



GREENVILLE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes

Committee of the Whole

August 21, 2018

5:01 p.m.

County Square – Council Chambers

Council Members

Mr. Butch Kirven, Chairman
Mr. Willis Meadows, Vice Chairman
Mrs. Xanthene Norris, Chairman Pro Tem
Mr. Joe Dill
Mr. Mike Barnes
Mr. Sid Cates
Mr. Rick Roberts
Mr. Bob Taylor
Mrs. Liz Seman
Mr. Ennis Fant, Sr.
Mr. Lynn Ballard
Mr. Fred Payne

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting date, time, place and agenda was posted on the bulletin board at the County Square and made available to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned Citizens.

Council Members Absent

None

Staff Present

Joe Kernell, County Administrator
Mark Tollison, County Attorney
Dean Campbell, Assistant County Attorney
John Hansley, Deputy County Administrator
Regina McCaskill, Clerk to Council
Paula Gucker, Assistant County Administrator, Public Works
Teresa Barber, Fire Code Official/Code Enforcement Supervisor
Bob Mihalic, Governmental Relations Officer
Shannon Herman, Assistant to the County Administrator
Sarah Holt, Planning Director

Others Present

Jay Rogers, Planning Commission
Nick Hollingshad, Planning Commission

Call to Order

Chairman Kirven

Invocation

Councilor Sid Cates

Item (3) Approval of Minutes

ACTION: Councilor Norris moved to approve the minutes of the July 17, 2018, Committee of the Whole Meeting.

Motion carried unanimously by Council Members present.

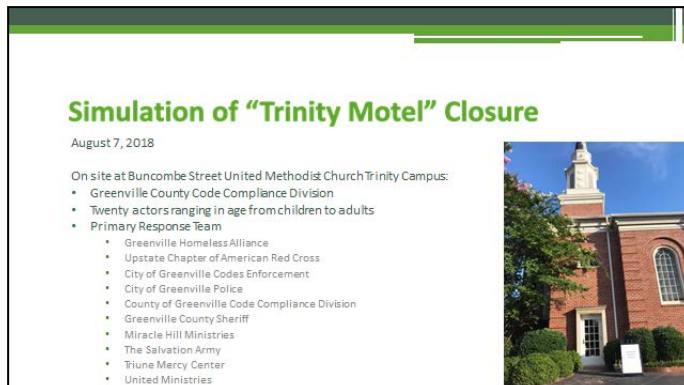
Item (4) Motel Displacement Response Plan Update

Presented by: Susan McLarty
Greenville Homeless Alliance



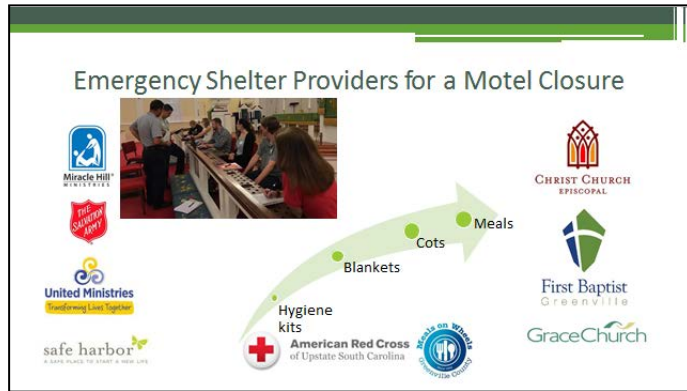
Susan McLarty stated a hotel displacement simulation was completed on August 7, 2018, at the Buncombe Street United Methodist Church. Not only were the strengths and opportunities of the response effort apparent, but it also strengthened the overall understanding between the government and the response partners in a powerful way. Ms. McLarty stated the simulation also gave a glimpse into the community's perception of the homeless. There were 20 volunteers, ranging in age from the teens to the 70's, representing every demographic group. Ms. McLarty stated 40% of the actors were under the age of 20 and all the participants became increasingly engaged in "being homeless."

Ms. McLarty stated in the debriefing, the actors made it clear that the community could do much better in responding to the challenges of homelessness. Some of the actors continued a conversation about homelessness over a 3 hour lunch and some of the parents contacted her afterwards and expressed how much the experience had impacted their child. The simulation proved, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the Greenville community truly cared and was ready to do a better job.



Ms. McLarty stated from the service providers there was 100% mobilization and participation,

75% mobilization and participation from the government providers and 100% from Greenville County. Ms. McLarty stated the City of Greenville was to provide an officer but the officer was on vacation; a backup for all primary response partners had since been identified. The team was able to mobilize in 30 minutes and now understood that the lack of adequate shelters was a huge barrier.



