



MICHAEL T. BOYLAN
Council Member, District 6
Office (904) 255-5206
Fax (904) 255-5230
E-Mail: MBOYLAN@COJ.NET

117 West Duval Street
City Hall, Suite 425
Jacksonville, FL 32202

OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

February 13, 2023

11:00 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

Topic: CM Boylan re Critical Quality of Life Issues initiatives as part of the Council Strategic Plan
Location: Lynwood Roberts Room, located at 117 West Duval Street, 1st floor, City Hall

Meeting Convened: 11:04 am

Attendance: CP Freeman; CVP Salem; CMs Boylan, Newby, Pittman and Howland

CM Boylan convened the meeting, welcomed the group and called for introductions. CP Freeman thanked all of the council members and attendees for their participation on these important issues. CM Boylan provided some background on the CQLI initiatives, and the council strategic plan and associated funds. In accordance with the requirements of Section 106.110, *Ordinance Code*, the Council is required to update and adopt its strategic plan annually and may propose an allocation of up to 0.5% of the current year's budget to fund its strategic priorities for the next fiscal year. Council will review and update the strategic plan and adopt the final plan by means of a Resolution, to incorporate the funding requests for each component of the strategic plan for inclusion in the Mayor's final annual budget proposal. The CQLI Committee issued a final report in December that listed several recommendations in the areas of affordable housing, homelessness, and access to healthcare. Among the recommendations from the committee: Affordable housing - Commission a Comprehensive Study, Public/Non-Profit Housing Strategy, Incentivize Private Sector Developers, Create More Inclusionary Zoning, Acquire Land (Community Land Trust), Develop a Tenant Bill-of-Rights, Monitor and Regulate Institutional Investors, Eviction Protection, Dedicated City Leadership, Dedicated Funding; Homelessness - Have Measurable Goals, Determine Recurring Funding; Access to Healthcare - Develop a Marketing Campaign, Modify the UF Health Patient Requalification Timeframe.

CM Boylan distributed a handout with some suggested strategic plan funding requests based on the work of the CQLI Committee. The requests included: \$50,000 for a comprehensive housing study possibly conducted by the Florida Housing Coalition, \$1 million for rental assistance, \$1 million for Jacksonville Area Legal Aid (JALA) for housing legal services, \$100,000 for a consulting analysis of homeless services and potential recurring funding streams, \$500,000 for JaxCareConnect and \$1 million for health safety net providers.



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CM Pittman, co-chair of the affordable housing group, said she supports the comprehensive housing study but would also like to see the other recommendations made by that group considered. CVP Salem suggested relying on the expertise of local entities, not necessarily the Florida Housing Coalition. CP Freeman asked about the timeline of a housing report. CM Boylan said it would ideally be completed in 2-3 months. CM Pittman said the study should have a clearly defined scope, and it should look for equity firms/LLCs' home purchasing patterns by zip code. CM Howland said the study may validate all of the work currently being done by the Administration. All 5 CQLI Committee members indicated their support for the housing study.

