

CITY COMMISSION

WORK SESSION MINUTES

October 6, 2020

6:40 p.m.

PRESENT: Commissioners Chilton, Estrop, O'Neill, and President Copeland. City Manager Heck and Community Development Director Meadows.

GUEST: Ms. Elaina Bradley, Executive Director of Interfaith Hospitality Network.

NOTE: Commissioner Rue arrived during the work session but did not participate in the discussion.

HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS:

Topics discussed at the work session held on Tuesday, October 6, 2020, were:

1. Community Development Director Shannon Meadows spoke on Rental and Utility Assistance available to city residents. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted many families causing housing insecurity and homelessness since March 2020. Approximately 54 percent of Springfield's housing is a rental property compared to the State's 52-percent average. Statewide statistics show that 40 percent of renters are either in the eviction process or facing eviction due to inability to pay rent.

The Neighborhood Housing Partnership has federal funds to administer assistance with rent and utilities on behalf of the City of Springfield. All assistance payments are made directly to the landlord or utility company. Residents may call 937-322-4623 or go to the website www.springfieldnhp.org for additional information. Mrs. Meadows stated residents currently receiving assistance through Metropolitan Housing Authority (SMHA) or other subsidy from HUD do not qualify for this program, but can call SMHA at 937-325-7331 for other assistance plans.

Mrs. Meadows explained the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a Moratorium on Evictions from September 4, 2020, to December 31, 2020. Eligibility requirements are available on the City's website and include a declaration statement that must be signed and sent to the landlord for every adult in the household. Mrs. Meadows reminded citizens that keeping good records of their documents is vital as well as continuing to make as much rent payments as possible. The CDC's moratorium is meant to assist renters during this time, but past-due rent payments will be required.

2. Ms. Meadows and Ms. Elaina Bradley of Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) spoke on the unprecedented emergency housing need of the community. As of July 2020, an emergency shelter waiting list was created for the first time.

Ms. Bradley stated IHN had a 700 percent increase from 2019 in emergency shelter requests for families with children and a 350 percent increase for single men and women. There are currently 133 individuals in non-congregate shelter which includes 49 children, 24 families and 52 singles. The current wait list has 154 individuals who are contacted by IHN staff daily and/or weekly for updates and possible placements. Programs for prevention of emergency shelter needs are in place along with programs to transition citizens from emergency shelter to permanent housing.

Dr. Estrop suggested sharing the emergency housing assistance information with churches, realtors, and the United Senior Services organization to help distribute information to those who may know someone in need. Dr. Estrop also suggested using unused church buildings and city facilities as temporary shelters. Mr. Heck stated that staff would present information on the former Downs Armory building at a future date.

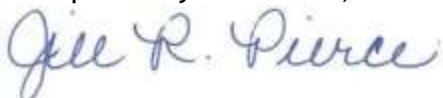
Mr. Copeland suggested that citizens share the information with anyone they know who could use the assistance. Mrs. Meadows added landlords could encourage their renters to seek help.

Mrs. Chilton asked for additional details on housing assistance after the eviction moratorium's deadline on December 31, 2020. Mrs. Meadows explained assistance and guidance would continue to be available through Neighborhood Housing Partnership.

Mrs. Chilton also asked how citizens can contact IHN for emergency assistance. Ms. Bradley stated citizens with a housing crisis may call 937-325-8154 and also explained the local 2-1-1 assistance phone number can provide helpful information.

Adj. 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jill R. Pierce
Clerk of the City Commission