

**ST. JOHNS COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL
(HHSAC)
MEETING MINUTES
October 28, 2020**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Charles Daly, Chair; Tara Haley, Vice Chair; Chip Cover; Shannon Nazworth; Kelly Battell; Thomas Nielson;

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tina D'Alessandro

STAFF PRESENT: Shawna Novak, HHS Director; Mary Garcia, Social Services Support Staff

BCC LIASON: Jeb S. Smith, County Commissioner – sent regrets
Brad Bradley, Deputy County Administrator – sent regrets

VISITORS: Betty Rehrer; 17 Zoom attendees

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL: Chair called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m. Quorum was present.

REPORT FROM COMMISSIONER JEB SMITH: No report.

MINUTES – September 2020: Thomas Nielson **motioned** to approve the September 23rd minutes. Shannon Nazworth seconded the motion; minutes were **approved unanimously** by the Council

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Homeless Workgroup Update:

a. Continuum of Care (CoC) Update: Brittany Coronado was not in attendance.

b. Update - HHS Response to Covid: Shawna Novak reported the residential assistance program funded by the CARES Act opened on August 20th and, as of Friday, October 23rd, 582 applications are in progress, 679 applications have been fully submitted, 301 households have been assisted and approximately \$900,056 has been expended. Ms. Novak said \$3,176 was the average amount of assistance provided per household. Ms. Novak said the application submission window will close on Saturday, October 31, 2020 at 5pm and she said

the program will have been open for 10 weeks at that point. Ms. Novak said the month of November will be spent working on applications that were in process or were turned in by the October 31 deadline, but she clarified the funds must be expended by December 30, 2020. Discussion ensued with regard to the amount of money received and how much will be spent down. Ms. Novak explained there were restrictions, such as a household income limit of \$140,000 and the need for applicants to demonstrate a 25% or more loss of income due to Covid. Ms. Novak said the application process was quite involved, and even with the additional staff and strong case management, some applicants were simply unable to provide the necessary documentation.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Affordable Housing Projects:** Joseph Giammanco, Director of St. Johns County Emergency Management, introduced himself and explained he is in charge of the County's CDBG-DR funds and that one third of these funds are being put into two affordable housing projects. Mr. Giammanco said contracts were signed with two development partners at the end of September, 2020, after an RFP was put forth. Mr. Giammanco said the first project, which is planned to be on SR207, near the I-95 corridor, will consist of 132 units, 51% of which will be affordable and the remaining 49% at market rate. Mr. Giammanco said he anticipates ground breaking in summer, 2021, with project completion by the end of 2022. Mr. Giammanco reported the building plans include a service center and four buildings on this property. Mr. Giammanco went on to say they are still working out the details of the second project with the developer but he stated it will also be held to a minimum of 51% affordable housing units out of approximately 80 units. Mr. Giammanco said this project will include two larger buildings, rather than four, and he said ground breaking is anticipated to begin in summer, 2021, but that this project may be completed sooner than the four building project. Mr. Giammanco said the grant period ends in 2023, but said Covid has not significantly affected the timelines of these two projects as it has other CDBG projects. Mr. Giammanco said these projects have a 40 year affordability clause and so the developers will be required to operate and maintain those properties for that time period, while oversight will be conducted by the County.

Shannon Nazworth, President and CEO of Ability Housing, Inc. said her organization has put in an application with the State to do a new construction project consisting of 92 units in West Augustine. Ms. Nazworth said they have been working for about two years with a CDC that has a plan for revitalization of the area, and would primarily handle the commercial aspect of the project, while Ability Housing would handle

the residential component. Ms. Nazworth said the project has been designated by the County as a “local government area of opportunity” and a priority project for the community. Ms. Nazworth said that as such they would be awarded \$460,000 from the County’s affordable housing trust, if their project is approved by the State. Ms. Nazworth said they hope to hear from Florida Housing’s Finance Board as to whether they have been selected or not by the second quarter of FY 21. Ms. Nazworth said if they are awarded, they will then begin the State’s year-long underwriting process, and start construction in early 2022, if all goes well, with units ready in early 2023.

REPORT FROM BRAD BRADLEY, DEPUTY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR: Shawna Novak shared Mr. Bradley’s regrets and said she could share information on the CARES Act funded non-profit assistance program on his office’s behalf. Ms. Novak said 48 non-profit agencies have been assisted through this program to date, with approximately \$265,000 expended thus far. Ms. Novak said this program is in the middle of a second phase, and she will provide the Advisory Council with updated figures when they are available.

FUNDED AGENCY UPDATES:

Alpha Omega Miracle Home: The agency reported they are moving their job skill classes to Zoom and they are being recorded for later viewing.

