



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, FEBRUARY 12, 2026 – 1:00 P.M.**

<u>Committee Members</u>	Attendance	Present	Absent
Paula Yukna, Chair	P	11	1
Robin Martin, Vice Chair	P	10	2
Ray Dettman	P	11	1
Michael O'Brien	P	11	1
Amy Schimelfenyg	P	11	1
Colby Williams	P	9	3

Staff

Marie Joseph, Homeless Initiatives Coordinator
 Carole Mitchell, Homeless Initiatives Program Manager
 Jorg Hruschka, Chief Volunteer Services
 Katrina Johnson, Community Services Department (CSD)
 Acting Assistant Department Director
 Olivette Carter, Assistant Housing and Community
 Development (HCD) Manager
 Sergeant Monica Ferrer, Police Department, Special
 Operations & Events (Homeless Outreach Team (HOT)
 Supervisor)

Others

Greg Hunt
 Rick Riccardi, Fellowship Recovery Community Organization, Chair, Board of Directors
 Joseph Kenner, President, Hope South Florida
 Garry Smyth, Rotary Connections, Co-founder and Executive Director
 K. Cruitt, Recording Secretary, Prototype Inc.

I. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Yukna called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m.

II. Determination of Quorum

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

III. Public Sign-In

IV. Approval of December 2025 Minutes

Motion made by Mr. O'Brien, seconded by Mr. Dettman, to approve the minutes of the January 2026 meeting with the stated corrections. In a voice vote, the motion passed 5 to 1 as Mr. Martin had stepped out of the room.

V. Agenda Items

a. Presentation:

- i. Rotary Connection Project – Garry Smyth and Gwynne Beatty

This item was deferred until later in the agenda.

b. City Data and Program Updates:

- i. FixIt FTL – HB 1365 & Homeless Concern Data

Carole Mitchell, Homeless Initiatives Program Manager, provided an overview of the January homeless concern data and updates related to FixIt FTL and HB 1365 compliance.

- ii. Community Court Data

Ms. Mitchell reported that Community Court data was not yet finalized, as information is still being entered, but noted that trends have remained consistent over the past several months. She also referenced the January data from the Fort Lauderdale Police Department Homeless Outreach Team.

- iii. Safe Parking Program and Shared Housing Update

Ms. Mitchell reported that staff is in communication with LifeNet4Families and is moving forward with a Safe Parking Program service agreement. She noted a tentative March 19 Commission meeting date, which may be postponed.

Vice Chair Martin questioned why staff decided to proceed, and Ms. Mitchell stated it was at the direction of the Deputy City Manager. Vice Chair Martin expressed concern that the County's Safe Parking Program, opened since December 2025, has enrolled only nine (9) participants despite a capacity to serve twenty (20) families. He suggested it may be premature to launch a City program before evaluating barriers in Broward County's service model and recommended further monitoring and coordination with the County to ensure the City adopts a model that works. He also raised concerns about entering into a contract for services and questioned whether there is verified need prior to expending funds.

Chair Yukna commented that some individuals may simply want a safe place to park and sleep without extensive supportive services. Vice Chair Martin responded that the program should serve as a gateway into the continuum of care and emphasized the importance of removing barriers (such as income requirements).

Joseph Kenner, President of Hope South Florida, spoke in agreement with Vice Chair Martin. He explained the County program, launched December 15, currently has 2–4 vehicles nightly and nine enrolled participants. He indicated income requirements may be a barrier to participation and suggested the program function as a triage model to serve those most in need. He described the pilot as operationally sound but still in a learning phase.

Committee Member O'Brien inquired about differences between Broward County and Fort Lauderdale criteria. Vice Chair Martin reiterated concerns regarding eligibility requirements and potential alternative approaches.

Ms. Mitchell stated she will bring the Committee's feedback to executive leadership and the City Manager's Office for consideration and confirmed the March 19 presentation to the City Commission will likely be postponed.

Motion made by Vice Chair Martin, seconded by Mr. Dettman, for City staff to hold off on presenting a Safe Parking Program to the City Commission until they have had time to review the current Safe Parking Program under Broward County. In a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Mitchell reported that staff is seeking to move forward with Shared Housing through Homes United, consistent with the City's interest in partnering with the organization again.

