



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
HOMELESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HAC)
TOWER 101 – 101 NE 3RD AVENUE
SUITE 1100 CONFERENCE ROOM
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33301
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2024 – 1:00 P.M.**

July 2023 – June 2024

Attendance

Paula Yukna, Chair	P	10	0
Robin Martin, Vice Chair	P	10	0
Ray Dettman	P	7	0
Amy Schimelfenyg	P	10	0
Jamie Sturgis	A	1	1

Staff

- Luisa Agathon, Neighbor Support Manager
- Carole Mitchell, Homeless Initiatives Program Manager
- Marie Joseph, Homeless Initiatives Coordinator
- Kayla Weinberg, Community Court Assistant
- Jorg Hruschka, Chief Volunteer Services
- K. Cruitt, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communication to the City Commission

Motion made by Vice Chair Martin, seconded by Mr. Dettman, that the Advisory Committee share with the City Commission that we do not believe that taking a tough stance on homelessness is the best posture to take as a City as great as the City of Fort Lauderdale. We believe that the verbiage should be about compassion, and that not all homeless are causing problems in our community, and that we are looking at solutions to provide housing and support for those who are the most vulnerable in our City. Until we can provide enough housing and support for those who are homeless, we do not encourage the City to criminalize any of the activities that are life-sustaining activities. We do agree with getting tough on people who commit crimes, but individuals who are merely trying to sleep and sustain their life are not committing crimes. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

I. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Yukna called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. Determination of Quorum

It was noted a quorum was present at the meeting.



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III. Public Sign-In

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

IV. Approval of September Minutes

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

V. Agenda Items

a. HB 1365 – Town Hall meeting dates

Chair Yukna advised that there are three upcoming Town Hall meetings to address Florida House Bill (HB) 1365 and encouraged the Committee members to attend them. The meeting dates and locations are:

- Tuesday, October 22, 2024 at the L.A. Lee YMCA
- Tuesday, November 12, 2024 at United Way
- Thursday, December 5, 2024 at the Beach Community Center

Ms. Agathon asked that the Committee members reach out to other individuals who may be interested in these meetings and urge them to attend. The City's legal team will provide an overview of HB 1365 as well as the City's related Ordinance, which was recently passed. The City Manager's Office will also review how reporting of camping or sleeping on public property or in public rights-of-way should be done, and there will be an overview of the City's existing programs to address its homeless population and the successes achieved during the past fiscal year. None of the Town Hall meetings will be available via Zoom.

Chair Yukna asked if other Florida municipalities have taken action similar to Fort Lauderdale's Ordinance, which applies on a 24-hour, seven-day basis. Ms. Agathon replied that she could look into this further.

b. Ordinance No. C-24-42 / Code of Conduct Affirmation Statement

Vice Chair Martin requested Staff clarification of why the City Commission chose to adopt an Ordinance which is more restrictive than the requirements of HB 1365. Ms. Agathon advised that the City Commission directed the City Attorney's Office to look into the actions taken by other Florida municipalities, followed by the drafting of an Ordinance for the Commission to consider.

Chair Yukna commented that the Ordinance does not address use of the City's beaches or parks. Ms. Agathon explained that the Fort Lauderdale Beach is covered by its own

Ordinance addressing overnight sleeping. There are also separate City park rules which address camping or sleeping, which is why those facilities are not included in the Ordinance.

Ms. Agathon continued that the City may enforce its Ordinance on City or public property only. When the Police patrol the beach, there are limits to what they can enforce depending upon whether or not it is City property.

Cathy Cather, private citizen, stated that the City Attorney's Office has most likely investigated what has been done in other states when similar state laws were enacted and municipalities made a decision on whether or not to follow those laws or enact their own laws. She pointed out that when less stringent laws were adopted by municipalities, the result in many cases was that the homeless population congregated in those areas.

Vice Chair Martin observed that Fort Lauderdale's Ordinance has made it illegal for homeless persons to sleep on public property at any time of day. He expected that when an unsheltered individual is found to be sleeping on public property, the Police will be called and would be able to arrest that individual. If the individual is not arrested, they would most likely be given a warning and asked to move on from that location. This could mean that the individual would instead end up in another municipality in which it is legal for them to sleep during the day.

Vice Chair Martin continued that the City has also chosen to stop food and shower services for homeless persons, which had been provided by Hope South Florida at a local church for several years. The City declined to renew the permit under which showers had been offered. He concluded that while he did not disagree with the City taking a "tough" stance on persons who are breaking the law, they have instead created laws which perceive individuals who have no place to live or sleep as criminals.

