

**ST. JOHNS COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL
(HHSAC)
MEETING MINUTES
January 17, 2019**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Charles Daly, Chair; Shannon Nazworth; Vasco Valov;
Eric Colon; Tina D'Alessandro;

MEMBERS ABSENT: Chip Cover; Tara Haley, Vice Chair

STAFF PRESENT: Shawna Novak, Director, Health & Human Services; Angie
Cowling, HHS Staff Support; Mary Garcia, HHS Staff Support

BCC LIASON: Jeb S. Smith, County Commissioner
Joy Andrews, Assistant County Administrator

VISITORS: Diane Vaughn; Melissa Witmeier; Toby Erwin; DeAnna
O'Flaherty; Marissa Vetter; Sandra Jackson; Cyndy Dailey;
Fthr Ted Voorhees; Catherine Taylor; Joyce Mahr; Patti
Greenough; Kim Rist; Dennis Maneja; Becky Yann; John
Eaton; Anamaria Penagos; Judith Dembowski; Nancy Eiro;
Brittany Coronado; Dawn Bell

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL: Chair called the meeting to order at 4:01p.m.

MINUTES – November, 2018 Meeting (no December meeting): Shannon Nazworth
motioned to approve the minutes. Eric Colon seconded the motion; minutes were
approved unanimously by the Council.

REPORT FROM COMMISSIONER JEB SMITH: Commissioner Smith reported statistics
regarding growth in St. Johns County over the past 1 ½ years. Commissioner Smith said
the County has grown during this period of time from approximately 100,000 residential
properties to approximately 121,700 residential properties, which is the current estimate
on the Property Appraiser's website. Commissioner Smith said he was struck by the fact
that the gross taxable value has already increased by approximately \$1.7 billion over the
last year. Commissioner Smith also stated the total taxable value is currently \$27.8 billion,
which is nearly a 7% growth over the last year and projected to hold steady, if not
increase. Commissioner Smith said the County Commissioners chose not to levy the
recommended impact fees on non-residential properties in 2018, in order to encourage
business growth in St. Johns County and increase the collection of sales tax revenue, as
well as increase the ad valorem tax base. Commissioner Smith said the County probably
won't see the full effect of that decision for two years or so. Commissioner Smith went
on to say new impact fees became fully implemented as of January 1, 2019, and he said
the County would start to see some of that revenue, as well. Commissioner Smith also

said voters did not support the homestead tax exemption increase in November of last year and that will be very helpful to the County. Commissioner Smith concluded by discussing the donation of a new tract of land, west of I95, that runs from CR 209 to CR 305. Commissioner Smith said a road is planned that will run approximately 7.4 miles and it will connect the north end of St. Johns County to at least CR 13. Commissioner Smith said the acceptance of this land was approved by a 4-1 vote by the County Commissioners and 3,332 new properties are anticipated in conjunction with the new road. Commissioner Smith said this new road will open up the interior of the County and it will bring great change to that area. Shannon Nazworth asked Commissioner Smith where affordable housing might fit in with the County's growth. Commissioner Smith said considering the rising cost of land and materials, he believes efficiencies will most likely be the answer. Commissioner Smith said people need to adjust their thinking with regard to smaller housing and accept the idea that bigger is not necessarily better. Commissioner Smith also discussed the impact fee structure and the subsidized fees for units of 800 square feet or less.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

OLD BUSINESS:

a. Homeless Workgroup Update:

- 1. Continuum of Care (CoC) Update:** Brittany Coronado reported the CoC has a new review manager, Lauren Lowry, who will be overseeing contracts for the CoC. Ms. Coronado said they are currently awaiting a new RFA so they can apply for more funds.
- 2. HMIS Lead Agency Support/Point in Time Update (PIT Count):** Brittany Coronado reported the PIT Count will take place on January 24, 2019 and the CoC voted to adopt the same methodology that was used in the 2018 Count. Ms. Coronado reported the Count will be done digitally this year, so the volunteers will use tablets in the field. Mr. Daly asked about the use of volunteers this year and Ms. Coronado said they believe they have enough knowledgeable volunteers from partner agencies participating in the Count. Ms. Coronado said they have assistance from St. Francis' outreach team, as well as staff from LSF. Ms. Coronado also stated a timeline has been prepared for this year's Count and the subcommittee continues to meet in preparation for the event.

