

DRAFT

Empowerment Center Oversight Advisory Board Meeting
Wednesday, November 5, 2014 – 1:00 P.M.
Alachua County Community Support Services, John Henry Health Center Conference Room
Gainesville, Florida

MEMBERS PRESENT: County Commissioners Mike Byerly and Robert “Hutch” Hutchinson, City of Gainesville Commissioners Todd Chase and Yvonne Hinson-Rawls, Bernie Machen

ALSO PRESENT: Assistant City Manager Fred Murry, County Attorney Michelle Lieberman, City Attorney Nicole Shalley, Community Support Services Director Susan Myers, Community Support Services Assistant Director Tom Tonkavich, Program Manager Marie Small, Facilities Management Manager Gary Cothren, Neighborhood Planning Coordinator, John Wachtel, Jon DeCarmine, ACCHH Operations Manager, Theresa Lowe, ACCHH Executive Director, Tony Campo, WeCare Program Manager, Rick Dolan, Department of Forestry, Forrest Eddleton, Liz McCulloch, Bob Smith, Arthur Stockwell, Jo Beaty, Jo Caldwell, Annette Perez

1. Call to Order

Chair Mike Byerly opened the meeting of the Empowerment Center Oversight Advisory Board at 1:05 P.M.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

Commission Hinson-Rawls moved to adopt the meeting agenda as presented. Chair Byerly called for public input, none offered. Motion carried 5 – 0. Commissioner Hutchinson 2nd.

3. Department of Forestry Presentation

Rick Dolan, Forestry Operations Administrator, for the Florida Forest Service, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services presented information on land recently acquired by the Forestry Department, around the Empowerment Center. The land in part will be used to create the Newnan's Lake State Forest. The Department of Forestry officials have offered to fence off an area of about 10 acres adjacent to the Empowerment Center which is being used for camping by those receiving services. Mr. Dolan presented maps of the area including the proposed fencing location.

Members discussed the presentation and noted land use discussions should be discussed in detail at a future meeting to address additional questions and clarify how the fencing would be located. The land use meeting should include all respective adjacent land owners. Mr. Dolan noted the land proposed for camping could be governed by a local agreement with the City of Gainesville to address liability concerns and access to the road for forestry operations. Chair Byerly asked for public input, which was received by the Advisory Board members.

4. Shared Vision of the Empowerment Center

Members discussed and made comments on the shared vision for the Empowerment Center including the range and scope of services needed, geographic boundaries, short and long term objectives, and various housing models. Members discussed the need to accommodate various sheltering services including, indoor, outdoor, and camping. There was general consensus that the vision should focus on the Empowerment Center and adjacent property being used for camping. There was also discussion of the need for a triage center, perhaps with the Criminal Justice, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse grant funding that Meridian Behavioral Healthcare receives to provide services for the mentally ill and substance abusers. The board discussed prioritizing needs, what we want to do, and how to do it, including funding required for it.

The board asked staff to bring some suggested visioning statements to its next meeting for consideration and possible adoption.

5. Alachua County, City of Gainesville, and Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry Presentation.

Members heard a presentation from Assistant City Manager Murry and Joe Jackson, Legal Representative for the Coalition. They also received updated and corrected handouts from Mr. Jackson detailing financial issues, service levels and proposed contractual modifications. The Coalition noted additional funding is needed to continue services including indoor and pavilion sheltering as well as Day Services. They provided information on the various service providers located at the Empowerment Center. The need for additional funding is driven by higher than anticipated utilities, insurance, personnel, and other items.

The Coalition also proposed that expenses could be reduced through separate metering of utilities, landscaping (grass mowing), and general maintenance expenses. Members indicated the Coalition should be permitted to provide grass mowing services, pending review and clearance by the City of Gainesville Risk Manager. It was noted there is a separate group working on land clearing of other properties donated to the Coalition, who are working with Action Labor and use its workers compensation and general liability insurances.

After discussion and various question and answers, Commissioner Hinson Rawls moved to recommend that staff analyze the Coalition's request for additional funds, and prepare requests for consideration by the City of Gainesville and Alachua County Commissions to provide additional funding in the amount of \$251,680, less any savings to accrue to Coalition reserves, effective 10/1/14, split equally between the City of Gainesville and Alachua County for indoor sheltering, pavilion, and general operations as presented and that the Inter-local and Services agreements be amended accordingly.

Chair Byerly called for public input, members listened to those wishing to provide comments on the motion.

Motion passed 5-0. Commissioner Hutchinson 2nd.

6. Creation and Appointment of Other Groups to Assist the Advisory Board

Members received the staff proposals to create additional work groups to assist the advisory board including the Citizens Advisory Council, Healthcare Services Workgroup, and Resident Council.

Commissioner Hutchinson moved to form an Empowerment Center Citizens Advisory Board, composed of up to 15 members, that staff advertise the various categories proposed, however selection not be limited to just those categories, with appointments to be made at the next Empowerment Center Oversight Advisory Board meeting. Motion passed 5-0. Commissioner Chase 2nd.

Members discussed the need for a Healthcare Workgroup and determined an existing group is working on healthcare related issues so further action is not needed at this time. Members also discussed the need for a Resident Council and noted one has already been formed, there is no need for it to report directly to the Advisory Board. Members did indicate a standing item should be added to future meeting agendas to provide input from the existing resident council as needed and desired. Additionally, Oversight Advisory Board meeting agendas and minutes should be posted at the Empowerment Center.

7. Short and Long Term Priorities

Members presented and discussed their thoughts on priorities for the Empowerment Center. There was some discussion that the Center needs to continue operating for some time and establish some baseline before further establishing new priorities. Members indicated sheltering services are a priority as well as other services related to the root causes of homelessness. The public also needs to be made aware of all the positive things occurring with the Center and to work on longer term priorities as part of year 2 funding. There is also a desire to work with the various citizens and volunteer groups assisting the center and homeless population, not to lead them, rather to assure coordination.

8. General Comments and Discussion

Members provided additional comments and noted future decisions need to be made regarding the level of services and how much additional funding is needed, as well as possible sources of funding. Decisions also need to be made regarding landscaping. Staff were asked to provide additional information on various housing models including organized camping similar to

Pinellas County and Portland, OR. Concerns were also expressed over the number of buildings being used and that future discussions would need to occur to determine which buildings are renovated, when, and for what purpose.

9. Public Input

Chair Byerly called for public input and several individuals provided members with input.

10. Next Meeting Agenda

Staff Liaison Tonkavich provided members with ideas on the next meeting agenda. Members discussed date, time, and location. It was agreed upon the next meeting will be held at the Empowerment Center, 2845 NE 39th Ave, Gainesville, FL. The agenda will focus on three items; the adoption of by-laws, selection of members for the Citizens Advisory Board, and establishing the Advisory Board's vision for the Empowerment Center.

Additional topics for future meeting agendas include discussion about a funding group, future land use, camping models, and input from law enforcement and others on enforcement of trespassing laws.

Meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Recorded by,

Thomas A Tonkavich, Staff Liaison