



Legislation Text

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Empowerment Center and Dignity Village Update (B)

This is a request for the City and County Commission to receive an update on the Empowerment Center and Dignity Village.

This agenda item is to provide the City and County Commissions with an update on the status of the Empowerment Center and Dignity Village. This is the final year of the agreement between the City of Gainesville and the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry (ACCHH). The original agreement with ACCHH was for three (3) years, and called for the City to pay ACCHH \$308,000 each year. The County, through a separate interlocal agreement with the City, agreed to pay half that cost (\$154,000). ACCHH was responsible for generating other resources to cover other costs associated with the management and coordination of services. Both the City and the County Commissions have provided additional funds to support the services to the homeless. The contract was amended in December 2014, to total \$559,680, which was split evenly between the City and County. The proposed budget for FY 2016 for ACCHH is \$780,793.75, which is subject to the availability and approval of the City and County Budget.

The current contract with ACCHH will expire on September 30, 2016. In October 2015, the City and County staff anticipate bringing this issue to the Empowerment Center Oversight Board for their review and recommendation to the City and the County Commissions. At that time, the Oversight Board must determine whether: 1) to recommend that the City and the County issue a new RFP for a new provider; 2) either of the Government entities wish to manage or coordinate services at the Empowerment Center; or 3) to direct staff to negotiate a new contract with ACCHH for another three (3) years.

With the expiration of the contract with ACCHH, the City and the County have the opportunity to have one provider to manage and coordinate services for the Empowerment Center and Dignity Village for FY 2017. However, the City of Gainesville Commission has given clear policy direction for City Management to manage and coordinate services for Dignity Village for FY 2016.

The Oversight Advisory Board's Citizens Advisory Committee plans to conduct a workshop with many public and private stakeholders in September 2015. Topics may include the following: 1) What services are being provided at the Empowerment Center and Dignity Village; 2) Who is providing those services; and 3) Fundraising. The purpose is to better understand what services are needed, but are not provided.

Similarly, the City and the County staff support a full review and update of the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, which would allow the Community to discuss all the elements related to homelessness services, including: evaluating how funds are currently distributed for homeless services; determining, based on data and analysis, the Community's greatest needs; and exploring how to better coordinate services. The end result should be a Community Homelessness Policy that guides future actions and expenditures for both providers and governments.

At this time, the City has expended approximately \$19,542.12 for services for Dignity Village, excluding Staff time and emergency services (Police and Fire/Rescue Services). The cost includes rental fees for dumpsters, porta-potties, rental of emergency trailers/PODs, and the purchase of two ramps (Emergency Evacuation Plan for FY 2015). Emergency Management/Evacuation Expenditures are necessary to ensure that the City and the County Emergency Plan can address the residents' needs during an emergency activation for hurricane, fire, etc.

The Gainesville City Commission has approved additional funds in the amount of \$110,556.75 for FY 2016. These funds will be set aside as contingency funds in case ACCHH and the Oversight Board cannot meet their fund raising goal of \$221,113.50. The City has approved \$160,000 for a community policing pilot program for Dignity Village. Finally, the City Commission also approved and authorized the City Manager to hire a Dignity Village Project Manager/Coordinator to manage and implement the City's rules and regulations for the camping area.

The Alachua County Board of County Commissioners has yet to make decision on the shared funding for ACCHH for FY 2016.

On July 16, the Gainesville City Commission took action on two of the three recommendations forwarded from the Oversight Board to the City of Gainesville and the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners. The City Commission approved the additional funding for ACCHH for FY 2016 and modified the recommendations on management of Dignity Village, directing the City Manager to take over the management of the camping area and enforce the proposed rules and regulations developed by the Action Team. Betty Baker, Project Manager, has agreed to accept a temporary assignment to manage Dignity Village while the City seeks a Project Manager to take on the permanent assignment.

On June 15, 2015, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) agreed to provide technical assistance on homeless services to the Gainesville-Alachua County Community. On August 3, 2015, the Technical Assistance Consultant completed an assessment report on the community. The City of Gainesville, Alachua County, and ACCHH provided information for the report, which will be submitted to HUD for its review and approval.

City Management anticipates introducing the rules and regulations to Dignity Village residents in early August with enforcement beginning later in the month. In addition to the City's effort to manage and control Dignity Village, Randy Stacy and a group of volunteers continue to clean and remove tents from the camping area. In July, Mr. Stacy and his volunteers counted 160 tents/persons in Dignity Village.

The City has entered into a contract with CPPI to complete some construction activities on the Empowerment Center in the amount of \$585,525.00. The work is partially funded with \$300,000 from State Funds. The remaining funds are to come from the City's construction fund for the One Stop Center. The funds will improve ten previously-identified buildings by paying for roof repairs, painting, and kitchen equipment. The work is to be completed in twelve (12) weeks once started. This project will preserve the buildings for future activities and the development of the site as a Human Services Campus.

The Gainesville City Commission approved the recommended budget of \$780,793.75 for FY 2016 with the conditions that the expenditure rate should reflect the FY 2015 budget of \$559,680 and that \$221,113.50 be placed in a contingency fund in case the ACCHH and the Oversight Board are unable to raise the additional operating funds. The City's share of the proposed budget is \$390,396.87, with \$110,556.75 being placed in the contingency fund. The County is scheduled to address the recommendation of the Oversight Board at its August 11 Board of County Commissioners meeting.

The construction funds are to come from State funds in the amount of \$300,000 and the remaining funds are to come from construction funds originally allocated for the construction of a new building for the One Stop Center.

The City and County Commission hear a presentation from staff and provide policy direction on the management, coordination, and implementation of services at the Empowerment Center and Dignity Village.