

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CITY
COMMISSIONERS FOR THE CITY OF PORT ST. JOE, FLORIDA, HELD
IN THE COMMISSION CHAMBERS AT CITY HALL, June 28, 2011 AT
5:30 P.M.**

The following were present: Mayor Magidson, Commissioners Gingell, Kennedy, Patterson and Buzzett. City Manager Charlie Weston, Attorney Tom Gibson and City Clerk Jim Anderson were also present.

Gulf Coast Hope Center and the Panama City Rescue Mission:

Mayor Magidson indicated that the workshop tonight is to talk about the Gulf Coast Hope Center and the Panama City Rescue Mission. He also noted that he personally invited Sheriff Joe Nugent to help quantify any problems that we may or may not have.

Revered Fox thanked the Commission for the opportunity to come and speak. Homelessness is very diverse and he has been doing this for twenty-six years. He also noted that a transient problem is different from being homeless.

Joe Atkinson the Project Director believes that the information about the project got out incorrectly. The location at 101 Reid Avenue will not be used to shelter or feed anyone; it will only be used as a temporary Administrative Referral Office under a short term lease agreement.

Mr. Atkinson stated, "Homeless are not just people living in the woods. The Rescue Mission tries to be proactive and determine what is needed of each individual and the need of the community." He doesn't know the needs because he doesn't live in Gulf County. Mr. Atkinson has over fifteen years of experience in Social Work and the facility has a growing number of single mothers with children that need assistance.

Teedy Nobles a member of First Baptist Church, has been very involved in helping people and sees a lot of people that need help. Christ sought out the poor and Teedy thinks that is what he needs to do. The Rescue Mission does a lot; it

reaches out to help those with drug and alcohol problems. People are hurting and he sees the need. Revered Fox can help our churches get organized. If we can help a child or a marriage, it's worth it.

Tammy Raffield indicated that she has battled drug addiction most of her life and has worked as a nurse for over thirty years. The Rescue Mission took her in and taught her how to live a sober life. She hopes that the program goes through.

Matt Scoggins noted that, thru bad choices, he stepped out of prison in 1992 homeless with a three year old son. This is what has compelled him to be involved and he hopes people don't judge him for his past. He loves the community and if people would not have helped him, I may have been back in prison. He understands why people are concerned but they thought the location on Reid Ave. would be a high visibility location. He doesn't want to see vagrants in town, that's not his intention. The Rescue Mission gave out backpacks and clothes to over 1400 children last year in Bay County. 450 families were fed last week. People gave him hope and that is his position.

Rev. Fox noted that Mr. Scoggins will be on the Rescue Mission Board if elected.

Mr. Atkinson noted that the Gulf County Committee called the Rescue Mission and asked for help to address needs. The Committee meets once a month and began in March 2010. They need to identify the needs and get to the root of the problems. Referrals will be made to other agencies and provide those in need with transportation. The Committee wants to serve as a resource, track the needs, gather the data and supply real statistics. They also want to meet with local civic organizations to show what services are available. Their next meeting will be held July 14, 2011 at First Baptist Church and the last meeting was held June 16, 2011 at the Senior Citizens Center. They will consider a new location if there is no need at the end of our lease.

The Committee wants to determine a plan of action. They nor the citizens know the needs but the committee wants to provide support to the community. Their long term goal is to work with the local communities to determine the needs; They are not going to decide without feedback.

Pastor Drew Tyler thinks that Rescue Missions are wonderful. She sees this as a need for the whole county. The mission should take a broad approach and look at a lot of material first.

Pastor Matt Fulcher noted that the need he sees is mostly locals in search of food and help with utility bills. He currently works with People Helping People to meet the needs.

Pastor Vicki Summers sees a few transits, but not a lot. She feels that it's good we are preparing, because with the economy things are only going to get worse.

Father Tommy Dwyer has helped one homeless person in the past two years and that was in Panama City. He helps everyone that he can and feels that we have a huge need in Port St. Joe. He believes that we have had a lack of communication and if all of this would have taken place before the office opened, we probably wouldn't be having this conversation.

Pastor Doug Golden tries to help as much as possible and the many of the people that he helps are single and on their way to another location.

Chief Barnes sees approx. one true homeless person a year in town. He feels that we don't have a need for a Homeless Shelter. We have a Homeless Shelter and Detoxification Center in Bay County. If we try to create a satellite office for each service, he thinks we will have problems. As a citizen he feels that we have over thirty churches that are willing to help. Why didn't we partner with one of the churches instead?

Pastor Matt Fulcher suggested the possibility of housing the Hope Center in the old Highland View Methodist Church Building. He noted that Erica White with People Helping People doesn't have a problem with it.

Commissioner Buzzett supports the Rescue Mission, but he can't support the location in the downtown district. He believes the issue is the location which is against the comp plan. A Business License is need as well and asked Attorney Gibson to address this issue.

