



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
HOMELESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HAC)
TOWER 101 – 101 NE 3RD AVENUE
SUITE 1100 CONFERENCE ROOM
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33301
THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2025 – 1:00 P.M.**

<u>Committee Members</u>	Attendance	Present	Absent
Paula Yukna, Chair	P	3	0
Robin Martin, Vice Chair	P	2	1
Ray Dettman	P	3	0
Michael O'Brien	P	3	0
Amy Schimelfenyg	P	2	1
Colby Williams	A	2	1

Staff

Chris Cooper, Acting Assistant City Manager
Carole Mitchell, Homeless Initiatives Program Manager I
Kayla Weinberg, Homeless Initiatives Senior Administrative Assistant
Marco Aguilera, Homeless Initiatives Administrative Supervisor
Marie Joseph, Homeless Initiative Coordinator
K. Cruitt, Recording Clerk, Prototype, Inc.

Guests

Officer Brian Blount, FLPD, Homeless Outreach Team (HOT)
Officer Laurie Arthur, FLPD, Homeless Outreach Team (HOT)
Goldie Weakland

I. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Yukna called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

II. Determination of Quorum

Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present.

III. Public Sign-In

IV. Approval of February 2025 Minutes

Motion made by Mr. O'Brien, seconded by Mr. Dettman, to approve the minutes of the March 2025 meeting. In a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

V. Agenda Items:

a. Homeless Advisory Committee

- i. Biannual City of Fort Lauderdale Board and Committee Member Training - 4/22/25 (6-8pm)

Ms. Mitchell advised of an upcoming training session for Board and Committee members on the 22nd of April requesting that all members consider attending the meeting either via Zoom or in person if allowed.

- ii. Discussion – Strategies and Actionable Recommendations

The discussion transitioned to strategies and actionable recommendations. A proactive approach was put forward, suggesting a formal request to the City Commission for a comprehensive action plan which should explicitly articulate the Commission's policy, objectives, and specific positions on critical issues such as pallet homes and designated parking lots for the homeless. Understanding the Commission's stance on these matters is crucial for aligning the Committee's recommendations with the City's overall direction. It was proposed that researching best practices from other municipalities, citing Miami Beach and the Miami Trust as potential models, would be advisable, with further suggestions made for exploring a County-wide approach with Broward County at the helm, and coordinating efforts with individual municipalities.

A proposal was put forth by Mr. Dettman for issuing a request for proposal (RFP) to solicit solutions from organizations specializing in homeless services, a key element of which should be a mentorship component, recognizing the vital role of mentors in guiding individuals transitioning from homelessness to stable housing and leveraging community volunteers for this mentorship program. Additionally, a suggestion was made for considering boarding houses as a temporary housing solution, although there is the potential for neighborhood resistance due to their resemblance to traditional boarding houses. The goal of transitioning residents from these temporary arrangements to permanent housing was emphasized.

Ms. Schimelfenyg highlighted the absence of a comprehensive, long-term plan in Fort Lauderdale to address homelessness, underscoring the critical need for long-term housing coupled with comprehensive support services, expressing concerns about funding the RFP initiatives, and questioning the availability of resources for effective program implementation.

Discussion continued regarding the Committee's role and its relationship with the City Commission. The importance of a proactive approach was emphasized, advocating for the Committee to develop a proposal, secure staff support, and formally present it to the Commission, rather than passively awaiting direction. The advisory nature of the Committee and the need for staff to furnish information and data to the Commission to inform them of the Committee's recommendations was then explained.

The following issues of importance were also discussed:

- A review of Broward County's existing Master Plan for addressing homelessness and identifying areas where the Committee could strategically contribute was recommended.
- Stronger case management services at key entry points, such as Community Court, to ensure individuals experiencing homelessness receive adequate support and guidance.
- Addressing the challenges of implementing pallet shelter facilities, citing land scarcity and the limited impact such a facility might have given the scale of homelessness in Fort Lauderdale.
- The difficulty of finding a suitable location for a pallet shelter regardless of if the project is funded.
- The resource disparity between Fort Lauderdale and Miami, recognizing Miami's significantly greater funding capacity for addressing homelessness.
- Shifting the focus to critical service gaps and serious concerns about the potential loss of meal and shower programs provided by Hope South Florida and LifeNet for Families, as well as the importance of these services for basic hygiene and mitigating the negative impacts of hunger.

