

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA  
Workshop on the Homeless and  
Cold Weather Shelter Housing Needs  
February 23, 2010  
1:30 pm - 3:00 pm

The Board of County Commissioners met for a Workshop on the Homeless and Cold Weather Shelter Housing Needs in the Commission Chambers on Tuesday, February 23, 2010.

Present were Chairman Bob Rackleff and Commissioners John Dailey, Jane Sauls, Bryan Desloge, Cliff Thael, and Akin Akinyemi; Commissioner Bill Proctor did not attend. Also attending were County Administrator Parwez Alam, County Attorney Herb Thiele, and Board Secretary Rebecca Vause.

Chairman Rackleff called the Workshop to order at 1:30 p.m.

**Facilitator:** Candice Wilson, Health and Human Services Director

Ms. Wilson stated that staff was directed to schedule a workshop to address the under-utilization of assets within the homelessness continuum of care with the goal of identifying services, developing strategies and addressing unmet needs. She provided an overview of the workshop.

Ms. Wilson introduced representatives from the homeless care community: Susan Pourciau, Executive Director, HOPE Community and Big Bend Homeless Coalition and Mel Eby, Executive Director, Homeless Shelter; Grant Slayden, Chairman, Homeless Shelter Board of Directors, and Richard Smith, Director, Emergency Management.

Ms. Wilson acknowledged the efforts of individuals who have worked and coordinated with the City of Tallahassee in the operation of a "Cold Night Shelter".

Workshop attendees provided the Board with a wealth of information on the homeless continuum of care provided throughout the community:

- Ms. Pourciau shared local perspectives on the homeless community; noted the various service agencies throughout the area along with the assistance they provide, and key characteristics of a successful continuum of care. She then provided detailed information on the services of the Big Bend Homeless Coalition, as they are the lead agency in the area for local continuum of care. She noted that more beds (emergency, transitional, etc) and affordable permanent housing has been identified as a priority by local providers and estimated that 854 additional beds were needed (emergency shelter, transitional housing, safe haven and permanent supportive housing).

Ms. Pourciau concluded by suggesting that the County 1)re-ignite the 10-year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness; 2) provide incentives for local agencies to work cooperatively, and 3) prioritize unmet needs.

- Grant Slayden shared that Mel Eby has been the Executive Director of the Homeless Shelter for over 20 years. Mr. Slayden provided a brief overview of the Tallahassee-Leon County Shelter, which included its mission, budget, services (day center and health), property location and Shelter accomplishments. He pointed out that a large percentage of homeless are military veterans and are employed or pursuing employment. He offered that the Shelter continues to operate over capacity; housing on the average 212 individuals per night.

- Richard Smith provided information on the County's Emergency Management's Plan for Severe Weather Events.

#### Board Discussion

Commissioner Thael shared that he had been concerned about this problem for a long time and noted that he had requested the Workshop on September 22, 2009. He pointed out areas that he deemed important to address, such as: 1) parents being fearful their children would be taken away if discovered to be homeless; 2) homeless veterans; 3) establishment of meaningful timelines; 4) identifying resources and gaps in the system; 4) where is vision "cloudy", and 5) encouraging non-profits and other businesses to hire homeless individuals into basic service jobs. He also mentioned the need to involve homeless persons in current dialogue.

Commissioner Thael asked that staff take a look at raising the temperature to activate a cold weather shelter from 35 to 40 degrees and cited the need for a one-stop center. He concluded that homelessness was a regional problem which required engagement from policymakers and individuals throughout the area.

Commissioner Akinyemi asked Ms. Pourciau to elaborate on the recommendation to re-ignite the 10-year Plan. She responded that the Plan was developed in 2006-07 by the Mayor's Task Force and that now would be a perfect opportunity for the County, City and other stakeholders to take part in a re-prioritization, such as looking at funding, real concrete action steps and timelines. Commissioner Akinyemi referenced a successful and effective plan recently adopted by Gainesville/Alachua County.

*Commissioner Akinyemi moved, duly seconded by Commissioner Desloge, to approve Option 1 and support the recommendation to create a joint County/City Ten-Year Plan to eradicate homelessness, explore private funding and explore Veteran's Administration five-year Plan for possible funding.*

Commissioner Dailey expressed his support for the motion and asserted the Board's commitment to "tackling" this problem. He asked Mr. Smith of any action necessary by the Board regarding the operation of the emergency shelter. Mr. Smith remarked that the emergency shelters are provided to get a person out of life threatening conditions; that is the reason for the 35 degree threshold. Mr. Smith remarked on the need for more counselors. Commissioner Dailey confirmed with Ms. Wilson that she would represent the County at the upcoming Homeless Summit.

Commissioner Desloge thanked Mr. Eby for his 21 years of service and concurred on the need for staff to look into the creation of a "One-Stop" center for homeless services.

Chairman Rackleff indicated that he would support the motion and addressed the concerns regarding the utilization of the Lincoln Center as an emergency center. Mr. Smith indicated that problems and challenges are being worked through.

*Commissioner Thael requested that the motion be amended to include: 1) Incorporate into the Plan, the hiring of homeless in basic service jobs; 2) Include representation of School System and homeless persons in the development of the Plan, and 3) establish a "homeless court" to address minor law violations, i.e., jaywalking, open container violations, etc., to include community service work. This amendment was accepted by Commissioner Akinyemi.*

Commissioner Sauls expressed appreciation for the Workshop and would support the motion on the table.

*The motion as amended carried 6-0 (Commissioner Proctor absent).*

Workshop adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA

ATTEST:

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bob Rackleff, Chairman  
Board of County Commissioners

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bob Inzer, Clerk of the Court  
Leon County, Florida