Minutes

Motion made by Mr. Somerstein, and duly seconded, to approve. [The minutes were approved by consent.]

V. Agenda Items:

a. Shelter Presentation

Ms. Palmero recalled that at the December 2023 Committee meeting, the top three items the Committee wished to address were shelter, housing, and funding. She explained that she had prepared a presentation on shelter, which will be discussed by the Committee after it is presented.

Local shelters that assist homeless individuals and families include:

- Broward Outreach Center (Hollywood): funded through grants and private funding, with no Broward County funding
- Central Homeless Assistance Center (Fort Lauderdale): funded through Broward County and private funding
- North Homeless Assistance Center (Pompano Beach): funded through Broward County and private funding
- Salvation Army (Fort Lauderdale): funded through Broward County and private funding

Mr. Somerstein requested clarification of why the Broward Outreach Center elected not to receive County funding. Mr. Martin explained that this center chose to decline County funding for faith-based reasons. Entities receiving Broward County funds must ensure that religious participation is fully optional.

Mr. Somerstein asked if the services provided at the Central Homeless Assistance Center (HAC) and North HAC facilities are the same. Mr. Martin replied that services are meant to be comparable. The Central HAC has a capacity of 230 residents, although they are currently operating at 65% occupancy due to construction. As of January 3, 2024, 113 individuals and 10 families are housed at this facility. Broward County pays \$45.28 per bed.

Ms. Palmero explained that the funding allocation for each facility is for emergency shelter beds only and does not include case management for permanent supportive housing. No governmental agencies aside from Broward County assist the facilities with funding.

Mr. Martin emphasized that some partner agencies provide other services as well as emergency shelters, citing the permanent housing provided by the Broward Partnership for the Homeless as an example. Some providers offer supportive services as well as shelter.

Mr. Martin also addressed capacity, pointing out that during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were issues related to space allocation in order to ensure social distancing. Shelters also had difficulty hiring and retaining staff, which limited the number of beds they were able to provide and caused them to be below capacity.

Ms. Palmero advised that City Staff participates in a monthly shelter meeting conducted by Broward County at which each shelter discusses their census. This has recently included a discussion of support staff vacancies as well, as this limits the number of beds they are able to fill and causes their census to be lower.

Ms. Palmero also addressed the funding allocation for the Salvation Army, which includes additional beds Broward County has funded and allocated for a project at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. The Salvation Army provides beds for individuals who are homeless and sleeping at the Airport.

Mr. Somerstein asked what might happen in the case of a homeless individual who is not currently in a Broward jurisdiction which has a shelter. Mr. Martin clarified that Fort Lauderdale, as a governmental entity, has no control over who can access shelter. The Central HAC, for example, is located in Fort Lauderdale but does not prioritize Fort Lauderdale residents. Priority is determined according to needs assessments and other considerations.

Mr. Somerstein asked which entity determines the shelter that will take in a homeless individual. Ms. Palmero stated that this is determined by the Task Force for Ending Homelessness, which is the lead agency addressing homelessness. Each shelter contacts the Task Force each day and reports how many beds they have available. The Task Force then prioritizes the homeless individuals with whom they are meeting on that day to determine who gets these beds.

Ms. Palmero continued that some municipalities are able to purchase and manage shelter beds in specific shelter facilities and hold them for their own residents, Fort Lauderdale does not have this capability.

Lisette Barber, member of the City's Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC), stated that there are important distinctions to be made between the Salvation Army and other shelters. Homeless persons are given vouchers for a Salvation Army bed which may be good for up to one week. Mr. Martin advised that the individuals sheltered in this manner are not receiving case management and are not part of the emergency shelter system, but are participating in a respite system.

Ms. Palmero further clarified that supportive services can be provided at the Central and North HACs, although they are not available through the Salvation Army, which provides emergency shelter for up to one week at a time. She also pointed out that few beds are available because people in the shelter system are not moving sufficiently quickly into housing. This results in shelters that are often full or have few available beds.

Mr. Somerstein asked what sources can be used to help increase staff in order to increase shelter capacity. Ms. Palmero stated that issues include salaries: there may be few or no applicants for posted positions, which creates a barrier to bringing in more staff and increasing the shelters' census.

Mr. Martin explained that the emergency shelter system is intended to provide, on average, up to 60 days of service. Its goal is to transition individuals out of homelessness within 35 days; however, some individuals remain in a shelter significantly longer, as they

may be more difficult to place due to their needs. Transitional shelter is intended to provide two years or less for individuals with longer-term needs and multiple issues.

Mr. Somerstein asked if there is a central source which determines which type of housing an individual or family may receive. Mr. Martin replied that if the system works properly, the individual accesses outreach and is helped into emergency shelter. The individual may remain at that shelter for two weeks to one month before moving into either rapid re-housing or permanent housing. Persons in rapid re-housing typically do not qualify for permanent housing vouchers and are not disabled. This type of housing focuses mostly on families which have some source of income.

