

ST. JOHNS COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL (HHSAC)
MEETING MINUTES
April 15, 2021

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: None (one vacancy)

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

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

VISITORS: Betty Rehrer; Patti Greenough; Kristin Thomas; Brittany Coronado; Sandi Jackson; Jim Norman; Joyce Mahr; Dawn Bell; Judith Dembowski (All attended via Zoom)

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL: Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Quorum was present.

REPORT FROM COMMISSIONER JEB SMITH: Commissioner Smith reported he met with the property appraiser recently and was advised the County should see growth of 10% or more from a gross taxable value standpoint. Commissioner Smith also said there continues to be a great deal of both residential and non-residential growth in the County. Chip Cover took a moment to tell Commissioner Smith how impressed he was personally with the way the County managed the vaccine clinic at the Solomon Calhoun Center. Commissioner Smith said the County will begin to phase out vaccinations based on current need and the fact that private industry is taking over the process.

MINUTES – January, 2021: (no February or March, 2021 meetings) Tara Haley **motioned** to approve the January, 2021 minutes. Shannon Nazworth seconded the motion; minutes were **approved unanimously** by the Council.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Dawn Bell said she also appreciated the efficiency with which the County handled the administration of vaccines. Ms. Bell said two of her students at Flagler College work for the County and they were assisting at the Emergency Operations Center during this time and doing a great job, while also attending their classes.

OLD BUSINESS:

- a) **Continuum of Care (CoC) Update – Point in Time Count:** Brittany Coronado shared a presentation detailing the Point in Time (PIT) Count, which was conducted on January 28, 2021. Ms. Coronado explained the PIT is performed on a single night in January, and it is a count of sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness. Ms. Coronado explained the term “sheltered” refers to residing in a temporary housing setting such as emergency shelter, transitional housing, and safe havens, and “unsheltered”

refers to residing in a place not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, and on the street. Ms. Coronado said the count is conducted each year to raise public awareness and community involvement, and to provide HUD with necessary data collection to gauge the size and characteristics of the entire homeless population in each community. Ms. Coronado said Covid did impact the approach of the PIT Count with decreased face-to-face interaction and surveys, and decreased volunteers and CoC partner staff. Ms. Coronado moved on to results and stated that in 2020, the Care Connect Information Network of providers served a total of 8,362 people and of that population, 25% reported they were literally homeless upon asking for assistance. Ms. Coronado also reported CoC housing specific programs served 1,259 people and 68% reported they were literally homeless upon asking for assistance. Ms. Coronado stated the total homeless count of 419 was a 14% increase from 2020, the total unsheltered count of 291 was a 42% increase from 2020, and the total sheltered count of 128 was a 21% decrease from 2020. Ms. Coronado said she plans to dig into the data more deeply but she did provide breakdowns by age group, gender, race, and ethnicity. Ms. Coronado also broke down the data by veteran status and by those with substance abuse and mental health disorders. Ms. Nazworth asked if Ms. Coronado was able to break out data for the senior population and report on any increase in that demographic, as she said her organization has been seeing older clients and this is trending nationwide. Ms. Coronado said she should be able to provide data on those over a certain age if given a little time.

- b) Update – County Response to Covid:** Shawna Novak reported the County is still managing the administering of vaccines for the Department of Health and as Monday, April 12th, 111, 274 residents have been vaccinated. Ms. Novak went on to say the County has also been working with the State to set up three pop-up vaccine clinics for the J & J vaccine but those have been postponed temporarily. Ms. Novak stated the County has plenty of vaccine appointments open and there are over 37 private pharmacies and physician's offices administering the vaccines currently.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. Alpha-Omega Miracle Home:** Kristin Thomas reported Alpha-Omega Miracle Home (AOMH) is in their 21st year serving the community and carrying out their mission of assisting single mothers and their children in securing stable housing. Ms. Thomas stated AOMH provides their clients with access to continuing education, stable employment, case management, free counseling with licensed mental health counselors, and encouragement from the faith-based community. Ms. Thomas said that in 2009, a low-income, safe housing program for formerly displaced women 60 years and older, was integrated and these women find renewed purpose when paired with single mothers and their children. Ms. Thomas said the senior women also receive supportive services from onsite case managers and counselors, as well as support from the community through churches, businesses and individuals. Ms. Thomas said AOMH has served 900 residents since its inception 21 years ago, and 90% of those residents are gainfully employed, 94% have gone on to graduate high school or earn their GED, and 90% have pursued higher education or completed vocational training. Ms. Thomas went on to say AOMH owns 16

