

City of Gainesville

*City Hall
200 East University Avenue
Gainesville, Florida 32601*



Meeting Minutes

Monday, December 6, 2004

1:00 PM

City Hall, Room 16

Community Development Committee

*Commissioner Chuck Chestnut, Chair
Commissioner Craig Lowe, Member*

Persons with disabilities who require assistance to participate in this meeting are requested to notify the Equal Opportunity Department at 334-5051 or call the TDD phone line at 334-2069 at least two business days in advance.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:07 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chuck Chestnut and Craig Lowe

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Approved as Recommended.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

040709 Minutes of November 4, 2004 (B)

RECOMMENDATION *The Committee approve the minutes of November 4, 2004.*

Approved as Recommended

040708 Minutes of November 15, 2004 (B)

RECOMMENDATION *The Committee approve the minutes of November 15, 2004.*

Approved as Recommended

DISCUSSION OF PENDING REFERRALS

040187 Community Wide Plan to End Homelessness (B)

Mr. Tom Saunders, Community Development Director, stated that the mayoral transition team referral requested that the Committee review the matter of the limitation on the number of beds and meals provided at St. Francis house. He explained that visits to other communities had determined that those communities provided more beds at a single location than Gainesville's do, but also required an identification card and periodic counseling.

Joe Jackson, citizen, indicated that he had requested that the City Commission revisit the issue of the number of meals served to the homeless in soup kitchens, and how many were housed overnight at local shelters. He suggested that limiting the number of meals served to the homeless placed an artificial cap on the help they could receive. He explained that St. Francis House was large enough to accommodate more than the 75 they are currently permitted to feed. He noted that St. Francis House was

working with City staff on the problem of people congregating along S.W. 4th Place, and was also considering revising the fencing arrangements. He urged the Committee to recommend to the City Commission that the artificial limits on the number of people fed be eliminated.

Jim Boggs, Executive Director of St. Francis House, stated that the limits on meals served had been imposed due to concerns about impacts such as litter and public safety. He explained that St. Francis House had dealt with litter issues by removing all styrofoam from their inventory. He noted that on safety, there had been a very productive meeting with GPD Chief Botsford. He indicated that St. Francis House had been working with staff on how to minimize traffic on S.W. 4th Place. He explained that he was very concerned that his employees and volunteers would have to turn people away. He stated that he would like some instructions on how to deny individuals available food. He suggested that there would be no significant changes in the level of activity around St. Francis House if the limitations on meals served required by the Special Use Permit were removed. He pointed out that, in January, he would be providing staff with a report on the number of meals served.

Father Gillespie, Board Member of St. Francis House, gave a brief history of the origin of the St. Francis House. He explained that the initial purpose was to feed hungry students enrolled at the University, who did not have enough money to buy food. He suggested that the City should raise the limits on the number of meals provided since the need for services had grown.

Linda McGurn, citizen, stated that she had been involved in the issue since the 1980's, and had served on several committees regarding the homeless. She stated that if a facility were opened, people would come to that facility. She suggested that service to the homeless should be spread throughout the community, not just the downtown area. She indicated that the City of Clearwater didn't allow a soup kitchen and a homeless shelter in the same facility. She suggested that the City strike a balance that provided dispersal of services, spread throughout the community.

John Skelly, Director, Department of Community Support Services Poverty Reduction Program, gave an overview of the three levels that Clearwater has to take care of the homeless. There is a gaps analysis that the local coalition in Gainesville has done that compares the number and types of homeless individuals to the available facilities. He stated that there is a gap between the needs and service levels.

Mr. Saunders stated that as the community grows, its needs for providing service to the homeless would grow. He agreed that it would be appropriate to raise the limit on the number of beds at St. Francis House to 35.

Commissioner Lowe stated that the City needed to consider the impact of increased homeless services on the downtown area as a whole, and how those impacts could be minimized. He agreed that there should be some type of registration or identification process for people receiving services.

Commissioner Chestnut asked how many churches were serving meals. He indicated that he would like to see some type of tracking system, so there would be more coordination on a large-scale basis and so there wouldn't be a duplication of

services.