The main emergency shelter providers were Miracle Hill, the Salvation Army, United Ministries and Safe Harbor. There were no spaces available in any of the shelters during the simulation, even though it occurred near the beginning of the month, in the summer, when beds were expected to be available. In the event of an actual motel closure, the Response Team would have mobilized area church partners or mobilized "cold weather beds" if the shelters were full. Ms. McLarty stated the Red Cross would also be called upon to supply basic necessities such as hygiene kits, blankets, cots and meals in the event of an actual displacement event. She added that Meals on Wheels had offered to provide food.



Ms. McLarty stated the Response Team was confident that transportation services would be provided in the event of a displacement. During the simulation, United Ministries provided a van for transporting residents and all of the agency partners provided extra staff to assist. Buncombe Street Methodist Church, Greenlink, the Urban League and Christ Episcopal have also pledged to provide transportation services.

Key Takeaways from Motel Closure Simulation

- Primary Response Team mobilized and on-site in 30 minutes.
- All emergency shelter beds were full. No room in the inn!
- The issues associated with drugs and substance abuse impacts providing emergency shelter
- Identified the need for the official inspection form to include demographic information for those being displaced to speed service provider response time. Form will be altered the week of August 27.
- Identified a need for on-site service provider triage to expedite relocation. This is under development by primary response team.
- Need for a 48 hour placement for immediate evacuation for those who have nowhere else to go.

Ms. McLarty stated the key takeaways from the motel closure simulation were as follows:

1. The Primary Response Team was mobilized and on-site in 30 minutes.
2. All emergency shelter beds were full.
3. The issues associated with drugs and substance abuse impacted the providing of emergency shelter. It was recognized that this was an epidemic and significant player in the growing homeless population.
4. The Team identified the need for the official County inspection form to include demographic information for the residents in order to speed up service provider response time. The form was being updated by the Greenville County Code Enforcement Department.
5. The need for an on-site service provider triage was needed to expedite relocation.
6. A 48-hour placement for immediate evacuation was highlighted as a need for those residents with nowhere to go.

Ms. McLarty stated there was a need to set aside government funds to assist with motel displacements. If the County could reimburse agencies for a 48-hour temporary placement, agency response could be more comprehensive. She added there was a local agency able to locate temporary housing if reimbursement could be made. If government funds could be utilized to open shelters that were only open during the coldest months, there would be an increase in available beds. If the County implemented the rolling inspection of motels to meet certain criteria by tenant cost and size as tax assessments were completed, properties at risk could be identified and the dwellings would become more habitable. Staffing could be part-time and cost-efficient.

Ms. McLarty stated the Greenville Homeless Alliance proved its knowhow and was able to respond immediately and effectively in partnership with government; however, future responses would be dependent on putting some government resources into building capacity. She stated all of the agencies involved had the opportunity to apply for grants and it was very likely the grants would be awarded if government stakeholders had "skin in the game." Ms. McLarty stated the Homeless Alliance was ready to be the hands if Greenville County and the City of Greenville were willing to provide shelter where the hands could be most helpful.

Chairman Kirven stated the report was very impressive and it was obvious a number of lessons were learned during the simulation exercise. He added the ongoing process had been outlined and Council looked forward to future reports on the progress being made.

Councilor Ballard inquired about the impact of drugs during the simulation.

Ms. McLarty stated during the simulation, there were occupants who were unwilling to leave because they had marijuana in the room.

Councilor Seman inquired if any dollar amount had been set in regards to the County's investment.

Ms. McLarty stated the average cost to relocate a family out of a motel room was around \$3000.00.

Councilor Cates inquired about Ms. McLarty's statement that there were no available beds in the area shelters.

Ms. McLarty confirmed that the area emergency shelters were full at the time of the simulation.

Councilor Cates stated if an actual displacement were to occur, it was possible there would be no beds available in the area shelters.

Ms. McLarty stated the service providers were willing to open up "cold weather beds" if they were full during an actual motel displacement and the plan addressed doing that for a period of up to two (2) weeks.

Councilor Cates stated he spoke with officials at Miracle Hill recently and there were 80 regular beds in the facility so they could accommodate 80 additional individuals, if necessary.

Ms. McLarty stated the Economy Inn was full in January.

Councilor Cates inquired how many individuals were displaced from the Economy Inn.

Ms. McLarty stated there were about 20 occupants left who had nowhere to go.

Chairman Kirven stated Council would be hearing more about the Motel Displacement Response Plan in the near future.

Item (5)

Affordable Housing Report

Presented by: Joe Kernell, County Administrator

Mr. Kernell stated as a followup to the presentation by Ms. McLarty, Paula Gucker and staff were currently working on identifying code enforcement issues that could be put in place that most likely alleviate would substandard living conditions in area motels. The County would much rather deal with the situation on the front-end as opposed to when the structures became uninhabitable; this approach was much more cost effective and efficient.

