

5E-1

PALM BEACH COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

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Meeting Date: April 6, 2021 [] Consent [X] Regular
[] Ordinance [] Public Hearing
Department
Submitted By: Facilities Development & Operations (FDO)
Submitted For: Community Services
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I. EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Motion and Title: Staff recommends motion to receive and file: A nine-month status report on operations of the Lewis Center Annex at 673 Fairgrounds Road in unincorporated West Palm Beach.

Summary: On February 25, 2020, the Board of County Commissioners (Board) approved the *Sheltering and Housing Strategy Annex to Leading the Way Home* – Palm Beach County’s Plan to End the Cycle of Homelessness. A key component of that strategy was to expand shelter and housing opportunities until the future opening of Homeless Resource Center 2 (HRC2) in the western Lake Worth Beach/Palm Springs area. To accomplish this strategy the Board approved of temporarily repurposing a portion of the 17-acre County-owned property at 673 Fairgrounds Road that was formerly used as a correctional facility into an emergency shelter providing up to 125 beds for individuals and couples experiencing homelessness. At that time, and in response to community concern, the Board committed to receive a status report of the facility following nine months of operations. The facility commenced operations on July 6, 2020, and the April 6, 2021 Board meeting will coincide with the ninth month of operations. This agenda item serves to fulfill the commitment for the nine-month status report. (FDO) District 6/Countywide (LDC)

Background & Policy Issues: The Lewis Center Annex commenced operation as an emergency homeless shelter on July 6, 2020, following a series of minor facility improvements for operational readiness and environmental softening. April 6, 2021 will mark nine months of facility operations, at which time the Board committed to receive a facility status report. This agenda item constitutes that status report.

Consistent with the approach to other HRCs across Palm Beach County, a Neighborhood Oversight Panel (Panel) was assembled to observe, identify and report concerns to County representatives. This panel is comprised of representatives of: 1) the residential communities of Bella Terra, Breakers West and Palm Beach Plantation; 2) the South Florida Fairgrounds; 3) Palm Beach County Staff; 4) Gulfstream Goodwill Industries, Inc. (as operator of the facility); and 5) PBSO. The Panel first met at the facility on June 20, 2020, and subsequent meetings have taken place on August 3, 2020; November 9, 2020; and February 9, 2021. To accommodate social distancing during COVID-19, virtual attendance has been offered to additional representatives of the residential communities that are not Panelists. The next meeting is currently scheduled for May 25, 2021.

Similar to opening of the Lewis Center on 45th Street in West Palm Beach, some incidental conditions associated with the facility’s operations were identified by members of the surrounding community during the initial months of operations. Amongst these conditions were increased sightings of panhandling, loitering, litter and encampments by individuals experiencing homelessness within and/or alongside area roadways. While not all sightings were linked to facility guests or individuals known to service providers, a share of these instances were confirmed to have a direct connection to the Lewis Center Annex.

Continued on Page 3

Attachment:
PowerPoint Presentation

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Recommended by: *REM [Signature]* 9/15/21
Department Director Date
Approved by: *[Signature]* 3/19/21
County Administrator Date

II. FISCAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

A. Five Year Summary of Fiscal Impact:

Fiscal Years	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Capital Expenditures					
Operating Costs					
External Revenue					
Program Income					
In-Kind Match (County)					
NET FISCAL IMPACT	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

# ADDITIONAL FTE POSITIONS (Cumulative)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
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Is Item Included In Proposed Budget: Yes _____ No _____
 Does this item include the use of federal funds? Yes _____ No _____

Budget Account No.: Fund _____ Dept. _____ Unit _____ Object _____
 Program _____

B. Recommended Sources of Funds/Summary of Fiscal Impact:

This item has no fiscal impact.

C. Departmental Fiscal Review: 
 Karyn Sykes, Director of Financial and Support Services

III. REVIEW COMMENTS

A. OFMB Fiscal and/or Contract Development and Control Comments:

 3/11
 OFMB PC 3/11 AP LM 3/11
 3/15/21
 Contract Development and Control 3-17-2020

B. Legal Sufficiency: 
 Assistant County Attorney

C. Other Department Review:
 DocuSigned by:

 Department Director

This summary is not to be used as a basis for payment.