apartments and 3 homes and they are in the process of expanding with the addition of 100 to 150 new beds. Ms. Thomas also touched on the AOMH Community Diaper Bank, as well as their thrift stores and voucher program.

- b. Current Vacancy – Application Review and Discussion:** Charles Daly explained the vacancy created by Tina D’Allesandro’s resignation was posted on the County website but there were no new applicants. All eligible applications were sent to Council members and Mr. Daly said he and Ms. Haley reviewed them at the executive meeting on April 1st and they both felt that Kim Elmore and Lorraine Keith were the strongest candidates, with extensive backgrounds in health and human services. Discussion ensued and Mr. Cover commented that both Ms. Elmore and Ms. Keith made the effort to attend the June, 2020 HHSAC meeting, when all candidates were invited to introduce themselves. Mr. Daly asked if any other vacancies were pending and at this time Ms. Battell informed the Council that she was planning to retire and would be turning in her resignation to the County so her seat would be opening up soon, leaving another “human service professional” vacancy on the HHSAC. There was more discussion and Ms. Novak explained one candidate must be chosen and a new vacancy posted for Ms. Battell’s seat. Shannon Nazworth **motioned** to request the Board of County Commissioner’s approve the recommendation that Lorraine Keith be added as a member of the HHSAC; Thomas Nielson seconded the motion; recommendation **approved unanimously** by the Council. Ms. Nazworth did add that she would like for staff to reach out to Kim Elmore and ask that she submit an updated application so that she can be considered for the posting of the Human Service Professional vacancy, which will be created by the resignation of Kelly Battell.

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

FUNDED AGENCY UPDATES:

Alpha Omega Miracle Home: Staff gave a presentation today – nothing further to report.

Council on Aging: Ms. Gesek reported on which programs and facilities are currently open and said some programs are not seeing the number of people they are accustomed to, even though they are providing masks and socially distancing. Ms. Gesek said they are not serving congregant meals at this time but that the Meals on Wheels program continues to operate at full capacity. Ms. Gesek said the Sunshine Bus also continues to run para-transit and six routes.

Epic Behavioral Healthcare: Patti Greenough reported the build-out on the residential treatment wing is going well and they hope it will be complete in July, giving them 12 more residential treatment beds and two more detox beds. Ms. Greenough said the JET program has moved back to the jail and the capacity for that program has increased quite a bit. Ms. Greenough said leadership at the jail is very happy with this program and the treatment outcomes. Ms. Greenough said she recently met with Tara Wildes, St. Johns County Director of Corrections, who said alcohol abuse, domestic violence and methamphetamines are the top three reasons people are being arrested at this time. Ms. Greenough expressed concern about the proposed legislative budget, which includes a \$65.5 million cut to behavioral health and she said while there is a lot of federal money coming down through the Rescue Act, it can’t supplant anything that is not already funded by the legislature. Ms. Greenough said she would be sending out templates of a letter to be

addressed to Governor DeSantis asking that this cut not be made. Ms. Greenough echoed what Dawn Bell said with regard to difficulty in hiring staff at this time.

Good Samaritan/Wildflower Clinic: No representative in attendance.

St. Augustine Youth Services (SAYS): Emma Hayes said they will also be affected by the proposed budget cuts if they go through, and she shared Ms. Greenough's thoughts with regard to the complexity and severity of cases they are seeing, and the difficulty in onboarding new staff. Ms. Hayes said their psychiatrist is still able to see clients within one week, which is helping to divert Baker Acts. Ms. Hayes said approximately 180 assessments were performed in the last quarter and approximately 80% of those individuals were diverted from in-patient care.