CM Boylan said he has met with Jim Kowalski, JALA, about budgetary needs to increase services. Typically, the funds JALA receives from the City come primarily from the competitive PSG grant process. Per Mr. Kowalski's presentation to the CQLI Committee, other city's legal aid organizations receive regular appropriations from municipal general funds, but JALA does not receive such City funding. JALA has experienced a 125 percent increase in eviction prevention requests since 2019. In 2021, JALA handled nearly 7,000 civil legal aid cases involving more than 16,000 individuals and family members, 2,762 of their cases involved housing stability. If approved, a rental assistance program (ERAP) would be available to residents who pay more than 30 percent of their income on rent and/or are facing rent increases that make them unable to stay in their home. There was some discussion as to oversight and administration of the ERAP funds. It was suggested that United Way handle the distribution of ERAP funds as they did during COVID. CM Newby said all organizations should be considered, not just United Way. CVP Salem said he is leery of committing future budgets with recurring funding for ERAP, and that each issue should be reevaluated annually through the strategic plan. CM Boylan noted that affordable housing is a perennial problem. CP Freeman asked about promoting awareness and ensuring access to the ERAP funding. CP Freeman noted that the City has the infrastructure and the city-wide reach to administer the ERAP funds. CM Howland said he supports the ERAP concept in theory as it diverts homelessness, but wants to know more about the totality of the need. CM Newby and CM Pittman noted that those in need of rental assistance may need it for more than one month. CP Freeman said he'd like to find out from the Administration how many were helped with the COVID ERAP funding, and he said that he thinks the language referring to annual funding be stricken from the request so as to not bind future budgets. All 5 CQLI Committee members indicated support for the ERAP request without the per annum language, and with CM Howland sharing his skepticism and his suggestions to include more housing priorities in the PSG process and to strive to increase the affordable housing stock throughout the city.

The group discussed the \$1 million request for Jacksonville Area Legal Aid (JALA) for housing legal services. CP Freeman said that the reference in the request to a "user-friendly bill of rights" should be removed, and CM Howland agreed based on his belief that government should not participate in rent control or take sides between landlords and tenants. CM Boylan said that if JALA received funds



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through the strategic plan allocation, they would be ineligible to apply for PSG grants. All 5 CQLI Committee members indicated support, without the language of an annual funding obligation.

Regarding homelessness, CM Boylan said the goal is to identify recurring funding sources and the proposed study would help identify the best pathway. CM Howland said that working group ended up with two objectives, supportive housing for the vulnerable chronically homeless population over age 55 and finding a way to reach functional zero. He noted that Changing Homelessness just received a grant from the Bezos foundation and Sulzbacher will be receiving City funds for a new housing project. CM Howland spoke about shelter capacity and how loosening shelter regulations may make more people want to stay there. He talked about prevention and diversion, wraparound services and increasing housing stock. CVP Salem again said he is leery of committing future administrations to recurring funding. CM Boylan said the purpose of the consultant's study is to determine if a recurring funding source is appropriate, and he noted that there are annual recurring budget carve outs already for KHA and economic development. CM Newby shared his opposition to any new tax as a funding stream. CMs Boylan and Salem mentioned the involvement of the private sector, especially the downtown business community. CP Freeman said that all entities should be a part of providing funding, including faith based groups and nonprofits. CM Pittman said that what is really needed is an implementation plan based on past studies and existing data. All 5 CQLI Committee members indicated support, with caveats to include implementation steps in the study and to not guarantee that the solution is recurring funding.

Regarding access to healthcare, the \$500,000 to JaxCareConnect will assist in connecting underinsured and uninsured residents with primary care, which will be a cost saving measure and improve health outcomes. The \$1 million to the safety net providers will enable those clinics to serve more residents in need, and address social determinants and obstacles to healthcare like transportation etc. All 5 CQLI Committee members indicated support for the healthcare funding request. All of the CQLI funding requests will be rolled together into one.

Public Comment

One attendee, Carl - who shared that he is currently homeless, said that it is essential to provide opportunities to earn income for those who are unhoused.

Pastor Barlow spoke about requiring a percentage of monies for homelessness to be included in City economic development incentives. He also noted that the City has some recurring funding that carries over between Administrations, the contribution to JaxChamber, and he commented on how the contribution has increased over the years.

Dawn Gilman, Changing Homelessness, said that recurring funds are needed for sustainability, and that the information these studies (housing and homelessness) are seeking already exists. She noted that coordinating an implementation plan among service providers may be trickier.



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Noel Comeaux, Northeast Florida Regional Council, extended his organizations willingness to assist in any way.

With no further business, CM Boylan adjourned the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:32 pm

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research

CHampsey@coj.net 904.255.5151

Posted: 2.14.23 5:00 pm