Existing regulations regarding food distribution by houses of worship were clarified explaining that it is permitted as an ancillary function, and emphasizing the importance of respecting residential surroundings and minimizing adverse impacts. The permitting process for outdoor social services was outlined, including food and hygiene services, although some permits had been scaled back due to exceeding their intended scope.

Discussion followed regarding the funding sources for "Showering with Love" and the overall City budget allocated for homeless services. The City budgets approximately \$2.5 million from its general fund specifically for homelessness initiatives, encompassing the homeless outreach team, the TaskForce contract, staff salaries, and Community Court.

Mention was also made of the critical importance of affordable housing as a long-term solution, and that affordability should target lower-income individuals, not those earning \$80,000 annually. The challenges of providing long-term housing solutions and the need for assistance with benefits applications, highlighting the vulnerability of single mothers with young children and working individuals struggling with substance abuse was also referenced.

An update on the Salvation Army's plans to convert family rooms into single rooms was provided. It was noted that the plan was not proceeding due to feedback concerning the loss of family shelter space from the Committee, other agencies, and the County. The topic of shared housing and boarding homes was raised, prompting a discussion about the potential benefits and drawbacks of such arrangements, along with the potential issues and hurdles associated with converting single-family homes into boarding houses, including building code compliance, neighborhood concerns, and potential conflicts with

community residence requirements. Concerns regarding the potential for resident exploitation due to inadequate regulation and oversight were also mentioned.

Also discussed were the City's efforts to encourage affordable housing through Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), and highlighting of ongoing collaborations with the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee to explore ways to make ADUs more affordable for both homeowners and renters.

Officer Brian Blount addressed concerns about shelter bed capacity, explaining that shelter staffing shortages significantly limit the ability of shelters to fill available beds, particularly during evening hours. He noted that entry-level shelter positions often require a bachelor's degree, but offer relatively low starting salaries, making it challenging to attract and retain qualified staff. The operational differences between the Salvation Army and the Central/North HACCs were explained noting that bed availability fluctuates based on factors such as gender distribution, family size, and program requirements. An update was also provided on the Central HAC's plan to seek approval for increased capacity and operational changes, noting that the changes primarily relate to access procedures rather than staffing or pay structure.

Officer Blount highlighted the successes of HomesUnited and Fellowship Recovery Services in providing mental health treatment and substance abuse services, respectively.

b. City Updates:

- i. Rickelle Williams, City Manager (effective 4/2/25)
- ii. HB 1365 – FixIt FTL Data
- iii. Community Court and PD Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) Data

Mr. Cooper presented data on requests for homeless services, Community Court data, and homeless outreach team activities, providing a comprehensive overview of key metrics and trends. Officer Blount further elaborated on the Homeless Outreach Team's activities, including encounters, reunifications, outreach efforts, red tagging abandoned property, warnings issued, property checks, and community engagement. A plan was announced to publish 30-day snapshots of these dashboards on the City's website to enhance transparency and provide public access to information about homeless services and outreach activities.

Mr. Cooper shared that Rickelle Williams, the new City Manager, became effective in her position on 4/2/25 and plans to introduce herself at a future Homeless Advisory Committee meeting.

II. Public Input

Ms. Goldie Weakland addressed the Committee speaking about the United Methodist Church allowing individuals to sleep on their driveway overnight, highlighting the need for safe sleeping spaces for those unable to access shelters, exploring similar arrangements

with other churches, and the positive aspects of this informal arrangement, such as increased safety, community support, and a sense of protection. A proposal was presented for a centralized day center concept, incorporating services like meals, showers, and other support, potentially utilizing existing city buildings or vacant lots, as well as utilizing the Community Court building as a possible location or exploring expansion or acquisition of another suitable building, including the importance of co-locating services in an area already frequented by the homeless population.

III. Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 2:42 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.

THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON MAY 8, 2025, AT 1:00 P.M.

[Minutes prepared by L. Tayar, Prototype, Inc.]