Vice Chair Martin noted that Broward County is currently developing standards of care and recommended the City coordinate with the County to review and potentially adopt some or all of those standards. He emphasized the importance of safeguarding units the City funds, and suggested slowing the timeline until the draft standards, expected next month, are available for review.

Ms. Mitchell also provided updates on Community Court expansion efforts. During a recent Florida Licensing on Wheels (FLOW) visit, thirty-four (34) individuals were registered, fifteen (15) showed up along with twenty-two (22) walk-ins. Services included the issuance of twenty-one (21) DMV driver's license renewals and state IDs combined. The DMV is considering continuing participation. The City's first Health and Wellness Fair for the unhoused was held on February 6. Seventy-one (71) individuals were served and included oral health education; Committee Member Williams was recognized for his support. Staff is planning a Job Readiness and Employment Fair on May 8, along with additional financial literacy programming.

iv. Neighbor Support Night – Thursday 2/12/26 (5:30 – 8:00 p.m.)

Ms. Mitchell announced the upcoming Neighbor Support Night and encouraged participation.

Committee Member Schimelfenyng added that all City services will be represented and noted that food will be provided.

Rotary Connection Project – Garry Smyth and Gwynne Beatty

Garry Smyth, Rotary Connections, Co-founder and Executive Director, along with Rick Riccardi, Co-founder, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Rotary Connection Project, a privately funded transportation initiative serving individuals experiencing homelessness. The program operates one 14-passenger bus, Monday through Friday, making 62 stops daily and engaging approximately 150 individuals per day.

A brief recess was called at 1:53 due to technical issues and the meeting was called back to order at 1:58.

Mr. Smyth emphasized the program is designed to be more than transportation. Each route includes a driver with lived experience and a peer specialist who builds relationships with riders and facilitates connections to services. Services include state ID assistance, work-related support (such as providing work boots), relocation and family reunification (with approximately 90% occurring same day), distribution of essential items, and warm handoffs to 46 partner agencies. Same-day services are available in central Broward. There are no barriers to boarding and no registration requirements.

The first Health and Wellness-style outreach model includes onboard amenities, and the January 2026 impact report was distributed, with February numbers already surpassing January totals. The bus design resulted from a student contest won by Sam Danzig, a 10th-grade student at American Heritage School.

In response to Committee Member O'Brien, Mr. Smyth clarified there is currently only one bus, which operates at full capacity daily, often leaving individuals behind and issuing bus passes. He noted the program could expand service to central Broward and the Hollywood/Dania area if additional funding were secured. The monthly operating cost is approximately \$22,500, or \$300,000 annually.

Discussion followed regarding sustainability and potential City support. Vice Chair Martin recommended staff evaluate appropriate funding options, noting that approximately 85% of the bus's service time is spent in Fort Lauderdale. Committee Member Dettman requested a report next month on whether financial support may be feasible.

Mr. Smyth also requested consideration for peer specialists to be stationed at Community Court (10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.) with computer access and inquired about using City garage space as a base location for parking and storage. He further noted the organization is nominated for the 2026 JM Family Enterprises Community Choice Award and encouraged support.

Additional discussion included comparisons of reunification numbers with Community Court, eligibility requirements, mail services through LifeNet4Families, and capacity limitations identified by other service providers.

c. Homeless Advisory Committee

i. Open Discussion

Vice Chair Martin suggested that City staff create a process for non-profits to handle requests for funding. Committee Member Dettman disagreed, noting that the Committee serves in an advisory capacity, and discussion followed regarding possible options. Committee Member Schimelfenyng supported Vice Chair Martin's suggestion.

Committee Member Williams emphasized the need for an awareness process, and Committee Member O'Brien stated that if a funding request is made, the Committee would like to be informed at the outset, noting no objection to organizations presenting requests.

Chair Yukna clarified that Garry Smyth had not come seeking funding but was requesting the Committee's endorsement and was also directed to the County Commission.

VI. Public Input

Chair Yukna opened public comment

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Greg Hunt stated that support is most beneficial for individuals who can work independently without close oversight. He noted that artists have faced threats and emphasized the need for a brick-and-mortar space or dedicated avenue to create and showcase their work.

Chair Yunka closed public comment.

VII. Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 2:46 p.m.

THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON March 12, 2026, AT 1:00 P.M.

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