

**MANATEE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER
1112 Manatee Avenue West
Bradenton, Florida
October 9, 2019**

Meeting video link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUlgjuGhS-qV966RU2Z7AtA>

Present were:

Stephen R. Jonsson, Chairman
Betsy Benac, First Vice-Chairman
Misty Servia, Second Vice-Chairman
Carol Whitmore, Third Vice-Chairman
Vanessa Baugh (Entered during the meeting)
Reggie Bellamy (Entered during the meeting)
Priscilla Whisenant Trace

Also present was:

Cheri Coryea, County Administrator
Mitchell O. Palmer, County Attorney
Amy N. Beck, Clerk I, Clerk of the Circuit Court



Chairman Jonsson called the work session to order at 1:35 p.m.

AGENDA

BC20191009DOC001

1. **FOOD BANKS**



Cheri Coryea, County Administrator, provided an update on food pantries, food banks, and challenges facing the local community. Food banks operating within the County are Meals on Wheels PLUS of Manatee, Inc., and Feeding Tampa Bay.

(Enter Commissioner Baugh)



Susie Bowie, Manatee Community Foundation (MCF), highlighted the organization's flexible relationships, charitable services, and main goals of providing food security for people in need. Over the past 20 years, MCF has been awarded \$30 million in grants and scholarships to service the County.

Bronwyn Beightol, United Way Suncoast, stated that Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) families earn more than the federal poverty level, but less than the cost of living, and are provided with charitable food services. The mission is to better lives by providing food nutrition to people in the County.

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Maribeth Phillips, Meals on Wheels PLUS of Manatee, Inc., clarified food banks provide food inventory to various food pantries that distribute food throughout the County. Meals on Wheels focuses their efforts on providing nutrition for people in need. There have been recent challenges regarding stocking local pantries, because Feeding Tampa Bay is located 45 miles away. Food pantries have expressed concern with the lack of inventory being delivered by Feeding Tampa Bay.

(Enter Commissioner Bellamy)



Bambi Forristall, Meals on Wheels PLUS of Manatee, Inc., stated that food pantries are the vessels for providing food to the community. Meals on Wheels has been a local, community partner for 47 years. Approximately 97 percent of funds received by the organization are recycled back into the program, and 100 percent of the food donations were delivered to

County residents. The Meals on Wheels contract with Feeding Tampa Bay ended in 2018. She requested the Board review the Feeding Tampa Bay matrix model because of suspicions that donations collected within the County are being used outside of the community.

 Thomas Mantz, Feeding Tampa Bay, stated Feeding Tampa Bay is a part of the Feeding America network. He reviewed goals, primary responsibilities, and the history of servicing Manatee County. They are no longer contractually connected with Meals on Wheels PLUS of Manatee, Inc. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) contract requires food donated within a county to be distributed within the same county. There has been a surplus of USDA food over the past two years because of hurricane relief, but the surplus will decrease in the upcoming years. Contrary to some claims, it would be too expensive to transport food from Manatee County to Tampa for redistribution into other communities. Feeding Tampa Bay attempts to store locally collected foods within their respective counties for efficiency purposes. Feeding America is the contract holder for food collection from retail grocery stores throughout the U.S. When Feeding Tampa Bay severed their relationship with Meals on Wheels, Feeding Tampa Bay was given the retail grocery store food collection contract by Feeding America. Food collection from retail grocery stores will decrease due to the ability to keep accurate inventory. Feeding Tampa Bay provides resources to communities that may not be available when other sources dwindle. The County needs 19 million pounds of food per year to feed the community in need, and only 8 million pounds of food is donated locally. This deficit creates the objective of attempting to obtain the additional 11 million pounds of needed food. Feeding Tampa Bay recognizes that the recent changes have been perceived as difficult for the local food pantries, and will continue working to feed the needy within this community.

 Discussion ensued that decisions cannot be made during a work session, \$900,000 annual cost to operate Meals on Wheels, the USDA contract was awarded to Feeding America, this is an emotional topic for the community, what is the County role with this issue, and if the County could require retail grocery stores to donate to local food banks.

 Mitchell O. Palmer, County Attorney, clarified the County does not have the authority to require retail grocery stores to donate to local food banks.