Ms. Palmero next addressed specialty shelters, which include the following:

- Hope South Florida (Fort Lauderdale): faith-based facility funded through Broward County and private funding; this facility operates a limited number of family units, all of which are full at present
- Covenant House (Fort Lauderdale): facility for young adults between the ages of 18 and 23, funded through Broward County and private funding; offers 74 beds for young adults
- Women in Distress: facility for victims of domestic violence, funded through Broward County and private funding; the capacity and census for this facility is not known
- Task Force for Ending Homelessness (Fort Lauderdale): this program operates the Elder Haven and Hope program, but does not receive Broward County funding specifically for that program; the Elder Haven and Hope program offers 11 beds for elderly adults aged 62 and over; this facility provides transitional and shared housing, and individuals are assisted toward rapid re-housing or permanent supportive housing

Mr. Martin emphasized that Women in Distress is a domestic violence shelter rather than a homeless shelter. Occupants must meet criteria for domestic violence, even if they are also homeless.

b. Discussion

Ms. Palmero requested that the Committee further discuss the presentation, including any questions regarding shelters or suggestions for the City moving forward.

Ms. Schimelfenyg asked if there are other organizations which provide shelter and do not receive Broward County dollars. Mr. Martin replied that he was not aware of any such programs of significant size.

Mr. Somerstein asked what municipalities, rather than the County, can do to assist shelters. Ms. Agathon advised that the City's current budget has no funding allocated to shelters. She recalled that in 2022, Fort Lauderdale allocated \$200,000 toward Salvation

Army beds, but ultimately could not reach an agreement with that entity on access to beds, which resulted in the City providing no funding.

Ms. Schimelfenyg commented that the City provides funding for programs that provide case management for homeless persons. Ms. Agathon recalled that she had previously provided a handout showing the City's different contracts with providers, which included the Task Force for Ending Homelessness, Showering Love, and the Fort Lauderdale Police and Fire Departments as well as Neighbor Support funding for homeless resources.

Mr. Somerstein asked if the City's budget could be adjusted to provide for a per diem for shelter beds for Fort Lauderdale residents. Ms. Agathon replied that this would be a policy decision, and suggested that the Committee may want to make this recommendation to the City Commission.

Mr. Martin explained that if a shelter is undergoing a particular difficulty, such as a staffing shortage, a city could offer a supplementary payment to a case manager's salary in exchange for a certain number of beds for that city. This strategy would require outreach to each individual shelter provider to discuss their capacity, barriers to service, projected goals, and what action the City might be able to take to assist them. Mr. Somerstein suggested that the Committee may wish to recommend this action to the City Commission.

Ms. Palmero cited the example of Miami-Dade's Homeless Trust, which is their lead continuum of care rather than the County itself. The Homeless Trust contracts with different shelters throughout Miami-Dade County and has purchased beds in several shelters, as well as treatment beds in facilities for individuals experiencing mental illness or substance abuse. She suggested that the Committee may also wish to look further into this option.

Mr. Somerstein asked how the Committee might secure additional information on the existing system's inability to operate at full capacity so they may make an informed recommendation to the Commission. Ms. Palmero confirmed that she can look into this as Staff Liaison for the Committee, and emphasized that the Committee members may also conduct their own research and bring this information forward for discussion.

Chair Yukna observed that there are grant funds available to the City, which have been mentioned by the City Commission in the past. Ms. Agathon replied that at the next meeting, Staff will provide a breakdown of these funds, which include grants, HUD, Police and Fire Departments, and services such as the Task Force to End Homelessness, among others. These will be discussed further under the goal of funding.

Ms. Schimelfenyg requested clarification of the issues discussed by the AHAC. Ms. Barber replied that the AHAC advises the City Commission on how to change policy and how to spend the City's affordable housing budget.

Mr. Somerstein noted that one policy issue is the ability for a developer to make a payment in lieu rather than constructing affordable housing units. This payment is divided between the County and the City. Ms. Barber stated that the AHAC is looking at accessory dwelling units (ADUs), the use of which has been restricted in the past. The AHAC hopes to provide incentives and remove disincentives for building these structures, which could lead to an increase in housing stock.

Ms. Barber continued that the AHAC also looks at what other cities are doing with regard to affordable housing in order to increase the number of affordable units, particularly at the low and very low income levels. She pointed out that most of the affordable units built in Fort Lauderdale are rented at higher income levels than these.

Ms. Palmero concluded that the Committee has discussed emergency shelters, shelter funding, and funding shortfalls at today's meeting. She, and individual Committee members, will research these further and bring them back for discussion and a recommendation to the City Commission. She added that she would also reach out to the AHAC's Staff Liaison to discuss a potential joint meeting, and concluded that she would provide the members with a folder of pertinent information on funding at the next meeting.

Ms. Palmero also noted that Neighbor Support Night is scheduled for February 15, 2024, in the City Hall garage. She encouraged the members to attend this event and spread the word throughout the community as well.

VI. Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 2:11 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: February 8, 2024

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