St. Johns Welfare Federation: Mr. Norman had to leave the meeting at 5pm, so no report was given.

Betty Griffin Center (BGC): Joyce Mahr said they have been restricting capacity to one family per room and no more than three per room in the women's dorm, and they have had no Covid cases to date. Ms. Mahr said they have had good luck finding homes for families and they have had four placed recently. Ms. Mahr said they are continuing to expand therapy services and hope to hire a couple of new therapists but they have also had a difficult time recruiting new staff. Ms. Mahr said they are continuing to use telehealth but hope that in May they will be able to bring the "A" and "B" teams back into the outreach office.

Early Learning Coalition: Dawn Bell said they are struggling to hire new staff and retain their current staff.

Emergency Services & Homeless Coalition (ESHC): Betty Rehrer reported a local church will be taking part in the "Adopt a Home" program and assisting with rehabilitation of one of their older homes, before a new family moves in. Ms. Rehrer said the church also assisted by renovating the ESHC pantry as it was very much in need of repair. Ms. Rehrer said the United Way has also assisted by funding the remodel of another older home and two veterans will be moving in when it is complete.

St. Francis House: No report.

St. Johns Housing Partnership (SJHP): Caleena Shirley reported the rising costs of building materials have made home rehab work and new construction a challenge.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

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

Homeless Advocacy Council: No representative in attendance.

SMA Healthcare: Sandi Jackson had to leave the meeting at 5pm so no report was given.

Flagler Health +: Brittany Coronado did not have anything further to report.

Health & Human Services Department (HHS): Ms. Novak reported the County received a direct allocation of \$7.9 million from the US Treasury at the end of January for rental and utility assistance. Ms. Novak said that due to the funding amount and a lack of staff resources, the County opted to do an RFP to have the program administered by a contracted provider. Ms.

Novak reported that Witt O'Brien was selected from the five responses received and the County engaged in contract negotiations with them on Monday. Ms. Novak reported the CDBG-DR program will be coming under Health & Human Services just as soon as space can be made for the 11 staff members that make up that program. Ms. Novak announced that April is Child Abuse Prevention month and a food drive will be held Saturday, April 17th, at Care Connect with HHS staff and community partners. Ms. Novak stated the bulk of the work with the HHS strategic plan consultant has been completed and a draft version has been supplied to the Council on Accreditation (COA), as well as County Administration, for review. Ms. Novak stated a completed version will be ready in anticipation of the COA site visit the first week in June. Ms. Novak said phase one of the five-year plan will include some initiatives involving technology enhancements to make accessing programs easier for residents, as well as a community survey since the necessary response by County and State to Covid delayed the Community Health Assessment. Ms. Novak stated the HHS plan will align with County Administrator Hunter Conrad's established values of compassion, trustworthiness and innovation, and HHS objectives will tie back to the newly established Board of County Commission goals of financial stewardship, economic development, world-class living, customer service and infrastructure. Ms. Novak said she and Assistant Director Joe Cone will present the plan to the Council and community partners when complete.

Ms. Novak requested a recommendation from the Advisory Council to enter into a new, one year contract with funded agencies at same funding levels as last year, with no option for renewal. Ms. Novak explained the contracts were originally drafted in 2019, for a one year period, with an option for one year renewal. Ms. Novak stated the County's necessary response to Covid delayed the planned Community Health Assessment and the HHS strategic plan and as a result, the new RFP should be planned for 2022, so the findings can be used. Mr. Daly asked when current contracts expire and Ms. Novak said they expire on September 30, 2021. Shannon Nazworth **motioned** to recommend a renewal of agency contracts at current funding levels, for a period of one year, commencing on October 1, 2021; Tara Haley seconded the motion; motion **approved unanimously** by the Council.

Faith Based Community: No representative in attendance.

Public Safety: No representative in attendance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Executive Meeting: Thursday, May 6, 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, May 20, 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 4:23 p.m.