



CoC Governance Board Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Bridget Engleman called to order the regular meeting of the CoC Governance Board at 9:00 a.m. on March 25, 2024 at Catapult Lakeland.

Roll Call

The following persons were present:

- Bridget Engleman
- Christina Coulson, Chair
- Benjamin Ruch
- Mary Beth Moore
- Guy Lalonde
- Amy Wiggins
- Jason Saffels
- Yolonda Williams
- Christina Roberts
- Rev. Robert Moses
- Cate Igo

Approval of Minutes

Waived

New Business

- **Jessica Henderson**
 - Bridget Engleman announced that Sherrita Denson has taken a new position at Catapult Lakeland. She introduced Jessican Henderson as the new HCPC Director of Strategic Initiatives.
 - All Board members were asked to sign and submit the Annual Conflict of Interest Statement.
- **CoC Governance Board Vision Statement**
 - Bridget Engleman shared the new Polk County CoC Governance Board Vision Statement *The vision of the Polk County Continuum of Care Governance Board is to bring together resources and resourceful people who create a community where everyone has a safe, stable place to call home. HCPC is to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.*
- **CoC Governance Board 2024 Mission**
 - Bridget Engleman reported that the HCoPC 5-year plan is for 2020 – 2025. She stated that the HCPC will be building new plans for Board approval. She noted the 5-year plan may need to be further divided into single year action plans. This year she is tasking the Governance Board with filling seats on corresponding Standing Committees. Committees

will be asked to form plans in the identified area and then report back to the Board for discussion, approval, and action steps.

- **Standing Committee List**

- Capacity Building – This team could address the need for a resource center for homeless citizens and those at-risk. Members stated the need for a drop-in center or rainy-day shelter in Polk County. There was interest in making it a one-stop shop. Research, planning, and funding need to occur.
- Planning
- Membership & Public Relations
- Advocacy
- Project Selection
- Youth Leadership (New) – This team could potentially address peer-to-peer support, teen Housing Summits, targeted services for school-aged homeless individuals, and partner with the Homeless Youth Task Force.

- **HCoPC 2023 Survey and Discussion of Concerns**

- Bridget Engleman led a discussion of several key responses from the 2023 provider survey. Items highlighted included:
 - 60% of respondents felt at-risk unhoused families lacked services.
 - 71.43% of respondents selected shelter for unhoused families as a service gap.
- Following survey results members briefly discussed the following items:
 - Lee County closed their only shelter, which may increase shelter needs in Lakeland due to proximity.
 - Polk County has a deficit of shelters and no affordable housing stock. Bridget Engleman is trying to persuade a variety of community stakeholders and developers to commit a percentage of their inventory to house CoC clients.
 - CoC clients placed in shelter or affordable housing need long-term, ongoing case management. They often struggle with self-care, financial literacy, self-sufficiency skills, etc.
 - Client challenges and delays in monthly rent payments from the Lakeland Housing Authority (LHA) decrease vendor desire to provide housing stock. LHA vouchers are often rejected by landlords because of payment delays.
 - Bridget Engleman helped develop a \$100,000 self-sufficiency program for school-aged homeless youth, which provided recipients with 12-months' rent. Participants are required to meet with case managers regularly and achieve benchmarks in care and financial independence.
 - Development of permanent supportive housing is needed in Polk County.
 - The CoC is working with the Lakeland Police Department to minimize arrests in Munn Park.
 - Ben Ruch reported a significant increase in the Pre-K to 12th grade homeless population over the last 5 years. There are currently over 5,000 homeless students enrolled in Polk County. He stated that the population is probably higher because the students self-report and don't always identify as homeless or don't report due to stigma. Mr. Ruch provided a brief overview of the PCPS Homeless Program. He also stated that the Homeless Youth Task Force will be re-launching in September. They will work to identify homeless youth barriers,

available resources, and vehicles to help increase access to information and services. Bridget Engleman will be invited to join their group.

- Central Florida Healthcare provides free medical care to all homeless children.
- A Donate Now button has been added to the PCHC Website. Additional fund-raising activities are also being explored.
- Polk Vision is creating a 5-year plan for engaging at-risk populations. They are also creating a master list of all resources in Polk County. PCHC could provide links to their content when complete.

- **Future Steps**

- Bridget Engleman stated that the Feedback Survey will be sent out again for updated feedback from CoC members. She will also send the Board the following items:
 - List of unfilled Board positions
 - Summary of historical CoC Governance Board actions and achievements
- The Board requested monthly meetings for the near future until Standing Committees and other essential tasks have been completed.
- Members requested a review of the definitions of each Standing Committee and their assigned tasks. Volunteers for each Committee will be secured at the next Board meeting.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting of the CoC Governance Board will be held on the Lakeland campus of Polk State College on Monday, April 29, from 9:00am to 11:00am. The address is 3425 Winter Lake Road, Lakeland, Florida 33803. The meeting room is LTB 1121. The LTB building is the first building on campus when entering from US Highway 98/Bartow Highway. The campus flagpoles are directly in front of the entrance to the building. Check in at the reception desk just inside the entrance for assistance locating the meeting room.

Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn by Jason Saffels.
- 2nd Motion to adjourn by Ben Rush.
- Meeting adjourned at 10:30am by Bridget Engleman.