



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**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, MARCH 14, 2024 – 1:00 P.M.**

**July 2023 – June 2024**

		<b><u>Attendance</u></b>	
Paula Yukna, Chair	P	4	0
Lilli De Lucca, Vice Chair	P	4	0
Ray Dettman	P	1	0
Fiona Johnson	A	0	3
Robin Martin	P	4	0
Amy Schimelfenyg	P	4	0
Barry Somerstein (arr. 1:08)	P	4	0

**Staff**

Lisette Palmero, Staff Liaison, Homeless Initiatives Program Manager  
Marie Joseph, Homeless Initiatives Coordinator  
Jorg Hruschka, Chief, Volunteer Services  
Karen Cruitt, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

**Communication to the City Commission**

None.

**I. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Yukna called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**II. Determination of Quorum**

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

**III. Public Sign-In**

Members of the public in attendance were asked to sign in at this time.

**IV. Approval of January Minutes**

**Motion** made by Mr. Martin, seconded by Vice Chair De Lucca, to approve the minutes. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

#### **IV. Agenda Items:**

The following Item was taken out of order on the Agenda.

##### **b. Housing Presentation**

Ms. Palmero showed a PowerPoint presentation on housing options in Fort Lauderdale, calling the Committee's attention to the City's Housing and Community Development Division, which has access to funds that can be used toward different housing options. These include:

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Fort Lauderdale is allocated \$1.5 million; programs run through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); CDBG-funded activities include acquisition, public facilities and improvements, rehabilitation, public services, capital projects, and fair housing activities
- Home Investment Partnership: this allocation is over \$700,000; the program provides federal assistance through HUD to municipalities in order to provide decent and affordable housing, particularly for low- and very low-income households; this program assists with housing rehabilitation/replacement and purchase assistance for first-time home buyers
- State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP): the City receives \$900,000 annually between 2022 and 2025; these funds can be used for moving costs, purchase assistance for first-time home buyers, and housing rehabilitation, as well as for assistance to homeless individuals
- Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA): the City receives slightly over \$8 million, for which different organizations submit bids to assist this population; agencies provide specific services to these households

Mr. Somerstein arrived at 1:08 p.m.

Ms. Palmero explained that the City has a Housing Navigation Program, which is operated in conjunction with the Task Force for Ending Homelessness. Through this program, the City works with homeless individuals with more complex needs and takes them from the street to housing. The Housing and Community Development Department (HCD), also shares SHIP funds for use toward moving costs for these individuals. Because of this use of SHIP funds and the partnership with the Task Force, the City had a 65% housing success rate in fiscal year (FY) 2023.

Chair Yukna requested clarification of the criteria for individuals moving from the street to housing. Ms. Palmero stated that some individuals have incomes and others do not. Some go through a coordinated entry process. The Task Force has built relationships with landlords in the Fort Lauderdale community, which means if a person does not meet the criteria for the coordinated entry process, the Task Force and the City can reach out directly to a landlord to seek a unit.

Chair Yukna asked how many units in Fort Lauderdale are available for these individuals. Ms. Palmero advised that she did not know an exact number, but added that some of these units are located outside the City. The timeline for moving individuals into these units without coordinated entry can be as quickly as two weeks to a month.

Ms. Schimelfenyg requested additional information on the City's 65% housing success rate. Ms. Palmero explained that from a list of 43 individuals with complex cases, 25 individuals were housed and three were reunified with family or friends. There is follow-up with housed individuals to ensure they can maintain their housing. In FY 2024, the City's goal is a 75% success rate.

Chair Yukna asked how an individual's eligibility for the Housing Navigation Program is determined. Ms. Palmero replied that the City works with the Task Force, the Fire Department, and the Homeless Outreach Team to identify individuals who are in greater need of help. Any unsheltered individual qualifies as eligible, but some require a higher level of assistance.

Jean Bellot, member of the public, asked how individuals experiencing mental illness are assisted, as they may have difficulty maintaining stability on their own. Ms. Palmero stated that the Task Force has a team that works specifically with individuals who have mental illness.

Mr. Somerstein asked if it would be possible for Staff to provide a chart showing funding sources and their uses. He also asked if some of the different funding sources and groups could be consolidated for greater efficiency. Ms. Palmero referred the Committee members to a list of the City Commission's FY 2024 priorities, which outlines all funding, including funds for housing accessibility.

### **c. Updates**

Ms. Palmero reported that the City's Neighbor Support/Homeless Initiatives Team was awarded \$250,000 from the state of Florida for a Homeless Mental Health Housing Program. The goal of this program is to appropriately stabilize individuals and families who are homeless with a mental health condition and pair them with local service providers of wraparound services for 60 days. This program will ensure they receive the intensive case management they need, including medication, counseling, and other services. This is intended to stabilize individuals so they can work on a housing plan toward further stability.