Council on Aging: Sharon Gesek reported their senior centers, adult daycare and Integrative Memory Enhancement Program (IMEP) remain closed. Ms. Gesek said activities are being done via Zoom and they have been sending out kits for seniors to keep them engaged and aware of what is happening in their community. Ms. Gesek said their IMEP team has been using Zoom, as well, to do one-on-one cognitive coaching. Finally, Ms. Gesek said they are sending out approximately 2,700 meals per month through their Meals on Wheels program.

Epic Behavioral Healthcare: Melissa Witmeier reported their new office in northwest St. Johns off CR210 is now open and providing mental health, substance abuse and prevention services. Ms. Witmeier also reported they are in phase one of the 12-bed expansion of the recovery center, which includes architectural design, permitting and demolition. Finally, Ms. Witmeier quoted some of their year one outcomes for the JET program and said 92% of individuals served saw a reduction in arrests in first year; 70% in stable housing; 92% employed within 180 days of admission to the program; and, with the results of the PHQ9 or depression assessment test, 85% reported a reduction in depression and acute symptomology, including suicidal ideation.

Good Samaritan/Wildflower Clinic: Chris Mastroidis reported they are in phase three of their flu vaccine clinics and said they have vaccinated over 400 people thus far. Mr. Mastroidis said their goal is 1,000 vaccines. Mr. Mastroidis said they will also be going to small businesses and restaurants that want to offer the vaccine to their employees.

Mr. Mastroidis said they will be going to Sonny's and Carrabbas the following day and then they will be visiting businesses downtown and over on the beachside in the future. Mr. Mastroidis went on to say they have hired a new physician's assistant and they can now offer three days of medical services weekly, along with offering three days of dental services per week. Finally, Mr. Mastroidis said they have been working with Flagler Health on the Plus Bus to offer services to the homeless in downtown St. Augustine two to three times per month.

St. Augustine Youth Services (SAYS): No report.

St. Johns Welfare Federation: No report.

Betty Griffin Center (BGC): Joyce Mahr reported they are at their maximum capacity under Covid guidelines but they are still offering assistance to those in immediate need. Ms. Mahr said if the shelter is full, there are other avenues they can explore in order to assist those individuals.

Early Learning Coalition: Dawn Bell reported their child care centers remain open and continue to provide this essential service.

Emergency Services & Homeless Coalition (ESHG): Betty Rehrer reported they are not renewing two of their leases due to non-payment and other violations. Ms. Rehrer estimated 50% of their tenants have retained their jobs and 50% have had to seek assistance due to losses from the pandemic. Ms. Rehrer also said they received a donation so that they can hold a Halloween party for resident children on October 30th.

St. Francis House: Judy Dembowski reported they are seeing many newly homeless individuals who have been affected by Covid and quite a few are older with deeper, more complex needs. Ms. Dembowski said their men's dorm is at capacity every night and they are having to turn people away. Ms. Dembowski said they are also seeing a great demand for their domestic violence beds and she has been working with Joyce Mahr on this problem. Ms. Dembowski stated they have entered into two new agreements; one to offer respite beds for homeless individuals that need follow up medical attention but no longer need hospitalization; and the second for those going to drug court who may be in danger of violating probation due to housing instability. Finally, Ms. Dembowski said they are in phase three of reopening and are still observing social distancing, encouraging masks and asking individuals that don't have appointments or employment to stay on campus.

St. Johns Housing Partnership (SJHP): Marissa Vetter said they are seeing an increase in homeowners that are delinquent on their mortgage due to Covid-19 and she asked that people be referred to SJHP for assistance with paperwork and to understand their different options. Ms. Vetter lamented the end of the CARES program and said she hoped some of the restrictions might be removed or lessened should the program be extended.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Florida Department of Health St. Johns: No report.

Homeless Advocacy Council: No report.

SMA Healthcare: Sandi Jackson reported they are at full capacity and conducting business as usual, other than masks and social distancing.

Flagler Health +: No report.

Health & Human Services Department: Ms. Novak reported the Social Services department is seeing increased foot traffic in their lobby from those seeking various types of assistance. Ms. Novak said the HHS strategic plan is underway and the consultants are currently conducting focus groups. Ms. Novak said a focus group with the Behavioral Health Consortium was conducted today and consultants hope to have focus groups completed by November 18th.

Faith Based Community: No report.

Public Safety: No report.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Executive Meeting: Thursday, November 5, 2020 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, November 12, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. at the St. Johns County Administration Building, County Commission Auditorium, 500 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, FL 32084.

ADJOURNMENT - Meeting was adjourned at 3:52 p.m.