Attorney Gibson noted that the City is obligated to follow its Comprehensive Plan and support the down town merchants. He doesn't think anyone here is opposed to the mission, but it could affect donations if it adversely affects the downtown sector.

Matt Scoggins indicated that if someone can help get them out of their lease, his truck and trailer will be load tomorrow.

Jim Norton noted that the City of Panama City has been in talks with Revered Fox in reference to blight in the downtown area.

Mayor Magidson was under the impression that there would not be an emergency shelter in Port St. Joe.

Revered Fox responded, "Not in the downtown sector."

Mayor Magidson indicated that the fear is the adverse affect of people congregating downtown.

Mr. Atkinson noted that their lease agreement prohibits people from loitering or the act of prostitution.

Commissioner Gingell asked, "How many mothers with kids do you care for?"

Reverend Fox, responded, "Two, and we turned two away today."

Commissioner Gingell noted that the local Jr. Service League gives out backpacks and we have a local pantry. I'm confused with the logistics and the office hours.

Reverend Fox indicated that the office will be open one day a week and that will be on Fridays.

Mr. Atkinson noted that if someone calls the office it will automatically roll over to his cell phone.

Revered Fox indicated that they need to assess the needs. They are spending the time and resources to see if they are needed. He will be reporting back on the needs and thinks approx. two hundred kids need help.

Mayor Magidson noted that Revered Fox should have a good idea of the fears. Can you share your goal to eliminate those fears?

Revered Fox indicated that the hope is to educate who the homeless truly are. Most homeless people can't be identified walking down the street. We are people of honor and we plan to stay in our lease.

Mr. Atkinson noted that as the need grows, he will be in town more often. They are dealing with unknowns.

Mr. Norton indicated that everyone supports the ministry and asked if the Rescue Mission is aware that the City of Panama City Officials feel they have a problem with vagrants.

Revered Fox responded, "Yes, I've always had Cities with this complaint. The people that are causing the problems are probably band from the mission.

Doug Anderson asked, "Where do the people come from?"

Revered Fox responded, "In three months I can have this information. 70% of the people at the mission live in the surrounding six counties.

Commissioner Buzzett indicated that the issue tonight is the office in the down town sector.

Reverend Fox noted that if we can make that change we will.

Mr. Atkinson indicated that it appears the solution is the location. If they can relocate, they will as quickly as possible. They also need to get a business license. We don't want to create problems and we are willing to compromise.

Bill Koran asked, "Have you ever been asked to move your location outside of Bay County?"

Revered Fox responded, "Absolutely not, I'm not under pressure. I'm a free law abiding citizen."

Mr. Koran asked, "Will you pledge not to open a shelter in Port St. Joe?"

Revered Fox responded, "It's not our intent."

Mr. Koran asked, "Did you file a lawsuit against the City of Springfield?"

Revered Fox responded, "Yes, we did appeal because they denied our Development Order to expand." If the assessment says we need a Rescue Mission, we will bring one to the area. We don't do things illegal.

Debbie Rowell noted that the mission has come to Port St. Joe because a few people have asked them to. It puzzles him to spend \$6K for an office that will be open one day a week.

Revered Fox indicated that they have raised over \$3K and are supporting an assessment study with a bigger plan.

Amber Davis asked, "Is the goal to build a shelter? What is the threshold number?"

Reverend Fox responded, "We don't know the number. At some point we may exceed our capacity and need to expand."

Ms. Davis noted that we know what our needs are. Why are you coming here without talking with us? Why do you need an office if you will only be here one day a week?

Reverend Fox indicated that he had contacted Mayor Magidson and Mr. Weston to let them know what they were doing first.

Ms. Davis asked, "Did they tell you we have a homeless problem?"

Mr. Atkinson responded, "No, and I had no idea of the Reid Ave. location."

Ericka Norton asked, "Since you signed the lease agreement affective June 1, 2011, have you found any homeless people?" "Have you done all of this without a Business License?"

Mr. Atkinson responded, "Yes."

Reverend Fox asked, "Can we close this meeting if we move out of the downtown location? If that is the problem, problem solved. We will lock the doors tomorrow and find a new location. In 90 days we will have a public meeting."

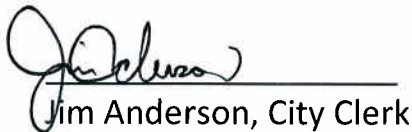
Attorney Gibson noted that our City Commission can't meet without it being properly noticed due to Sunshine Law Requirements.

Motion by Commissioner Gingell, 2nd by Commissioner Buzzett, to adjourn at 8:09 P.M.

Approved this 2nd day of August 2011.



Mayor Magidson



Jim Anderson, City Clerk