

Equity Advisory Board

Date: September 19, 2024
Time: 6:00 pm
Location: County Administration Building - Grace Knight Conference Room
12 SE 1 Street, 2nd Floor, Gainesville, FL 32601

1. Call to Order

Chair Rawls called the meeting to order.

Members Present: Kali Blount, Yvette Carter, Gerie Crawford (Vice Chair), Nancy Dean, Diane Dimperio, Alena Lawson-Bennett, and Ronald Rawls (Chair)

Members Absent: N/A

2. Approval of the Agenda

Gerie Crawford made a motion to approve the agenda as presented; Yvette Carter second; unanimous approval; motion carried.

3. Approval of Minutes

Diane Dimperio made a motion to approve the August 24 minutes as corrected; Yvette Carter second; unanimous approval; motion carried.

4. Departmental Orientation

Fire Rescue

Chief Harold Theus provided an overview of Fire Rescue services. The Department has five divisions including Finance & Accounting; Revenue Collections; Operations; Emergency Management; and Enhanced 911 & Communications. Currently, the department has 367 employees.

The Department hires people based on their character and commitment to public service and trains them to be fire fighters and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's). The department has 17 stations and provides county-wide ambulance service. The Towns of High Springs, LaCrosse, and Newberry have their own fire departments.

Department demographics for gender are 81% Male and 19% Female and for ethnicity 72% White; 11% Black; 12% Hispanic; and 5% Other. The physical

agility assessment was difficult for females to pass years ago, but new tools and technology reduces this barrier. Our Captain for Recruitment goes to local schools to recruit. One Assistant Chief is Female and one is African American. Two African Americans are eligible for promotion to Lieutenant. The majority of employees have less than five years experience.

Chief Theus invited the Board to attend an upcoming "Let's Talk - How to have a conversation with someone who is different than you" session to ensure all employees feel welcome and included. The next is tentatively scheduled for November.

Retention has dramatically improved over the last three years due to better pay, schedules, and work environments. Employees who are multi-lingual receive additional pay. The starting salary is \$48,100 for an EMT Firefighter. Paramedics will receive an additional \$8,500; Driver Operators are paid \$4 more per hour.

The Combined Communications Center (911 operators) has a contract to allow non-English speakers to provide emergency services and care.

The department is starting a Mobile Integrated Health Services program wherein a Mental Health Counselor, Paramedic and EMT provide community paramedicine, funded by the federal Opioid Settlement Grant. This will bring services to people in unincorporated Alachua County so they don't need to go to the Emergency Room for routine health services.

Environmental Protection

Director Stephen Hofstetter was postponed until the October 17 meeting.

5. Equity Audit Tool

Housing Element

Ben Chumley, Growth Management, reported that staff used the Equity Audit tool to answer questions regarding the Housing Element of the Comp Plan. Inclusionary Housing policies are being developed for review by the Equity Advisory Board before presenting to the County Commission. This could be a good tool to increase mixed income housing.

Some situations will require mandatory Inclusionary Housing. Mixed use developments can exchange non-residential components for affordable housing.

It was suggested that staff either define or remove the term "Fair Share Housing." The definition of "Affordable Housing" is paying no more than 30% of household income. One of the main objectives of the Housing Element is to disburse

affordable housing throughout the County. The County can donate surplus property for affordable housing projects. It was suggested that staff consider reducing the one-home-per-five-acres for family subdivisions.

This information will be used during the next update of the Comprehensive Plan. Items that were listed as "generally" should be updated so they are "specifically" addressed.

6. Member Comments

None.

7. Public Comments

None.

8. Announcements

The consensus was to cancel the December meeting in observance of the Christmas holiday.

The County purchased the Sunrise Motel (\$2 million for 35 units) so as not to displace occupants in 30 units.

The Eastside Health Clinic is now operating. It is located off Hawthorne Road.

Dr. Houchen resigned. Recruitment hasn't started, but the position will be filled.

The NAACP will be hosting "Souls to the Polls" Saturday from 1-7 p.m. outside the Supervisor of Elections Office.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Rawls.