

# St Johns County Civic Roundtable

April 11, 2016

## Minutes of Meeting

President Lofgren Called the meeting to order at 9:05am.

Secretary's Report: The minutes of the March 14, 2016 were accepted as read.

Treasurer's Report. The balance in the Civic Roundtable account was reported as \$1053.64.

President Lofgren introduced Gary Peterson, Executive Director of Home Again St Johns. Mr. Peterson told of his long tenure in St Johns County including 20 years as a baker, followed by an extensive career in various non profit organizations including The United Way, Habitat for Humanity, and St. Francis House before becoming executive director of Home Again St Johns in 2012. Home Again coordinates the Dining with Dignity Program that through the efforts of over 35 Churches provides thousands of meals to the needy in our county. He estimated a homeless population of 5,000 in St Johns County with 25% under 18 yrs. old. Many of these individuals are living in cars or in the woods.

In February ground was broken on a 13.5 acre site located at 1852 State Rd. The new center will eventually provide an array of services to the homeless including a medical clinic, dining facilities, offices for support agencies, an 8 to 10 bed respite unit, Sheriff's substation and up to 100 apartments(Short term). This campus with seven buildings, as envisioned, will be built as funds become available.

The goal is to help the homeless become tax paying working citizens. A program in Utah showing a 70% success rate is providing a template that may help to show the way. Gary noted that 70% of the homeless have mental problems of varying severity. Also complicating the homeless problem is the lack of low cost housing in St. Johns County. The funds required to move the new center range from 2 to 10 million dollars depending on which stage can be funded. .9 million to develop site, 1.2 million for medical clinic and 7 million to build out the remaining plan.

Questions from our membership to Mr. Peterson:

- 1) Will we attract "Freeloaders" and /or homeless from distant geographies drawn by our facility and services? Answer: Some of that will occur.
- 2) How will St. Francis House and other charitable groups interact with the new Home Again St. Johns? Answer: Continue to work together/ may use space at the new center.

- 3) What will the sustained costs of the program each year? Answer: \$200,000 to \$300,000 per year.
- 4) Will there be low cost housing at the center site?  
Answer: No
- 5) How long does the average homeless person require for recovery? Answer: 18 to 24 months.
- 6) Why is the Sherriff at the site? Convenient location and may minimize substance abuse.
- 7) Will job training be available? Answer: Yes
- 8) Will land be used for homeless to grow edible crops? Answer: Yes
- 9) Mental Health Outpatient Clinic available? Answer: Sherriff has allocated \$15,000 from seized assets for treatment of homeless mentally ill.

Other Business:

St Johns County has funded (\$30,000) a feasibility study to design and build a VA facility. Proactive approach to reduce wait time for vets in our county needing medical treatment.

New Members:

Peggy Hayworth ..... Del Webb

Scott Jefferson ..... Del Webb

Robert Yerkes ..... Porpoise Point HOA

Rob Prest..... Quail Point HOA

Respectfully Submitted,

Dennis Froio, Secretary