



## Agenda Item Summary

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Agenda Date: 12/15/2020

Agenda Item No.: 3.

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**Agenda Item Name:**

Alachua County and City of Gainesville: Approach to End Homelessness

- A. Street Outreach Program
- B. Budget Inn Purchase and Use
- C. Dignity Village Closure

**Presenter:**

Claudia Tuck, (352) 264-6704

**Description:**

Alachua County and City of Gainesville Joint Commission Meeting to Discuss Homelessness and Program Updates

**Recommended Action:**

None

**Prior Board Motions:**

October 6, 2020, November 10, 2020, and December 08, 2020

**Fiscal Consideration:**

None

**Background:**

The Alachua County Board of Commissioners and the City of Gainesville Commissioners continue to meet to discuss and plan efforts to reduce and end homelessness. The joint commissions have implemented various strategies with the intent to mitigate the impacts of homelessness for those who continue to be unhoused and to support those placed to remain housed. This joint discussion include updates regarding the following:

**Street Outreach Program - Status/Update**

Since April 2020, Community Support Services joined with the University of Florida College of Medicine/Mobile Outreach Clinic and Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. to conduct street outreach across the County providing homeless and medical services with particular emphasis geared towards COVID prevention and field-testing. Street Outreach has assisted over 300 homeless individuals.

See Homeless/Medical Street Outreach - December 2020 Attachment.

**Budget Inn Purchase and Use - Update**

On December 8, 2020, Alachua County agreed to purchase the Budget Inn as a means to provide sheltered for homeless individuals. Unhoused individuals have an increased use of crisis services primarily due to the lack of safe, stable housing. Best practices in working with homeless individuals involves a coordinated response and prioritizing the most vulnerable for housing.

**Dignity Village Closure - Permanent Supportive Housing Update**

In May 2019, the City and County Commissions jointly approved the ACCHH proposal to close Dignity Village and create a temporary transitional campground on the Grace campus for former residents of Dignity Village. The project had a two-year timeline, and called for the onsite campground to reduce in size as staff and community partners assist former Dignity Village residents with housing placements.

Alachua County Social Services continues to provide Permanent Supportive Housing Services to individuals in coordination with the homeless Continuum of Care under Coordinated Entry. Residents meet regularly with their case manager to work on goals that will assist them to remain housed. Currently, 27 individuals are program participants. See FY 21 Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Funds Update Attachment

## Homeless/Medical Street Outreach - December 2020

### Overview

Working in collaboration with the University of Florida College of Medicine/Mobile Outreach Clinic and Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc., Community Support Services continues to coordinate homeless/medical outreach services and COVID testing in the field. Teams comprised of a behavioral healthcare staff from Meridian and two to three 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year medical students are dispatched to known encampments and other locations where the homeless congregate.

Existing homeless outreach staff developed a training module for the medical students to help them understand the purpose of the project, how to engage homeless individuals, and street safety practices. Alachua County grant funded (CABHI) staff coordinated schedules and provided directions on where to conduct street outreach based on zones throughout the county, e.g., Depot Park, NE 39th Avenue, I-75/Newberry corridor, etc. Working together with the College of Medicine, a written protocol was developed to guide the medical students through the process. The teams assess the homeless for COVID like symptoms, collect test specimens, and provide basic medical care like wound dressings. The teams also distribute survival supplies including shelf stable food boxes, personal hygiene items, face masks and hand sanitizer.

The teams are grateful for the many donations that have been received to support its mission. The United Way of North Central Florida donated goodie bags, bottled water, and sanitizer. The Salvation Army donated hundreds of personal hygiene kits containing hand soap, shampoo, and other personal necessities. The Helping Hands Clinic donated a case of bug repellent which was very useful for both the homeless and the volunteers conducting outreach. UF Health Street donated feminine hygiene products and clothing. Recognizing the medical students volunteerism the Rotary Club donated gas cards to help offset some of their out of pocket expenses.

Since early April 2020, teams have been dispatched on a recurring basis and over 300 homeless people have been engaged and assessed. Less than 10 people displayed Covid like symptoms or otherwise requested to be tested. Most test results came back negative and those who tested positive indicated they had a place to safely self-isolate.

### Upcoming Activities

The outreach model has evolved considerably since its inception. Today, it is organized as a street medicine model. Teams go out every Thursday, both early morning (7:30 - 9:30 am) and afternoon (1:00-3:00 pm). UF developed an electronic medical record which is used to case manage many of the homeless individuals we have developed an ongoing relationship with over the course of the pandemic. With available CARES funding, Alachua County has purchased a large supply of survival items which will be distributed the week of December 14, 2020. Both the medical students and Meridian staff will assist in distributing over 200 goodie bags containing personal hygiene items as well as cold weather supplies including gloves, socks, Mylar blankets, and beanie caps. We will also be distributing another pallet of approximately 150 food boxes.

## **Motel Purchase to Expand Affordable Permanent Housing**

The CDC states, “lack of housing contributes to poor physical and mental health outcomes, and linkages to permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness should continue to be a priority.”

The national best practice in ending homelessness is to focus on housing the most vulnerable and place directly in housing under the Housing First model. This model addresses chronic homelessness by providing housing and specialized case management focused on housing stability.

The shortage of affordable housing in Florida is primarily due to the widening gap between people’s incomes and the cost of housing according to the University of Florida’s Shimberg Center for Housing Studies.