Ms. Palmero continued that the City had originally requested \$500,000 for this program, which would provide 30 beds. With \$250,000, the number of beds would be lowered to 15.

Chair Yukna asked how long individuals may remain in the program. Ms. Palmero advised that this will be determined on an individual basis, although the intent is to cap each person's stay at 60 days. The program will be intensive.

Mr. Somerstein asked how much of the \$250,000 will go toward beds. Ms. Palmero explained that beds cost \$40 per day per bed. She emphasized that this amount is inclusive of food and services. The program will use a scattered-site model so all 15 beds may not be in the same place.

Ms. Palmero continued that the City had requested \$2 million from the federal government, of which they were awarded \$850,000 for a Critical Homeless Support Service Hot Spot Program. "Hot spots" are areas where five or more homeless individuals tend to congregate and/or camp. The City will use these funds to deploy an array of community services to these areas to create a housing strategy. The funding request includes case managers, overtime compensation for employees of the City's Parks Department for cleanup, software assistance, and non-congregate shelter.

Mr. Somerstein asked how much of the \$850,000 will be used specifically for beds. Ms. Palmero replied that this has not yet been budgeted, as the City did not receive the full amount they had requested.

#### **a. National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference**

Ms. Palmero continued that she and Ms. Joseph recently attended the National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference. At present, there are roughly 34,000 unsheltered individuals in the city of San Francisco, where the conference was held, with another 80,000 unsheltered individuals in Los Angeles. By comparison, there are approximately 800 unsheltered persons in Fort Lauderdale.

Ms. Palmero continued that San Francisco is able to prepare ballot initiatives for bonds and taxes which are voted on by the public. Monies are allocated in this way toward services for homeless persons.

Ms. Palmero advised that Neighbor Support Manager Luisa Agathon and Assistant City Manager Anthony Fajardo, who are currently visiting three west coast cities, plan to meet with Neighbor Support Staff and share their findings with the intent of developing an Action Plan that could be implemented in Fort Lauderdale. This plan will be shared with the Committee when it is complete.

The Florida State Senate recently passed the final version of the Unauthorized Public Camping and Public Sleeping Bill, which prohibits local governments from allowing homeless individuals to sleep or camp on most public property or on any public right-of-way; however, County governments may establish specific areas for camps where homeless persons would be allowed to stay.

Most counties providing encampment areas would be required to provide services, including bathrooms and clean water. The bill places a one-year time limit on the establishment of camps. If the county decides to place an encampment within the boundaries of a city, the municipality's local government must approve the location.

Members of the Florida Legislature who oppose the bill express concern that it fails to solve the problem of homelessness by doing little to help individuals get back on their feet and move toward permanent shelter. Counties will be asked to put services in place at homeless encampments; however, no funding was attached to the bill to defray this expense. Broward County does not currently have a place to which individuals sleeping outdoors may relocate, although they are now required to provide one.

Ms. Palmero continued that some Central Florida and North Florida communities have begun arresting homeless persons. Fort Lauderdale does not want to take this step. She concluded that further guidance is needed from the City's Chief of Police as well as from the County. More internal meetings are planned to determine a strategy.

Mr. Martin stated that the legislation will put a major strain on municipalities as well as organizations which assist homeless persons. Chair Yukna asked if the legislation can force homeless individuals to relocate to an alternate site. Mr. Martin replied that the intent seems to be preventing individuals who live on the street from creating small tent cities. This would mean they are subject to trespassing or other violations that would allow law enforcement to move or threaten them.

Mr. Somerstein asked if the legislation would force the county to take some type of action. Mr. Martin advised that there are likely to be multiple years' worth of lawsuits addressing the bill.

Ms. Palmero continued that Fort Lauderdale does not have the ability to offer a bed to a homeless individual due to their limited resources. She reiterated that internal meetings are planned and she would keep the Committee apprised of developments.

#### **d. Discussion**

Ms. Palmero reminded the Committee members that the three top priorities they had identified at a previous meeting were shelter, housing, and funding. The next presentation will focus more closely on funding. She added that the Committee may also request that their Chair make a communication to the City Commission if they are in agreement on what will be communicated.

Chair Yukna asked if the Committee would be permitted to meet more than once per month. Ms. Palmero replied that she would need to ask the City Clerk's Office if this is an option. She noted that in addition to her capacity as Staff Liaison, she has many other responsibilities.

Leann Barber, member of the public, advised that the city of Tampa may provide a workable model, and asked if the Committee could learn more about what is being done there, including how law enforcement interacts with the public. Ms. Palmero explained that the Continuum of Care (CoC) in Tampa operates differently than in Broward County and Fort Lauderdale: a former tent city has evolved into a pallet shelter because the county had sufficient money and land. In addition, Catholic Charities operates the shelter and provided most of the money for this move.