 Discussion continued regarding the Feeding America/Feeding Tampa Bay agreement ending with Meals on Wheels, Feeding Tampa Bay still holds contracts with organizations that provide the food, how do the USDA contract changes affect local food banks and pantries, where are food donations stored, what actions can get more food into the community, why Meals on Wheels considers themselves choiceless, what can the County do for a solution, is Meals on Wheels speaking with congressional representatives, how does All Faiths Food Bank operate and what counties do they serve, and what would it take to allow Meals on Wheels to partner with All Faiths Food Bank.

 Mr. Mantz clarified the food donations are delivered to partnering agencies in the area. The biggest change in food relief programs is that donations are perishable food items that need to be delivered within 24 to 48 hours. The decrease of USDA nonperishable foods and the increase of perishable food donations creates pressure to move foods quickly.

 Ms. Phillips clarified that Meals on Wheels had no choice as to which food bank was awarded the USDA contract. Feeding Tampa Bay elected to terminate their contract to retail grocery store food collection under the Feeding America contract. The benefit of a local food

bank is that pantries schedule their food collection based on the time of distribution, the number of volunteers, and storage capacity. The best solution is that the USDA and Feeding America contracts be given back to Meals on Wheels. The USDA contract is a federal program, but is administered through the State's Department of Agriculture, who appointed Harry Chapin, Food Bank of Southwest Florida, a Feeding America affiliate, as the contract's administrator. Feeding America is also contracted with All Faiths Food Bank, located in Sarasota County, and collects retail grocery store food donations for two counties. Feeding Tampa Bay denied the request to allow the portion of the retail grocery store collection contract for the Manatee County area to be moved under All Faiths Food Bank two years ago.

 Ms. Forristall stated All Faiths Food Bank has a new building, equipped with extra storage and refrigeration capabilities, and is located 11 miles away. When Meals on Wheels was not re-awarded the USDA contract, Feeding Tampa Bay terminated their contract for retail grocery food collection; and at the same time, refused to release the Manatee County area to All Faiths Food Bank.

 Discussion ensued on Feeding Tampa Bay and Meals on Wheels need to work together, the fear of the new food matrix model, is the food shortage being experienced in other counties, concerns with how the food will decrease in the future, food ordered is not being delivered to pantries, Feeding Tampa Bay charges food pantries, foods donated from grocery stores in the County are staying in this area, Feeding Tampa Bay charges 55 cents per mile, and why would Feeding Tampa Bay not allow the release of the County to All Faiths Food Bank, which is closer, and the mutual goal should be to feed as many needy people as possible.

 Ms. Phillips stated some concerns expressed by smaller food pantries include not being able to collect deliveries from Feeding Tampa Bay because of limited hours, and the demand exceeds the quantity, which causes Feeding Tampa Bay to distribute foods from other places.

 Mr. Mantz stated the food shortage is being felt by other counties. Feeding Tampa Bay believes the decision to not allow Manatee County to partner with All Faith Food Bank was the correct decision, and the reason will not be disclosed in a public forum. Feeding Tampa Bay partners with as many food pantries as possible, and feels confident they can provide food to feed the community. Meeting the demands of food pantries is based on the available foods donated. Currently, 75 percent of all food donations are perishable; this amount will increase to 85 percent in the next 10 years.

 Discussion continued regarding reasons Feeding Tampa Bay's refusal and their belief that they are better stewards than other local food banks, all donated foods being kept in the County, Meals on Wheels worked with 80 different agencies, but Feeding Tampa Bay is only working with 25 agencies, why is there a food shortage, and food pantries face challenges, because they cannot pick up from a closer food bank.

 Mr. Mantz clarified some food pantries have decided against partnering with Feeding Tampa Bay, but partnering food pantries are having food being delivered. Food banks have set up sharing fees as to not bear the cost of the entire distribution model, because they were performing most of the work. The prior contracts with Meals on Wheels charged a per pound delivery fee to food pantries.

 Discussion ensued on information provided during town hall meetings, what are the next steps for Meals on Wheels, Child Protective Investigations (CPI) donates emergency food baskets to families with cases, and if the Feeding Tampa Bay model supports scenarios similar CPI.