Mr. Boggs stated that there were monitoring guidelines that St. Francis House was required to meet every year. He explained that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) required that a fiscal management information system be provided for everyone who received their funds. He stated that there was complete documentation for all that are served at the St. Francis House.

Beth O'Grady, Homeless Coalition representative, stated that there is considerable coordination throughout the City's and County's homeless service providers, via the Coalition.

Father Gillespie noted that there were no churches that served the homeless everyday, and it would be inefficient for them to do so. He explained that it was more efficient to serve out of a single, centrally located, and easily accessible soup kitchen. He indicated that it would provide food, more efficient equipment, and volunteers that could work together.

Commissioner Lowe stated that he was in favor of raising the limits for feeding the homeless in the downtown area. He noted that St. Francis House could not solve the problem alone. He indicated that he would like to see more flexibility from all concerned with the problem of the homeless. He agreed that it was the responsibility of all citizens, and the southeast seem to be shouldering the greatest burden.

Mr. Jackson stated that if St. Francis can serve over 300 people on Christmas and Thanksgiving, there was no need for a limit under 300 throughout the year.

There was a motion by Commissioner Lowe to: 1) increase the beds provided at St. Francis House from 30 to 35; 2) staff to report back at the next meeting on what an increased limits should be for meals; 3) having a management plan to minimize the impact on the area for meeting the increased limit (have an identity card that is issued by the service provider and policies implemented for the recipients for those services); and 4) staff to research the Salvation Army situation (and how to address its zoning).

Mr. Boggs indicated that, if caps were to be placed on the number of meals served, an achievable plan should be developed, so it could be applied throughout the community. He requested a 60 to 90 day moratorium in which Code Enforcement would issue no citations on the number of homeless served until there was a formal recommendation by the City Commission.

Rodney Long, Alachua County Commissioner, stated he has been appointed by the County Commission to serve as their representative on poverty and homeless issues. He explained that a homeless summit would be held March 31, 2005, and the City should become a partner in that summit. He noted that homelessness was a countywide issue, not just a City issue. He indicated that he supported eliminating the caps on service to the homeless.

Ms. McGurn stated that the City Commission voted to put on a cap on feeding the homeless, and to take that cap off without looking deeper into the matter was unfair.

She noted that a number of people went through months of hearings on the matter.

RECOMMENDATION *The Committee recommended: 1) staff report back to the City Commission on January 10, 2004, to increase the beds provided at St. Francis House from 30 to 35; 2) staff to report back at the next meeting on what an increased limit would be for meals; 3) having a management plan to minimize the impact on the area for meeting the increased limit (have an identity card that is issued by the service provider and policies implemented for the recipients for those services); and 4) staff to research the Salvation Army situation (and how to address in zoning).*

040186 Comprehensive Homeless Shelter Facilities (NB)

RECOMMENDATION *Staff to report back next month in order for the service providers to participate in the discussion.*

Continued

001198 Graffiti Abatement (NB)

RECOMMENDATION *The Committee recommended keeping this item as an active referral for periodic updates.*

Continued

030166 Bicycle Parking Requirements (B)

RECOMMENDATION *Community Development Committee to the City Commission: 1) initiate a petition to the City Plan Board amending the draft regulations so the bicycle parking requirement is never reduced to less than 50% of the usual required amount; and 2) remove this item from the referral list.*

Continued

040067 Design Plat Timelines (NB)

RECOMMENDATION *The Committee requested that this item be kept active so the Committee could provide input into the design plat process as it is being updated.*

Continued

002555 Design Review Process (NB)

RECOMMENDATION *Staff provide an update. The Economic Development/University Committee will discuss on December 7, 2004.*

Continued

030266 Advisory Boards and Committees - Review of Large Site Plans (NB)

RECOMMENDATION *Discuss this item under the design review process referral.*

Continued

REMOVAL OF DUPLICATES

Continued

NEXT MEETING DATE

January 6, 2005 10:00 A.M.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 P.M.