In working with the Alachua County Division of Social Services, staff reports that there are many challenges facing the homeless, particularly a lack of affordable housing. Beyond dealing with mental health, substance abuse or physical disabilities, the homeless must compete with renters and families in finding and securing affordable housing. The lack of affordable housing, limited work opportunities, poverty, background issues, and prior evictions compound the difficulty of securing rentals (mobile homes, apartments, and houses) for permanent supportive housing participants.

Staff reviewed available County owned property and determined Alachua County does not own any vacant buildings that could be renovated to accommodate housing. County-funded housing can play a significant role in providing affordable housing to vulnerable unhoused individuals. The goal is to prioritize unsheltered people by increasing affordable rental options.

Motels and apartment complexes for sale were searched for opportunities to expand affordable housing. The Budget Inn was identified as a parcel for sale that could be converted for permanent housing. The parcel contains 36 efficiency units with exterior doors and individual meters. There is also a 2-bedroom house and 3-bedroom managers quarters. Additionally, there is an adjoining one acre + vacant parcel included in the sale.

On October 22, 2020, Alachua County entered into an Option Contract for the purchase of the Budget Inn located at 4401 SW 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Gainesville, FL 32608.

On November 10, 2020 the Board of County Commissioners voted to exercise the County’s Option and directed staff to proceed with the closing of the acquisition

County staff performed or contracted for a thorough due diligence inspection of the property. This included a complete building and land inspection, a survey of the property and improvements, two independent MAI appraisals and title work. The inspections, survey and title work show no significant issues with the property improvements or title.

On December 8, 2020, the BoCC reviewed additional information based on findings and costs discovered during the due diligence review of the property. The BoCC voted to re-negotiate the purchase price with the seller to not exceed the average of the two appraisals, authorize the Chair to sign the Amendment to the contract that revises the purchase price and authorize the County Manager to close the transaction provided that the cost of the work to remove a possible underground tank does not exceed \$25,000 and the cost to construct fire, life-safety and accessibility improvements does not exceed \$220,000.

## **Implementation Plan**

### **Step 1: Purchase and Repurpose**

Alachua County Board of County Commission purchase of a 36-room motel and convert into a 36-apartment unit complex.

### **Step 2: Property Management- total Operation Expenses -**

Upon purchase, contract with Alachua County Housing Authority to manage the property.

### **Step 3: Renovation**

Conversion of motel 36 units into one-bedroom units by installing bedroom doors.

### **Step 4: Occupancy**

Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry process identifies tenants for placement in the apartments.

### **Step 5: Community Support Services Staffing**

The Department of Community Support Services will provide case management and outreach to residents that they place in units, and work with other partners who will provide supportive services as indicated.

## FY 21 Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Funds Update

12/8/2020

### DSS PSH Program Update

3 New Referrals during FY21

10 New Households Approved since 10/1/20

23 Households Currently Housed (27 Individuals)

Clients are actively engaging with PSH case manager on a weekly basis and working toward stabilization goals. PSH Case Managers continue providing in-home services, accompanying clients to appointments, etc. Working closely with Three Rivers Legal Services to establish benefits for participants with no income.

The holiday season has particularly been very positive for the PSH participants. Many feel thankful for the opportunity of having a warm shelter and ability to cook a holiday meal in their own space. Some have been inspired to decorate and for the first time in many years, have someone from their family over to share the occasion.

County Social Services staff are in the process of screening and scheduling interviews for the new PSH & RRH staff positions. The goal is to have the remaining PSH positions filled in January and beginning to bring on RRH clients as well.

### Year 1 PSH Carryforward Budget

During the May 26, 2020, the BoCC approved amending the PSH budget reallocating funds from the original \$500,000 to support Disaster and Eviction Prevention as below:

#### PSH Funding Plan

Place 12 households in PSH and follow as per plan = \$191,830 (this includes all staffing and operational costs – ongoing long term)

Support 6 individuals in Bridge RRH = \$60,000

Place 4 individuals in ACCHH's RRH grant = Federal HUD grant

CoC to support additional RRH staff = new State funding

Subtotal = \$251,830

#### Plan for the remaining PSH program funding

PSH Placements Dynamic Prioritization from DV list:

Place 10 additional PSH households = \$64,000

Community Support Services COVID 19 Response:

Assist Alachua County households impacted by COVID 19:

- with Disaster and Eviction Prevention = \$184,170
- with rent assistance using General Revenue and SHIP funding

Subtotal = \$248,170

Total FY20 Funding = \$500,000

## **Current Status of FY20 PSH Funds**

The reallocated funds for eviction prevention were not expended due to the infusion of CARES funds to assist those impacted by the pandemic to remain housed. When the Eviction Moratorium expires in December 2020, it is anticipated that there will be a significant demand for assistance as many residents will face eviction. The Division of Social Services (DSS) is proposing that the remaining PSH FY20 funds be carried forward in alignment with the approved amended budget. DSS would continue the Disaster and Eviction Prevention providing rent, mortgage and utility assistance for those residents who fail to qualify for Coronavirus Relief Funds.

The Grace Marketplace Rapid Rehousing (RRH) Bridge to PSH funds were allocated for six identified households, however to-date two households have been submitted for assistance using this fund; households have been fully processed and monthly payments made through December 2020. Paid to date: \$12,459.63

## **Year 2 Budget Summary**

Based on the available budget of \$1M, an additional PSH FTE case manager will be hired. This case manager will receive some of the current caseload and fill the remaining PSH slots. During Year 2, DSS will be implementing a medium-term (18-24 months) RRH component. Start-up of the program includes hiring a RRH Case Manager. A total of 11-15 households will be served during this period. Participants will remain on the program for up to 2 years.