

ST. JOHNS COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL (HHSAC)
MEETING MINUTES
June 17, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Charles Daly, Chair; Tara Haley, Vice Chair; Chip Cover; Thomas Nielson;

MEMBERS ABSENT: Shannon Nazworth; (also, two vacancies)

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

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

VISITORS: Kelsey Wainwright; Lisa Burns; Marissa Vetter; Brittany Glisson; Betty Rehrer; Patti Greenough; Brittany Coronado; Sandi Jackson; Joyce Mahr; Joseph Cinney; John Lobo; Tonorey Callans (All attended via Zoom) Dawn Bell

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

MINUTES – April, 2021 (no May meeting): Tara Haley **motioned** to approve the April, 2021 minutes. Chip Cover seconded the motion; minutes were **approved unanimously** by the Council.

REPORT FROM COMMISSIONER JEB SMITH: Commissioner Smith reported that County Administration is currently reviewing requests made by department directors during budget hearings held on May 24th, 25th and 26th. Commissioner Smith also stated \$2,299,450 has been requested for current competitive independent agency solicitation process and he said this is the same amount that was funded last year. Commissioner Smith said the value adjustment board approved the tax roll in April and the administrator's workshop was held in May. Commissioner Smith reviewed the budget timeline, which takes place over the next several months, and he stated a second and final budget adoption will occur on September 21st. Commissioner Smith shared some statistics from the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR), which, he said, monitors and provides statistics on the population of every County in the state. Commissioner Smith said the BEBR reports that St. Johns County is averaging 4% growth each year, with a total of 261,900 residents effective April, 2021. Commissioner Smith said the commercial gross taxable value is up 53% in the last five years and residential is up 45% over the same time period. Commissioner Smith said this is about a 9% increase per year and over five years the gross taxable value has gone from approximately \$22.4 billion to \$32.7 billion. Commissioner Smith said it is expected that the gross taxable value will increase 9% yet again this year. Discussion ensued with regard to community services keeping up with the County's rate of growth.

PUBLIC COMMENT: John Lobo, Brittany Glisson, and Joe Cinney introduced themselves. Mr. Lobo is the new executive director of St. Vincent De Paul, Ms. Glisson is executive director at St. Gerard, and Mr. Cinney is executive director of Learn to Read. Charles Daly welcomed them all and thanked them for their attendance at this meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

- a) **Continuum of Care (CoC) Update – Point in Time Count:** Brittany Coronado said they are currently working on parsing out data trends from the 2021 Point in Time Count. Ms. Coronado said the CoC has also been working on a collaboration with Duval County Public Housing Authority in order to make it possible for St. Johns County residents to access emergency housing vouchers.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) **St. Johns County Housing Partnership Foreclosure Intervention Program:** Kelsey Wainwright provided Advisory Council members with a hard copy of her presentation. Ms. Wainwright explained St. Johns Housing Partnership (SJHP) is a HUD approved housing counseling provider and she said they offer first time homebuyer counseling, credit counseling, budgeting, rental counseling, and their nationally recognized foreclosure intervention service. A video was shown that tracked a particular success story about a loan modification made possible by SJHP and Jacksonville Legal Aid. The loan modification allowed the widow to remain in her home, with a monthly mortgage she could afford. Ms. Wainwright reported SJHP exhausted their grant for this program in April of this year and she said this was due in large part to the time it takes to have a positive outcome on foreclosure prevention cases. Ms. Wainwright said it is common for SJHP to work with homeowners anywhere from six months to two years or more. Ms. Wainwright stated that in fiscal year 2021, SJHP has assisted 32 families, comprised of 74 individuals. Ms. Wainwright went on to say 32% of these individuals were 60 years of age and over, 63% were Caucasian, 31% African American and 6% other race. Ms. Wainwright said these homeowners fall into two income categories; 40% have an income between \$0 and \$20,000; and 23% have an income exceeding \$50,500. Lisa Burns took over and gave specific examples of their positive outcomes. At the presentation's conclusion, Mr. Cover asked if SJHP's foreclosure prevention program has a waiting list. Ms. Wainwright said there is no waiting list for St. Johns County but she also said they were serving the entire state of Florida before funding ran out. Ms. Wainwright stated they are still receiving calls from residents of other counties, seeking assistance, but SJHP no longer has the funding to provide it to them. Ms. Burns did say that many homeowners are currently in forbearance and when the moratorium ends SJHP expects to have many more requests for assistance.
- b) **Current Vacancy – Recommendation Discussion/Candidate Review:** Charles Daly explained the Council has put forth a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners that Lorraine Keith be allowed to serve the term vacated by the resignation of Tina D'Allesandro. Mr. Daly said the vote to make this recommendation occurred at the April meeting and at that meeting, Kelly Battell put forth her resignation as she is retiring from the school board. Mr. Daly stated applications for all candidates that fit the "human services provider" description were sent to Council members for their consideration. Mr. Daly asked if anyone wished to put forth a recommendation and Chip Cover **motioned** to nominate Kim Elmore. Tara Haley seconded the motion; the recommendation to Board of County Commissioners that Kim

Elmore be allowed to complete term of Kelly Battell **approved unanimously** by the Council. Mary Garcia said she has been advised that both recommendations are scheduled to be considered at the July 20th County Commission meeting.

REPORT FROM BRAD BRADLEY, DEPUTY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR: Shawna Novak shared Mr. Bradley's regrets.

FUNDED AGENCY UPDATES:

Alpha Omega Miracle Home: Tonorey Callans reported many of their services are back to "in-person", including life skills classes and group counseling. Ms. Callans also reported 3 children born in their program have graduated high school and are all going into the military.