Vice Chair Martin asked if the City Commission has discussed the Committee's recommendations. He asserted that these recommendations should have at least been discussed, even if the Commission chose not to act upon them. He was also not aware of any communication from City Staff or elected officials to other entities, including Broward County's Continuum of Care (CoC), before they adopted the Ordinance. He concluded that the situation is very frustrating, and if the City continues this stance, he would no longer participate in the Homeless Advisory Committee (HAC).

Ms. Agathon advised that to her knowledge, Hope South Florida made the decision to stop providing food at the local church due to conflicts between their service and the surrounding neighborhood. Residents had complained about the number of unsheltered persons walking through the neighborhood and/or lingering in the area.

Ms. Agathon continued that in 2018, Hope South Florida had been granted a permit which allowed them to provide showers; however, the permit applied for a limited time and was required to be renewed. City Ordinances state that showers, which are considered a

social service, may only be provided more than 500 ft. away from residential units. The facilities were determined to be too close to the neighboring community.

Vice Chair Martin observed that the current tendency is to view the City's homeless population as a monolithic entity which creates problems, while more accurately this is only true of a portion of that population.

Vice Chair Martin reiterated that there has been no City discussion of the options the Committee has addressed, such as pallet homes, "tiny homes," and other solutions. He recalled that in September, the Mayor had mentioned using a portion of County land to provide some of these facilities, and asked why the decision was made to "get tough" if the proposed facilities were an option.

Ms. Schimelfenyg advised that an aide to City Commissioner Warren Sturman had made a presentation on the City's plans to her local civic association. The aide had indicated that the City planned to purchase a building for use as Community Court, as well as other prospective actions. She described these as stopgap responses to HB 1365, as there is no long-term funding available to address the needs of unhoused individuals.

Chair Yukna commented that the HAC might have had more significant input on issues facing the homeless population if HB 1365 had not been passed. She expressed concern with the City's decision to criminalize homelessness, and agreed with the Vice Chair that individuals should only be arrested for actual offenses.

Mr. Dettman asked if the Committee can reach out to the City Commission to share their concerns. Vice Chair Martin suggested that the Committee could ask the City Commission to soften the language of the Ordinance so it no longer criminalizes all homeless persons. He reiterated that there are other solutions.

Ms. Agathon addressed the Code of Conduct Affirmation Statement provided to the Committee members, stating that they may leave signed copies with her to turn ~~in to~~into the City Clerk's Office, or they may mail them to that office individually.

c. Next meeting / date change: Joint HAC & AHAC on November 18, 2024

Ms. Agathon stated that the HAC will hold a joint meeting with the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) on November 18, 2024 at 9 a.m. This joint meeting will be in lieu of the regular HAC meeting.

Leann Barber, chair of the AHAC, noted that there has been no discussion thus far of what the joint meeting is intended to accomplish. She advised that the AHAC has prepared an Affordable Housing Incentive Plan, which establishes how State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) funds will be used. The AHAC has suggestions on how more affordable housing can be provided in Fort Lauderdale, particularly at the low to extremely low income levels.

Vice Chair Martin recalled that there have been previous discussions of how zoning and density can be barriers to the provision of additional services. He felt this is one issue that both Committees can agree to promote, as it would assist homeless persons as well as households earning low incomes.

Ms. Barber stated that there should be a change in the City's tone to become more compassionate and individualize situations. She felt the two Committees could work together to promote a more neighborly Fort Lauderdale rather than emphasizing a "tough" stance on issues.

Vice Chair Martin observed that while the CoC and various providers participate in a successful system, the issue is that the services provided are not enough to address the need. This includes a lack of beds for unsheltered persons and families with and without health issues. The City and County have insufficient supportive housing resources for those who need them.

Vice Chair Martin concluded that due to his frustration with the City's choices, he felt he can add nothing of value to the Committee, and planned to resign. He thanked Staff for their assistance.

Ms. Schimelfenyg recalled that the Committee had previously made two recommendations to the City Commission, and requested an update on these items. Ms. Agathon advised that communications to the City Commission are presented during the Commission's Conference Agenda meetings. The Committee had made recommendations regarding pallet shelters and medical respite beds. Acting Assistant City Manager has taken the lead with regard to pallet homes, seeking to identify properties on which 10 of these structures can be placed if purchased.

Staff has also visited the site discussed as a possible medical respite location. The owner of this facility is working through zoning issues to ensure that it can be a communal living space. Once this is done, the City is seeking to identify funding for a management agency that could assist them in providing this resource. The City has not budgeted for this need in fiscal year (FY) 2025.