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Epic Behavioral Healthcare:** Melissa Witmeier gave a presentation on the Opioid Crisis in St. Johns County. Ms. Witmeier explained she has a decade of experience in suicide prevention, training and intervention, and she has recently joined Epic as their Director of Operations. Ms. Witmeier explained how opioids affect the body and she reviewed national overdose death statistics involving

opioids. Ms. Witmeier said substance abuse in general costs the Nation over \$600 billion annually and with the number of overdoses climbing so sharply, the Surgeon General released a rare Public Advisory regarding Narcan, an opioid-overdose reversing drug. Ms. Witmeier also said the average life expectancy in the United States has dropped in the past two years due to opioid overdoses and it is expected to drop again this year. Ms. Witmeier detailed the countless costs to communities, including increased incarcerations and legal costs, increased need for first responders, high costs to employers due to loss of productivity related to drug use, as well as more motor vehicle accidents and deaths. Ms. Witmeier stated local leaders convened the “G8 Summit” in Fall of 2017, to discuss a multi-disciplinary approach to the opioid crisis in St. Johns County. Ms. Witmeier said participants included County Administration, SJC Sheriff’s Office, Flagler Hospital, Epic Behavioral, the Department of Health and other key players. Ms. Witmeier said this group adopted a multi-platform approach to address the opioid crisis, including education and prevention, expansion of treatment, and public safety and law enforcement approaches. Ms. Witmeier also talked about efforts such as the forming of the Poly Drug and Opioid Task Force, the “Town Hall Meeting: The Opioid Crisis and Your Family” and organized “drug take-back” events, as well as education about, and distribution of, Narcan Nasal Spray. Ms. Witmeier also reviewed expanding treatment measures such as the implementation of an opioid treatment team in place at Epic and Flagler Hospital, the Family Intensive Treatment Team (FITT) and the MAT Clinic at Epic Recovery, which includes the medications Vivitrol and Buprenorphine. Ms. Witmeier also covered measures law enforcement is taking, such as Sheriff’s deputies carrying and deploying Narcan and the special criminal justice programs, Drug Court and Veterans Court. Ms. Witmeier went on to review future strategies to employ, such as making Narcan widely available, reaching children early, both in and out of schools, and educating them on the dangers of prescription painkillers and illicit opioids. Ms. Witmeier said efforts must be advanced to collect and analyze data to better understand the causes of opioid abuse and to fine-tune responses. Ms. Wittmeier also stated community awareness must be raised regarding the opioid crisis with a unified message to help shape community attitude and response. Ms. Witmeier detailed future strategies to employ in expanding treatment, such as increased accessibility to detox via increasing bed capacity, increased interventions at emergency departments, and expanding care coordination and peer support. Ms. Witmeier concluded the presentation by discussing future strategies to employ under public safety and law enforcement approaches, such as alternatives to arrest, i.e.; identifying individuals that need treatment rather than justice intervention, and expanding jail access to medicated assisted treatment (MAT), care coordination and intervention. Ms. Witmeier opened the floor for questions and a discussion ensued with regard to Narcan, its cost, availability and administration by law enforcement. There was also discussion regarding the merits of peer support and the programs that have been put in place, or will be put in place, as a part of future strategies.

- b. **SJC Veterans Service Office:** Tammy Shirley, a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) for St. Johns County, addressed the group and explained she and her two fellow VSOs primarily assist veterans, their dependents and surviving spouses, with their eligibility for benefits from the VA. Ms. Shirley explained she spearheads a “Veterans Stand Down” every year to assist homeless veterans and non-veterans. Ms. Shirley said this event is held in September and there are representatives from HUD Vash, Career Source, the Veterans Administration, the Wildflower Clinic, St. Francis House, VA Healthcare, and other organizations. Ms. Shirley explained the Stand Down is designed to assist homeless veterans and non-veterans with getting a fresh start and to try to help them to find housing and employment. Ms. Shirley said clothing and toiletries are on hand and haircuts are one of the services offered at the event. Ms. Shirley said there are even representatives from the VA on hand to assist vets with filing disability claims. Ms. Shirley also talked about the organization “Vets for Vets” and said they provide help for veterans in crisis with money to pay their rent on a one-time basis, or to repair a car or even just to buy groceries. Ms. Shirley went on to say it is extremely difficult to find housing for homeless veterans in St. Johns County due to the affordable housing crisis. Ms. Shirley explained HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) will provide vouchers for housing but in order to use them, veterans will most likely have to live in another county, with more affordable rents, and she said most are just not willing to leave St. Johns.
- c. **2019 Goals:** This matter was tabled until the February meeting but Charles Daly did say the Council might consider focusing on suicide prevention and/or the opioid epidemic. Mr. Daly also thought the issue of sheltering and housing the homeless might be good topics to consider. Ms. Nazworth said she would like to know if the CoC or the Health Leadership Council needs assistance and she requested County Staff recommendations for Advisory Council goals. Shawna Novak said the Health Leadership Council is working on a community scorecard and she would be able to provide more direction for the Council when that is completed.