Council on Aging: No representative in attendance.

Epic Behavioral Healthcare: Patti Greenough said they hope to open the new residential treatment wing in mid to late July. Ms. Greenough said Epic is now taking pregnant women in their detox and residential treatment programs. Ms. Greenough stated referrals to their MARS program have doubled in the last quarter and she said their hospital bridge program, which provides peer support to those in the ER and in hospital rooms, has increased 97% over the last quarter. Ms. Greenough said they are seeing alcohol abuse increase over opiate abuse and she said they've asked that DCF earmark money specifically for this issue. Finally, Ms. Greenough said they currently have a waitlist for outpatient mental health and substance abuse services.

Good Samaritan/Wildflower Clinic: Cyndy Dailey shared some staff changes stating they have a new board president and medical director, a new executive director and a new dental director. Ms. Dailey said they continue to work with the Flagler Health Plus Bus, providing services for the uninsured in Hastings, Armstrong and at Dining with Dignity downtown. Ms. Dailey stated the greatest need in their programming continues to be with the dental program.

St. Augustine Youth Services (SAYS): No representative in attendance.

St. Johns Welfare Federation: No representative in attendance.

Betty Griffin Center (BGC): Joyce Mahr reported they continue to allow only one family per room and will probably do so through the end of the year. As a result, Ms. Mahr said there has been an approximate \$16,000 spent on hotel stays over the past year. Ms. Mahr also shared the news that she will retire at the end of September and she said their board is searching for a new executive director at this time.

Early Learning Coalition: Dawn Bell said \$3 million in stimulus money from the Treasury has begun to be distributed to child care centers. Ms. Bell said some centers are receiving \$20,000 and this is really making a difference as many of them struggled during the pandemic. Ms. Bell said this money will help ensure child care centers are open when everyone returns to the workplace. Shawna Novak took a moment to express her appreciation for the weekly updates Ms. Bell sent out during the pandemic, advising which centers had vacancies, which centers were taking in new clients, and which centers were taking children of first responders.

Emergency Services & Homeless Coalition (ESHC): Betty Rehrer reported she has been working with "Our Florida" to assist their tenants who are behind in their rent due to Covid. Ms.

Rehrer also announced details about a self-defense course ESHC is sponsoring beginning on June 24th at the Moultrie Baptist Church.

St. Francis House: No representative in attendance.

St. Johns Housing Partnership (SJHP): As a follow up to their presentation today and the questions that were subsequently posed regarding wait-listing, Marissa Vetter explained though they are out of funding, they continue to serve St. Johns County clients with foreclosure prevention services. Ms. Vetter said they hope to receive more funding in September but until then, she stated, they are operating in the red.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Florida Department of Health St. Johns: No representative in attendance.

Homeless Advocacy Council: No representative in attendance.

SMA Healthcare: Sandi Jackson said SMA has also been impacted by workforce shortages, as reported by other agencies. Ms. Jackson stated SMA has several vacancies and less applicants than is typical for those vacancies.

Flagler Health +: Brittany Coronado stated CareConnect currently has approximately 90 people in queue for affordable housing and she said there is great concern for the residents that are behind on rent when the eviction moratorium expires on June 30th. Ms. Coronado also reported Flagler Health + has broken ground on their new facility in Durbin Park and it is expected to open in early 2023.

Health & Human Services Department (HHS): Ms. Novak reported that work has begun on independent agency contracts and they will be ready for the first County Commission meeting in October, so as to ensure there will be no funding gap. Ms. Novak advised she has asked for one new position for the Housing Department for this budget year and she said duties will include more oversight of the SHIP program which, she said, primarily does rehab on homes for eligible residents. Ms. Novak said she is also seeking to reclassify a current position in order to better assist the Social Services Department. Ms. Novak said positions may need to be added to the Community Based Care division, based on legislation that may be passed, but she did advise that this division is fully state funded, other than the required County match. Ms. Novak went on to say the Council on Accreditation (COA) recently completed did their assessment of Health & Human Services, which occurs every four years. Ms. Novak thanked partners that took part in stakeholders' interviews with COA and she said all went very well. Ms. Novak shared some of the very positive statements shared about staff and the culture of positivity that was associated with the Health & Human Services Department. Ms. Novak stated the contract has been signed with the contractor that will be administering the rental assistance program, which will be using the funds issued by the U.S. Treasury in January. Ms. Novak said the County is currently working with the contractor to set up policies, procedures and guidelines, and she said the application process will be 100% online. Ms. Novak said the program is tentatively scheduled to start in early July. Ms. Novak also reported the Board of County Commissioners approved a contract with Legal Aid that will provide them with funding necessary to hire additional staff in preparation for potential foreclosure and eviction increases. Ms. Novak said the funding provided to Legal Aid was specifically earmarked for Covid related issues. Finally, Ms. Novak advised all Covid restrictions have been removed in County buildings and she said the next Advisory Council meeting would be held in person. Ms. Novak invited all independent agency and community partner representatives to be present at the next meeting.

Faith Based Community: No representative in attendance. Mr. Cover asked if another representative might be invited to attend monthly meetings since Father Voorhees has not been available to attend for some time. Ms. Novak said she would inquire with the CoC.

Public Safety: No representative in attendance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Executive Meeting: Thursday, July 1, 2021 at 3:30 p.m. at the St. Johns County Health and Human Services Center, Mallard Conference Room, 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, FL 32084.

Regular Meeting: Thursday, July 15, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. at the St. Johns County Health & Human Services Center, Kingfisher Conference Room, 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, FL 32084.

ADJOURNMENT - Meeting was adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

DRAFT