Mr. Kernell stated Council had requested County Administration review the Affordable Housing Study recommendations made by GCRA as they related to the study. Mr. Kernell stated they would go over the 10 recommendations, but would skip the first recommendation and come back to it later. Mr. Kernell stated that Greenville County was doing most of what GCRA recommended; however, there were a few things the County could get a bit more involved with.

County Council reduced the building permit fees and development fees earlier in the year. Mr. Kernell stated that after having discussions with individuals who dealt with affordable housing, it had been determined the reduced fees helped with initial costs but there remained a gap that needed to be filled.

Another recommendation was in regards to the Comprehensive Plan and the hiring of an outside consultant to lead the charge. The County was currently receiving proposals and would be naming someone in the near future. He added that the County would partner with GCRA during the effort along with a number of other agencies.

Mr. Kernell stated the recommendation for the County to contribute a significant amount of money as well as identify available land that could be used for affordable housing was probably the most important and impactful recommendation. He stated there were five lots in Marietta that were surplus property. The Finance Committee would be considering a transfer of that land to GCRA to be used for the construction of affordable housing to include both owner occupied and rental units. Mr. Kernell stated as additional surplus property suitable for affordable housing was identified, staff would seek Council's approval to transfer the property to GCRA.

The County then looked at finding revenue sources to provide funding for affordable housing. Mr. Kernell stated that County's current revenue sources were not suited to undertake social services programs which were normally funded through Federal (HUD) and other State programs. He added the County's property taxes were low which limited the ability to stretch and reach out to other services and programs that were very expensive. Mr. Kernell stated GCRA was the arm of the County that dealt with affordable housing. GCRA relied on HUD funding, as other sources of revenue, to accomplish its goals.

Mr. Kernell stated in May of this year, the South Carolina General Assembly amended Act 432, which related to the establishment of Greenville Health System and its governance. As part of the legislation, GHS was responsible for paying the County \$1 million annually for the next 20 years. He stated this was considered "new money" and not something the County had budgeted. Mr. Kernell stated that staff had recommended County Council consider contributing the revenue to GCRA for the next five (5) years to be used to establish a revolving fund for affordable housing. The money could be used for various programs such as down payment assistance, construction of rental units and subdivision public infrastructure. He stated the fund could be replenished as properties sold, loans were extinguished or special assessments were paid.

Councilor Cates stated that currently incentives for builders were not very good. He asked what type of incentives, besides monetary incentives, could the County give builders to encourage them to build affordable housing. Mr. Cates stated the Bailey Bill allowed counties to have special tax zones with different tax bases.

Mr. Kernell stated the Bailey Bill actually allowed for tax credits for developers and had recently used for two (2) local mills to be redeveloped. He stated with the current housing market, there was not a big "appetite" for developers to build affordable housing. The "appetite" at this time was for more expensive homes. A builder could build the same number of expensive homes as affordable homes and make a much larger profit on the more costly units. If the housing market was to get a bit more tight, builders would look for more creative ways to build less expensive homes.

Councilor Cates stated he would like to see the County offer some type of incentive to builders to build lower income houses.

Mr. Kernell stated it was hoped that the recommendations would give builders some incentive to build affordable housing. It would take at least \$175,000 to build an "affordable" home in Greenville County; this amount would preclude a large number of families from purchasing a home. Down payment assistance through GCRA could possibly be provided to assist families in the purchase of a home.

Councilor Payne inquired about the "opportunity zones" that were introduced by Senator Tim Scott and passed in December of 2017. He stated he was aware there were some "opportunity zones" in Greenville County and asked if they could be utilized for affordable housing.

Mr. Kernell stated there were currently five (5) "opportunity zones" located in the unincorporated areas of Greenville County and they would qualify. He stated that anyone willing to invest in those areas would certainly benefit.

Councilor Fant stated Senator Scott's office was encouraging developers to look at "opportunity zones" in South Carolina for affordable housing.

Councilor Ballard stated the Greenville Housing Trust Fund was established with seed money from the City of Greenville. He stated he liked the idea of initially investing the surplus funds with GCRA but would like to reserve the option of using the subsequent four (4) years with different agencies to manage the funds and not lock in with GCRA.

Mr. Kernell stated an annual report would be submitted to Council and would give them plenty of time to review and determine the next steps. He added it was very likely that GCRA would partner with a number of area agencies.

Chairman Kirven asked if the next logical step would be County staff and GCRA fine tuning the plan.

Mr. Kernell stated staff was more than happy to put the program together with GCRA.

Chairman Kirven stated Council looked forward to seeing the completed plan.

ACTION: Councilor Dill moved to adopt the County Administrator's recommendations in the Affordable Housing Report.

Motion carried unanimously.

Item (6) **Adjournment**

ACTION: Vice-Chairman Meadows moved to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Regina G. McCaskill, Clerk to Council