 Nina Miller, Sheriff's Office, Child Protection Aide, clarified CPI will utilize foods from food banks to deliver to families. Depending on supplies, CPI will deliver food baskets once a week during an ongoing investigation.

 Mr. Mantz stated Feeding Tampa Bay participates in programs similar to CPI and always attempts to fill a void in the community. He provided an example of opening food pantries inside of schools to allow families additional access to food.

 Discussion continued regarding the County can take limited actions, Feeding Tampa Bay and Meals on Wheels should take advantage of cooperating together, obligation to impact this community, determine where food sources are, and there is a shortage of 11 million pounds of food in the County.

 Representatives of various local food banks, Shirley Pierson, Sue Philbrick, Kathy Dicarlo, Linda Zillergansis, Mark McCloughan, John Maps, Susan Bauer, Jim Shillings, Nadine Adams, Michael Chartier, Joy Johnson, Roy Eerie, Lance Gordon, Alberta MacIntosh, and Nina Miller expressed the same concerns on the tense relationship between Meals on Wheels and Feeding Tampa Bay, shortage of food, cost of delivery fees, lack of refrigeration for perishable foods, limited time frame to receive and size deliveries, lack of volunteers, the need for additional local food banks to increase resource availability, emergency situations can create obstacles to obtain food from the Tampa area, smaller food pantries cannot conform to the Feeding Tampa Bay matrix model, increase of families needing charitable food over the years, deliveries of inedible food, the need for canned and packaged foods, needing more flexibility on food choices, and encouraged Meals on Wheels and Feeding Tampa Bay to collaborate and find solutions for the food shortage peacefully.

There being no further public comment, Chairman Jonsson closed public comments.

 Discussion ensued on the need for more food pantries reflects an increase of the needy, the smaller food pantries cannot afford the cost of delivery and refrigeration, the need for more than one food bank in case of emergencies, creating County incentives for community gardens/agriculture, CPI cases are safety issues and not a food issue, if larger food banks with extra refrigeration space could be rented by the smaller food pantries, three delivery trucks operate in the County, and if baby and pets items are donated/delivered to food pantries.

 Mr. Mantz explained it is difficult to get donations for baby items, but if received, these donations are delivered. Feeding Tampa Bay delivers pet food, which is heavily needed for the senior demographic. He encouraged food pantries to partner with Feeding Tampa Bay.

 Discussion continued regarding having compassion for people, churches are slowly disappearing and make up the bulk of food pantries, Feeding Tampa Bay is an umbrella organization, the local community needs to fill the gaps, coalition of food banks should help facilitate the food services, the various funding/contracts received by Feeding Tampa Bay, concerns that Feeding Tampa Bay cannot fulfill the needs of smaller pantries, and Feeding

Tampa Bay should view Meals on Wheels as a local resource.

 Mr. Mantz clarified that Feeding Tampa Bay renews contracts every four years. The contract is service based and not geared towards County participation. The relationship between Feeding Tampa Bay and Meals on Wheels ended in June 2018.

 Discussion ensued on what the County can do for the community, how to enhance communications with Neighborhood Services, bridging gaps, and finding locations to place yellow donation bins.

BC20191009DOC003

(Depart Chairman Jonsson and Commissioner Baugh, Vice-Chairman Benac presiding)

2. SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS

 Ava Ehde, Neighborhood Services Director, utilized a slide presentation on homelessness, local resources, services, and initiatives. Neighborhood Services and local agencies provide resources to the community. She reviewed There's a Better Way initiative program in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where workers are paid \$9 an hour, while being connected to services. Other outreach programs/campaigns include Homeless Outreach Teams (HOT), Hand up, Not a Hand Out, Text to Give, and donation meters/boxes. Ms. Ehde distributed a Day Work Pilot Program flyer from a partnering agency.

 Discussion ensued on the complexity of the homeless situation, and finding partners to run a day work pilot program.

Mitchel O. Palmer, County Attorney, stated that County partners are required to have liability insurance.

 Discussion continued regarding an educational campaign, people prefer to donate material objects rather than money, some homeless people do not want to work, more information is needed on various programs, Manatee County's Better Way Program, supporting a day work pilot program similar to HOT Team, no shelters in the County, and the majority of the homeless demographic are within the City of Bradenton.