REPORT FROM JOY ANDREWS, ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR: Ms. Andrews did not have a report.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS (voting and nonvoting members):

St. Cyprian’s Church: None.

Homeless Advocacy Council: No representative attended this meeting.

Stewart Marchman Act: None.

Florida Department of Health St. Johns: None.

St. Johns County Sheriff’s Office: None.

Flagler Hospital: John Eaton reported on Care Connect and provided some information on juvenile suicide statistics in St. Johns County.

Health & Human Services Department: Shawna Novak did not have a report.

INDEPENDENT AGENCY UPDATES:

Early Learning Coalition: Dawn Bell reported her agency handles school readiness and she said they almost always have a wait list – especially in St. Johns County. Ms. Bell reports their St. Johns waiting list is typically 400-600 children but she said she was happy to report their waiting list is currently clear.

Epic Behavioral Healthcare: Patti Greenough said they are working toward bed expansion at this time and she also offered to review the priorities of the Behavioral Health Consortium, as their Chair, with the Advisory Council at a future HHSAC meeting of their choosing.

Wildflower Healthcare: Cyndy Dailey reported they have hired a new outreach coordinator and part of her duties will be to reach out to community agencies to see if more mobile dental and health clinics are needed. Ms. Dailey said they have openings for several positions, including a part-time dentist, and a hygienist, as well as a need for volunteers.

Betty Griffin Center: Joyce Mahr shared some concern over the government shutdown since, she reported, Betty Griffin Center receives 70% of their grant funding from the Federal Government. Ms. Mahr said they are closely monitoring direct client assistance funds and she said they may need to reach out to other agencies for some assistance if the shutdown continues.

St. Francis House: Judy Demboski asked the Council to remember some of the clients they accept have a long history of homelessness, some with deeper needs or substance abuse issues and they aren't always successful at being housed in the first attempt and this can affect outcomes on their quarterly. Ms. Dembowski also said they hope to have Port in the Storm ready to open in March of this year, with 16 beds for individuals 16 to 20 years old. Ms. Dembowski said they will be working with the Department of Juvenile Justice/juvenile probation division when this facility is open.

St. Augustine Youth Services: Dennis Maneja reviewed the numbers from the quarterly report for the period October to December, 2018. He stated there were 136 assessments done in this period, which resulted in 18 Baker Acts, and that is a diversion rate of approximately 87%. Mr. Maneja said their program supervisor, Emma Hayes, has been working with law enforcement and training them in behavioral health. Mr. Maneja also reported they have hired two licensed clinicians and they are now a 24/7 facility. Mr.

Maneja said this would allow any individual that is not Baker Acted to have 72 hours to interact with a licensed clinician.

St. Johns Council on Aging: Becky Yanni reported they have been putting some emphasis on caregiver support and, toward that end, there will be an evening for caregivers, with dinner provided, on January 31st at River House in St. Augustine.

St. Johns Housing Partnership: Marissa Vetter reported on three local residents that were able to keep their homes thanks to the Partnership's loan modification program. In one instance, Ms. Vetter reported an elderly couple's monthly mortgage went from approximately \$1,490 to approximately \$570 and, ultimately, allowed them to keep their home.

St. Johns County Welfare Federation: Jim Norman reported they have successfully transitioned all residents from Buckingham-Smith to the Pavilion, which can accommodate up to 69 residents. Mr. Norman said the Buckingham-Smith property is for sale and under contract and is scheduled to close at the end of March.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Executive Meeting: Thursday, February 7, 2019 at 3:30 p.m. at the St. Johns County Health and Human Services Building, Kingfisher Conference Room, 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, FL 32084.

Regular Meeting: Thursday, February 21, 2019 at 4:00 p.m. at the St. Johns County Health and Human Services Building, Kingfisher Conference Room, 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, FL 32084.

ADJOURNMENT - Meeting was adjourned at 5:18 p.m.