



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, AUGUST 14, 2025 – 1:00 P.M.**

<u>Committee Members</u>	Attendance	Present	Absent
Paula Yukna, Chair	P	7	0
Robin Martin, Vice Chair (left at 2:26)	P	5	2
Ray Dettman	P	7	0
Michael O'Brien (arrived at 1:03)	P	7	0
Amy Schimelfenyg (arrived at 1:09)	P	6	1
Colby Williams	P	5	2

Staff

Carole Mitchell, Homeless Initiatives Program Manager
 Luisa Agathon, Neighbor Support Manager
 Chris Cooper, Assistant City Manager
 Marie Joseph, Administrative Supervisor - Homeless Initiative Coordinator
 Kayla Weinberg, Homeless Initiatives Senior Administrative Assistant
 Jorg Hruschka, Chief Service Officer

Others

Pastor Duane Mellor
 Martyna Kilsh
 Trey Miller
 Goldie Weakland
 Tony Docal
 Greg Hunt
 K. Cruitt, Recording Secretary, Prototype Inc.

I. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Yukna called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

II. Determination of Quorum

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

III. Public Sign-In

IV. Approval of July 2025 Minutes

Motion made by Mr. Dettman, seconded by Vice Chair Martin, to approve the minutes of the July 2025 meeting. In a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

V. Agenda Items

a. Presentation: Homes United Ministries, Inc. - Pastor Duane Mellor

Pastor Duane, HomesUnited CEO, spoke to the Committee about the partnership with the City of Fort Lauderdale on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Housing Program. In a recent three-month pilot that ended June 30, 2025, 41 individuals were on the housing navigation list of which 29 were housed or reunited with a family or a friend. Twenty (20) individuals remain at HomesUnited and nearly half are self-paying. Since the inception of the program in 2019, it has grown from serving 27 participants to 459 in 2025, supported by 18 homes, including 13 in Fort Lauderdale. The model achieves a 76% one-year retention rate and provides housing at less than \$17,000 annually compared to \$51,000 per person on the streets. Emphasizing “housing with” services, the program combines housing, mental health care, and expedited benefits assistance. Clients are referred through providers like Henderson and connected to the Broward Behavioral Health Coalition, with additional support from over 2,300 volunteer hours last year.

With an annual budget request of \$250,000, the program can serve 83 clients at an average cost of \$3,000 each, with projected outcomes of 75% retention and full connection to mental health services. The long-term goal is to expand to 62 additional beds, reduce public safety costs, and continue offering stable housing as a foundation for recovery.

Trey Miller, Homes United COO, explained their preference for acquiring and rehabilitating homes, which is more efficient than new development, and noted their homes are located across Fort Lauderdale, Lauderhill, West Park (Hollywood), and North Lauderdale. The model limits two people per room, provides wraparound case management, and supports clients with pets. Funding for the first three months came from a state grant via the City of which approximately \$90,000 was expended. HomesUnited is now proposing \$250,000 for a full-year contract. Committee members asked for a detailed funding spreadsheet and review of current city spending to guide future recommendations.

b. City Data and Program Updates:

i. HB 1365 FitxIt FTL Data

Chris Cooper, Assistant City Manager, presented an update on the recent federal executive order shifting priorities away from the Housing First model toward mental health and substance abuse treatment, which may impact funding such as HOPWA and food pantries starting October 1. While some programs may face cuts or reallocations, Fort Lauderdale may benefit due to existing initiatives addressing mental health, substance abuse, and public camping. Updates included the Safe Parking program coordinated with Broward County, with funds expected by October. Jorg Hruska, Chief Service Officer, updated the committee about the newly launched Rotary Connection, a free bus transportation service connecting individuals experiencing homelessness to vital services using peer drivers and supported by faith based and other sponsors. Operation began on Monday, August 4th.

ii. Community Court and PD Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) Data

Mr. Cooper provided an update on Community Court data for July 2025, reporting 326 participants and 456 visits, with housing, food, mental health services, and cell phones being the most requested services. The court building has been improved with a long-term lease, pressure cleaning, painting, roof repairs, fixed windows, and newly affixed Community Court decals, enhancing its appearance and giving it a more official presence. Cooper highlighted the effectiveness of housing navigation and outreach efforts, including partnerships with Fellowship in HomesUnited, emergency shelters, and TaskForce for Ending Homelessness referrals, noting that participants are actively engaging with available resources. He also emphasized the efficiency of the city's response to reports of homeless encampments, often addressing issues well within the required five-day timeframe. Chair Yunka noted that the city consistently responds faster than the five-day requirement under HB1365, citing a successful case and expressing appreciation for the Homeless Outreach team.

iii. Homelessness Initiatives Program Highlights

Mr. Cooper share the Homeless Initiatives Program Highlights with the Committee. Thereafter, he addressed two recent motions from the Committee: one supporting Broward Partnership's effort to amend an ordinance to increase shelter capacity, and the other directing staff to explore fundraising opportunities such as GoFundMe. Mr. Cooper clarified that the first motion would go before the City Commission, while the second is intended for staff review before any formal communication. The Committee generally supports Broward Partnership's initiative to expand capacity, aiming to reach 300 beds initially, though actual capacity may depend on building and staffing limitations. Challenges in hiring qualified case management staff were noted, but the

organization provides comprehensive wraparound services. The Committee agreed that the communication to the Commission should reflect their support for Broward Partnership's efforts.

c. Homeless Advisory Committee

i. Open Discussion

Mr. O'Brien highlighted recent negative coverage in the Sun Sentinel and on social media, along with a report from the Florida Council on Homelessness, noting increasing homelessness in his and neighboring areas. He praised the Police Department's Homeless Outreach Team's work but stressed the need for more effective solutions. Mr. Cooper noted that safe parking for families is expected to open soon, though funding won't be available until October, and highlighted a countywide increase in homelessness.

The Committee discussed systemic challenges, including limited shelter beds, unaffordable housing, and contributing factors like jail and hospital populations released to the city. Mr. O'Brien emphasized the urgency of getting people off the streets, suggested communicating the issue to the City Commission, and highlighted potential solutions such as expanding beds at Broward Partnership Homeless Assistance Center (HAC). The Committee acknowledged ongoing efforts and follow-up with civic associations and the city.

VI. Public Input

Greg Hunt, emphasized that discussions on homelessness often focus only on addressing it after it occurs, rather than preventing it. He noted that many people become homeless not due to mental illness or substance abuse, but because housing costs have risen beyond their means. He highlighted that in Florida, unlike some other states, there are no caps on rent increases, giving landlords broad discretion to raise rents to levels unaffordable for most people.

Tony Docal noted that DCF has made it harder for people to obtain Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) cards at the main post office. Mail delivery issues were highlighted noting that case managers help the unhoused as best they can. Also, outreach to organizations such as the United Way continue to secure alternate locations where mail can be received for the unhoused. The Committee further discussed the mail and bus service, noting that the trial bus loop runs Monday through Friday twice a day for about three and a half hours and is still adjustable to meet key destinations such as the main post office. The financial viability of Homes United was raised, noting it is often

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subsidized by participant benefits. Daily contributions from residents cover some expenses while still allowing for some revenue.

VII. Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2025, AT 1:00 P.M.

[Minutes prepared by J. Burnham, Prototype, Inc.]