



Legislation Text

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Interlocal Agreement between the City of Gainesville and Alachua County for the Empowerment Center (B)

This item involves a request for the City Commission to discuss the terms of the Interlocal Agreement for the Empowerment Center with the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners and provide direction to staff.

This item supports the City Commission Strategic Initiative 3.1: Continue implementation and engage in the update of the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness, and City Commission Strategic Initiative 3.2: Renew the vision for the empowerment center and identify metrics and best practices for success.

Nearly ten years ago, the City of Gainesville (City) and the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (County) began a mission to establish a One Stop Homeless Assistance Center (OSHAC). The establishment of an OSHAC was a major objective in the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. In recent months, several major milestones have been achieved while working to accomplish that mission.

On November 19, 2013, the City purchased the former Gainesville Correctional Institute (GCI) complex and an additional 95 acres of conservation land from the State for \$1.3 million. Construction and renovation work has been underway since December on the campus to prepare for a service provider to administer and implement homeless services. Although the complex has yet to be officially named, it is commonly being referred to as the "Empowerment Center."

The Empowerment Center (Center) is a long term project, and there are no other resources allocated from the City or the County for the full development of the Center. The City and County included requests in their State Legislative packet for funds to fully develop the Kitchen and make repairs to the roofs on the remaining dormitories. In addition, the City requested similar funding for the Center from the federal government in the City's Federal Legislative Agenda packet.

On February 4, 2014, the County Commission discussed funding for Homeless Services and their future commitment for funding homeless services at the Center. In addition, the County requested that a governance structure be added to the Joint City and County meeting agenda for March.

On February 6, 2014, the City Commission approved an agreement with the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry (ACCHH) to administer and implement homeless services at the Empowerment Center. The purchase of the Center provides the City and County an opportunity to create an adaptive reuse project that will serve as a best practice model for Human Services in Florida. The development of the Center is a long term project and will require the City and County to continue standing firm in their commitment to the development and planning for human services at the site.

The agreement with ACCHH calls for a yearly allocation of \$308,000 for the services with the intent that one-half be provided by the City and one-half by the County; the agreement acknowledges that funding is subject to

annual allocations from the governing bodies. We are in the first year of a three year agreement; if the City or the County does not appropriate money to fund the agreement, the City can terminate the agreement with no less than 24 hours notice to ACCHH. The City and County Commissions have agreed in concept to fund the amount of \$308,000 for the first year of the agreement, and subsequent years are subject to annual budget appropriations by the City and the County.

On March 24, 2014, at a joint meeting of the City and County Commissions, staff received direction to develop an Interlocal Agreement between the City and County to establish a 5 member Governance Board comprised of 2 City Commissioners, 2 County Commissioners, and a 5th member chosen by the other members.

On June 19, 2014, the City Commission approved a draft Interlocal Agreement (Attachment A) which was provided to County staff for submission to the County Commission. The original draft Interlocal Agreement included a three year commitment of funding subject to appropriation, by both the City and the County. City and County staff have attempted to negotiate terms for the Interlocal Agreement, however any recommended changes would require approval by both Commissions.

On August 19, 2014, County staff submitted proposed revisions to the draft agreement to City staff (Attachment B). City staff created an outline that reviewed and commented on each proposed revision (Attachment C) to seek direction from the City Commission at the August 21st City Commission meeting.

The Governance Board cannot meet or begin discussions on future services at the Empowerment Center until the Interlocal Agreement establishing authority is in place. ACCHH has expressed their interest in getting the Governance Board in place as quickly as possible to assist in moving projects and programs forward. City staff also expects many other items related to Homeless Services being submitted to the City Commission and the County Commission for approval in the next few months including Cold Night Shelter Services, Respite Services, and the possible reinstatement of the Office on Homelessness.

Since May 5, 2014, ACCHH has been steadily increasing the services provided to the Homeless at the Center including breakfast and dinner meal service, mail services, lending library services, storage, shower services, restroom services, outdoor shelter services and a host of other social services. The number of individuals utilizing these services has been increasing as documented by reports and data submitted by ACCHH (see attachment D). An unintended consequence of good services has been the camping alongside and on City property as well as on the adjacent properties. The surrounding properties are controlled by State agencies.

ACCHH has made significant progress managing and coordinating services for the homeless at the Center. Generally speaking, the homeless community has begun to utilize the services at the Center. While services at the Center have increased, the community discussion on the status of the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness must begin in order to determine what progress has been made to date, and what services are needed for the future. City staff expects that this will be one of the major items brought before the Governance Board.

The City continues its renovation and construction activities on the Empowerment Center campus. The Kitchen area is now completed with the exception of the purchase of the equipment. The State Legislature approved \$300,000 for kitchen equipment, roof repairs and painting for the Center. The Department of Children and Family Services was given the task of negotiating and executing an agreement with the City for the utilization of these state funds. City staff continues to work with ACCHH on the planning and development of the Laundry room and the Kitchen in regards to equipment.

This is the first year of a three year agreement between the City and ACCHH for the management, coordination

and implementation of Homeless Services at the Empowerment Center; the total amount of the first year agreement is \$308,000. The draft Interlocal Agreement between the City and County which affirms the intent to jointly fund this project clearly states that any and all future funding by either entity is subject to annual budget appropriations from the Gainesville City Commission and the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners.

The City has already allocated over \$1 million dollars in renovation and construction funds to prepare the campus for homeless services.

The City Commission provide direction to staff on the terms of the Interlocal Agreement between the City of Gainesville and Alachua County for the Empowerment Center.