 Katherine Zamboni, Assistant County Attorney, spoke about a homeless man costing the City of Tampa over \$1 million in services. Some scenarios call for multiple attempts for someone to willingly participate in programs.

 Cheri Coryea, County Administrator, stated the County adopted a homelessness action plan in 2006, but the economy crashed soon after. There are great organizations in the County, but these programs should be a community effort, and not government funded.

 Chris Johnson, Community Coalition on Homelessness, stated the organization has created a list of homeless individuals in Manatee County. To assess the severity of a homeless individual, they use the vulnerability index scoring method of 1 to 16 points, which ranks into three categories. Category one consists of 49 individuals, scoring 1 to 3 points, who require no intervention and are expected to self-resolve. Category two consists of 89 individuals, scoring 4 to 8 points, who require some intervention such as rapid rehousing. Category three consists of 93 individuals, who require permanent assistance, because of being physically disabled or having mental health issues. Community Coalition on Homelessness primarily receives federal funding for rapid rehousing situations, but there is a need for case managers and mental health professionals. He reviewed The Salvation Army

shelter/day work program model that provided individuals with a place to stay at night until transitioning into their own housing. The Salvation Army shelter contains 16 beds and annual operation expenditures were \$191,000. The Sarasota successful HOT Team started with six beds and was able to determine a \$35 per day, per person cost that includes mental health services.

 Discussion continued regarding learning from Sarasota County's program, Commissioner Bellamy is participating in an informational meeting on other municipalities HOT Teams to present options to the Public Safety Coordinating Council, and the importance of having staff attend HOT team meetings to gather information for the Board.

Mr. Johnson clarified the Sarasota Sheriff runs the HOT Team and contracts for beds with The Salvation Army. He stressed the importance of people receiving care for substance abuse and mental health.

 Beverly Hill, Turning Points, described what services the organization provides, and she observed that only six people receiving services, were seen panhandling. She provided an example of an individual that utilizes their services, but potentially suffers from alcoholism, and reviewed other factors that may prevent individuals from making progress. Turning Points favors public education campaigns using slogans such as Spare Change is not Real Change.

 Julie Sauers, The Salvation Army, stated The Salvation Army operates the only local family homeless shelter, and they have had to turn away people because of capacity issues. They have partnered with the Coalition to End Homelessness and make changes to serve the community. The Salvation Army has programs with Veterans Affairs, Department of Corrections, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities. They need additional funding to provide wrap-around services.

Brian Payne, The Salvation Army Program Manager, stated it was determined that only providing a bed at night does not help an individual to make life changes. The Salvation Army has reduced the availability of overnight beds, but increased beds for individuals who are partaking in a day work program. Individuals are encouraged to work with case managers and become self-sustainable.

 Discussion ensued on The Salvation Army provides seven nights free for an individual annually, container housing options, obtain a written report from The Salvation Army about their programs, their clients are not panhandling, there are 114 beds in the men's shelter, 50 beds in the family/women's shelter, average of 10 empty beds nightly, and the cost for beds.

 Kelly French, The Salvation Army Business Manager, reviewed the cost for beds in each program. Donations to The Salvation Army provide 80 percent of their funding.

 Discussion continued regarding the need for the wrap-around services, and the HOT Team will need beds.

 Jeffrey Jean, The Academy at Glengary, stated the Academy provides psychiatric rehabilitation and finds employment opportunities for individuals who suffer from severe mental illness. The Academy is an outpatient facility, and 10 percent of the clients utilizing their services are from Manatee County.

 Discussion ensued on having a Neighborhood Services Coordinator review various agency programs and to include program funding in next year's budget.

 Ms. Coryea stated the County already funds several programs, but will instruct staff to create a comprehensive report.

Discussion continued regarding taking action soon, opportunity to educate the public at little cost, results first and a return on investment, day work program could be successful if panhandlers are willing to participate in a day work program, the County has a low unemployment rate, and having a HOT Team would be in collaboration with the Sheriff's office.

 Ms. Coryea stated the educational component helps individuals in need by offering service options, and provides a safe environment.

Discussion ensued on having limited resources, various program funding, collaboration may be difficult, and include Centerstone.

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ADJOURN

There being no further business, Vice-Chairman Benac adjourned the work session at 5:40 p.m.

Minutes Approved: _____