

Minutes of the Housing Subcommittee

Sep. 4, 2007, 8:30 a.m., Asbury Theological Seminary, 8401 Valencia College Lane.

Members present:

Krissy Todd, Chair; and Steve Kodsi. Commission Co-chair Tracy Schmidt also attended.

Members absent:

Cara Eule; Brian Wilson; Keylor Chan; and Thomas Griffin.

Staff present:

Yvonne Vassel, staff coordinator; Andy Rosario, Osceola County; Rob Heenan and Buddy Balagia, Seminole County.

Guests:

Dr. Jim Wright, Professor of Sociology at the University of Central Florida; Cathy Jackson, Homeless Services Network.

Dr. Wright spoke first of the Housing First model. He said there are many different ways that communities go about adopting this model and it is primarily a philosophy of how to provide housing rather than a model that needs to be followed step-by-step. For example, he said the local Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida (for which he is a board member) follows a service and treatment-first model, while the Housing First model places the homeless in housing and then follows up with services and treatment.

Dr. Wright said, although there has been good anecdotal information and some promising studies done of Housing First, he does not know of a comprehensive systematic evaluation of the model. He admitted to some skepticism about that housing method's ability to move enough people out of homelessness. He said, in theory, the Federally funded Section 8 program is the best way to assist the homeless into affordable housing but, in reality, the program is under-funded and Orlando's program has been closed to new applicants for years.

Cathy Jackson said Seminole and Orange counties have already begun implementing the Housing First model as part of the continuum of care but said it is currently serving only about 92 people.

Tracy Schmidt asked that the Committee come up with its Top Ten focus areas by the end of September so those can be looked at prior to the October 20 Commission retreat. A discussion of what those focus areas could be pinpointed the following preliminary ideas:

- Housing First
- Funding

- Supportive Housing
- Shelter
- Homeless prevention services

It was decided the next meeting on Sept. 18 would be a working one where the Committee will discuss what it has learned to date and how it wishes to proceed.

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

The next Committee meeting will be September 18, 2007, at 8:30 a.m. at the Asbury Theological Seminary, 8401 Valencia College Lane.

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