Ms. Agathon continued that the City is still conducting community outreach with regard to the proposed purchase of a building for Community Court. They have reached out to the Flagler Village Civic Association to discuss the purchase of a property for this use. Because Community Court only occurs one day per week, there will need to be identification of potential other uses for the building as well.

Chair Yukna asked if an appearance by the Committee could be placed on a City Commission Agenda to apprise the Commission of their advice, which would include not criminalizing homelessness. Ms. Agathon stated that she would contact the City Clerk's Office, which is responsible for coordinating joint meetings between the Commission and

City advisory bodies. The Chair may also sign up to speak at a Conference Agenda meeting at any time, whether or not issues addressing homelessness are on the Agenda.

Mr. Dettman suggested that Vice Chair Martin draft a statement communicating the Committee's position on how the City is addressing homelessness.

Ms. Schimelfenyg requested clarification of how long the Committee has been in existence. Ms. Agathon recalled that the Committee was convened roughly one year ago with a two-year horizon, but pointed out that the members may request that it continue. Ms. Schimelfenyg noted that there is no additional funding allocated toward the Committee's suggestions in FY 2025, nor have any long-term solutions been presented.

Ms. Barber observed that there is no independent entity in the City which advocates for the unsheltered population. Vice Chair Martin agreed, recalling that some advocacy agencies existed in the past in the area but are not currently extant.

Ms. Schimelfenyg suggested that the Committee address the City Commission's response to HB 1365, recalling that the Mayor had indicated at their September 2024 meeting that he would like feedback from them. Ms. Agathon advised that if the Committee wishes to draft a statement of this nature for inclusion in the meeting minutes, they would need to do so at today's meeting or the next meeting.

VI. Public Input

Rachel Danzig, private citizen, stated that she and her family have volunteered to assist homeless persons in recent years. She emphasized the importance of recognizing that many unsheltered individuals are only in that position due to the intimidating nature of the process of seeking assistance, as well as a lack of representation. She added that she only recently became aware of the Committee's existence and suggested that the members consider expanding its membership.

Ms. Agathon noted that the Committee's membership is currently limited to seven members, but pointed out that members may reach out to their appointing Commissioners to express interest in increasing this number. She also observed that the District 1 and District 3 Committee positions are currently vacant, and individuals interested in membership may reach out directly to those District Commissioners or apply online.

Ms. Agathon explained that in order to send a communication to the City Commission, the Committee must make a motion and provide the language for that communication.

Cathy Cather, private citizen, stated that one issue she has encountered with regard to reaching out to decision-makers is the need to present a specific solution rather than a problem. This may include action(s) taken successfully by other municipalities and the budgets necessary to enact those solutions.

Ms. Cather continued that it is common for the public to be more aware of efforts that do not work than those that do. She offered the example of a service provided in the state of California which requires unsheltered individuals, including those who may be receiving Medicaid or Medicare, to undergo a free pharmacogenetic test to ensure that any medications they are provided are appropriate for the condition they are intended to treat.

Vice Chair Martin explained that the Committee has previously made positive and specific recommendations to the City Commission, citing the medical respite facility discussed at previous meetings as an example. He pointed out that the City has taken a negative position, which the Committee wishes to encourage them to change.

Goldie Weakland, private citizen, stated that stakeholders from across the country have met in the past to discuss programs that have been successful or unsuccessful. This was done in the context of a formalized meeting with presentations. She was not certain of whether or not this forum still exists, but noted that more information is available at a meeting held the first Wednesday of each month at the Salvation Army.

Ms. Weakland continued that another concern is that overnight cots for unhoused persons are not full at all shelter facilities every night. She recommended that the Taskforce For Ending Homelessness use a waiting list for these cots, pointing out that the number varies from night to night. Vice Chair Martin clarified that these are overnight cots only, which are not the same as providing individuals with access to programs, and suggested that outreach directly to the Taskforce or the CoC could be useful in determining a solution to improve the process.

Motion made by Vice Chair Martin, seconded by Mr. Dettman, that the Advisory Committee share with the City Commission that we do not believe that taking a tough stance on homelessness is the best posture to take as a City as great as the City of Fort Lauderdale. We believe that the verbiage should be about compassion, and that not all homeless are causing problems in our community, and that we are looking at solutions to provide housing and support for those who are the most vulnerable in our City. Until we can provide enough housing and support for those who are homeless, we do not encourage the City to criminalize any of the activities that are life-sustaining activities. We do agree with getting tough on people who commit crimes, but individuals who are merely trying to sleep and sustain their life are not committing crimes. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

VII. Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

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

Homeless Advisory Committee
October 17, 2024
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Next Meeting: November 18, 2024

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