Ms. Palmero continued that while Fort Lauderdale has discussed a similar option, the biggest difficulty is the need to meet Hurricane Code requirements. Broward and Miami-Dade Counties have a stricter Building Code than counties farther north, although those counties also experience hurricanes.

Ms. Palmero added that another option is the development of “navigation centers” for unsheltered persons. A company has indicated that they may be able to construct buildings that can meet Miami Hurricane Code requirements. The issue would be finding a place to construct navigation centers.

Chair Yukna pointed out that due to a decrease in enrollment, a number of schools may be closed in Broward County. It was noted that these buildings are owned by the Broward County School Board, and there has been discussion of using these facilities for shelter or affordable housing, although Ms. Palmero noted she did not know the outcome of this discussion.

Mr. Dettman noted that at a previous meeting, Mr. Martin had recommended the Committee members review the City’s Ordinances. Mr. Martin explained that when the City created the Central Homeless Assistance Center, they developed a number of Ordinances addressing how this center can operate, including a prohibition on accepting “walk-up” clients. All potential clients must be brought in through the Task Force for Ending Homelessness. Another Ordinance caps the number of people who can stay at the facility at roughly 200, even though the facility is capable of accommodating a greater number of people.

Mr. Dettman asked if the Committee can request that Staff look into these Ordinances and find out what can be done to increase the Center’s capacity. He also noted that the City has issued a request for proposal (RFP) for a shelter. Ms. Palmero confirmed that an RFP for a non-congregate shelter has been issued through HCD. This can either be a new shelter or an expansion of an existing shelter.

Mr. Dettman asked if a voucher system could be implemented to allow unsheltered individuals to use vouchers to access beds in hotels. Ms. Palmero explained that the City moved away from providing hotel beds after the COVID-19 pandemic, as that model requires a great many services in addition to a hotel voucher. Some organizations still have limited funds that can be used toward hotels; however, the individual or family must have an exit plan. An individual cannot be housed indefinitely in a hotel.

Ms. Palmero continued that there may be different discussions regarding the purchase of a motel or hotel that could be supplied with services to help unsheltered individuals and families access permanent housing.

It was asked if Fort Lauderdale receives any other funds to address homelessness in addition to federal and HUD funding. Ms. Palmero replied that there are monies from the state as well as from the City's General Fund. Fort Lauderdale does not receive any money from Broward County to address homelessness.

Mr. Somerstein stated it would be helpful to see a conceptual recommendation from the individuals who work with the City's unsheltered population, which the Committee could then send, possibly in revised form, to the City Commission.

Chair Yukna asserted that she would like the Committee to go before the Commission after their regular summer break and make a recommendation of what they would like to see.

Ms. Palmero advised that she and other members of Neighbor Support may share information they have heard from unsheltered individuals, but that is very different from the Committee hearing directly from formerly unsheltered persons about what can help or hurt the process of getting off the street.

Mr. Martin advised that the greatest needs are money and housing, with the form of housing dependent upon how much money is available. The City can evaluate available properties, as well as schools, for potential use as temporary or emergency shelters. He added that Broward County has funding for a South Homeless Assistance Center, but have not yet launched this facility. It is also difficult to find apartments for unsheltered individuals even if they have the money due to the lack of affordable housing.

Ms. Palmero stated that the City works closely with the Fort Lauderdale Police Department as well as the Fort Lauderdale Fire Department, who have community-based teams that seek to assist unsheltered persons. She agreed that this outreach must be broader.

Mr. Martin noted that different funding sources may also be available to assist different populations, such as veterans and families. Ms. Palmero advised that the City will address individuals with mental health issues through the new funding program; after the first year of this program, it may be possible to expand those services to other sub-populations as well.

Mr. Somerstein stated that he would like to hear more information on the inventory of excess City properties. Chair Yukna added that she would also like information on the possibility of converting schools and hotels to provide housing, and whether funds are available to refurbish these properties.

Ms. Barber asked if there is consideration of seating a formerly unsheltered person as a member of the Committee. Ms. Palmero explained that the makeup of the Committee, including the number of individuals and how they are appointed, is determined by Resolution. She suggested that the Committee can make a recommendation to expand its size and the categories for its seats. The City Commission may then determine whether or not to expand the Committee's governing Resolution.

Mr. Martin stated that he serves on a Broward County committee which identifies needs and gaps in funding sources, and can share this information with the Committee. There are also a number of special projects underway at the County level, such as addressing unsheltered populations in specific areas.

Ms. Schimelfenyg asked when the City will develop and finalize the FY 2025 budget. Ms. Palmero replied that the budget process is already underway and must be finalized by October 1, 2024. She concluded that the Committee will need to make any recommendation to the City Commission by September.

## **V. Adjourn**

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 2:26 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: January 11, 2024**

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