Background & Policy Issues (Cont.): In response to these instances of community concern, and again same as opening of the Lewis Center, the Panel worked both during meetings and outside of meetings to identify potential solutions. As a result, and in addition to standard practices upon enrollment into the facility and routine operational practices, the following measures have since been implemented for targeted attention to the areas of community concern and interest:

- Panel members send notice to multiple designated individuals to ensure receipt of and timely attention to observed conditions of concern
- A Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) has been stationed at the facility to immediately respond to reported observations of concern
- Coordination calls between Palm Beach County and PBSO Staff were conducted to ensure a common understanding of referral protocol, create an open line of communication, and to support and reinforce the local efforts of one another
- Local non-residential property owners have been encouraged to enter into a Trespass Enforcement Affidavit with PBSO, including posting of standard issue no trespass signage, to enable PBSO to lawfully enforce instances of trespass. This same approach was completed by Palm Beach County for those areas of the property that are not lending direct support to operation of the Lewis Center Annex.
- PBSO has begun periodic visits to the facility to speak with guests and educate them on local laws and expectations of conduct, in addition to other community policing initiatives in the immediate vicinity
- Facility personnel periodically reinforce expectations with guests through group announcements, including identification of unwanted conditions that are reported by Panel members
- Facility guests, PBSO and SWA representatives periodically collect litter and debris that accumulates along Weisman Way

Since all of these measures have become and remain active, the number and frequency of reported concerns have significantly decreased. At the last Panel meeting on February 9, 2021, Panelists representing the local residential communities and South Florida Fairgrounds identified no new concerns or observations for attention, and indicated current conditions being tolerable if sustained until the facility is closed.

The timeline for closure of the facility remains an item of high interest to the Panelists. At the time of operational commencement of the Lewis Center Annex it was expected that the opening of the permanent/replacement HRC2 facility would occur in the Fall of 2022. Admittedly, it took Staff a number of months more than expected to achieve closure on priority assignments and other work volume that was already in progress at that time. County Staff continues to reassure the Panel that the facility is a temporary operational accommodation and was commenced only due to prevailing circumstances and emerging need at that time. A progress report on HRC2 is provided at each Panel meeting. At this time, the professional design effort for HRC2 is in the Construction Documents (CD) phase and is nearing final completion. Permitting will immediately follow, with construction to commence upon all permits being secured, full funding in place and contract awarded to the Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR). Barring no unforeseen circumstances, Staff is projecting that facility to become operational in the first quarter of 2023, and has openly represented that same expectation to the Panel. HRC2 remains a high priority and is given constant daily attention by its entire project team to realize its opening as soon as is possible.

To date the Lewis Center Annex has largely met expectations for service to local individuals and couples experiencing homelessness. Some reduction in capacity has been required on account of COVID-19. Nonetheless, the following table provides a snapshot of the facility's accomplishments to date and current operations as of the preparation of this agenda item:

	Individuals Sheltered	Individuals Exited from Facility	Individuals Currently Sheltered	Individuals Placed into Permanent Housing	Average Duration of Stay (Days)	PBSO Drop-Offs
Total	352	275	77	69	50	30

Palm Beach County
Board of County Commissioners

April 6, 2021

Regular Agenda Item 5E-1

THE LEWIS CENTER ANNEX

9 MONTH REPORT



Palm Beach County
COMMUNITY
SERVICES

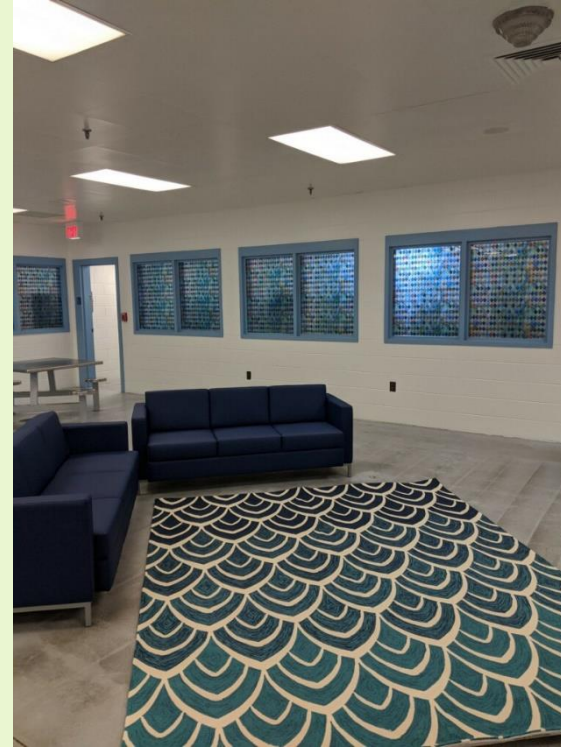
Helping People Build Better Communities

JOHN PRINCE PARK EFFORTS

Over 200 persons at JPP were engaged and offered services:

- **Isolated in non-congregate sheltering locations**
- **COVID Testing**
- **Transition to Annex**
- **Travelers Aid**
- **Reconnected with friends and family**

LEWIS CENTER ANNEX AT FAIRGROUNDS



Partners:

- Goodwill
- PBSO
- Rebel Recovery
- SEFBHN
- Parks & Rec
- Community Services
- TLP
- Healthcare District
- SCMH
- FDO
- PBC Fire Rescue
- Assorted Healthcare Providers

JOHN PRINCE PARK EFFORTS

June 25, 2020



October 1, 2020



ANNEX CENTER OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

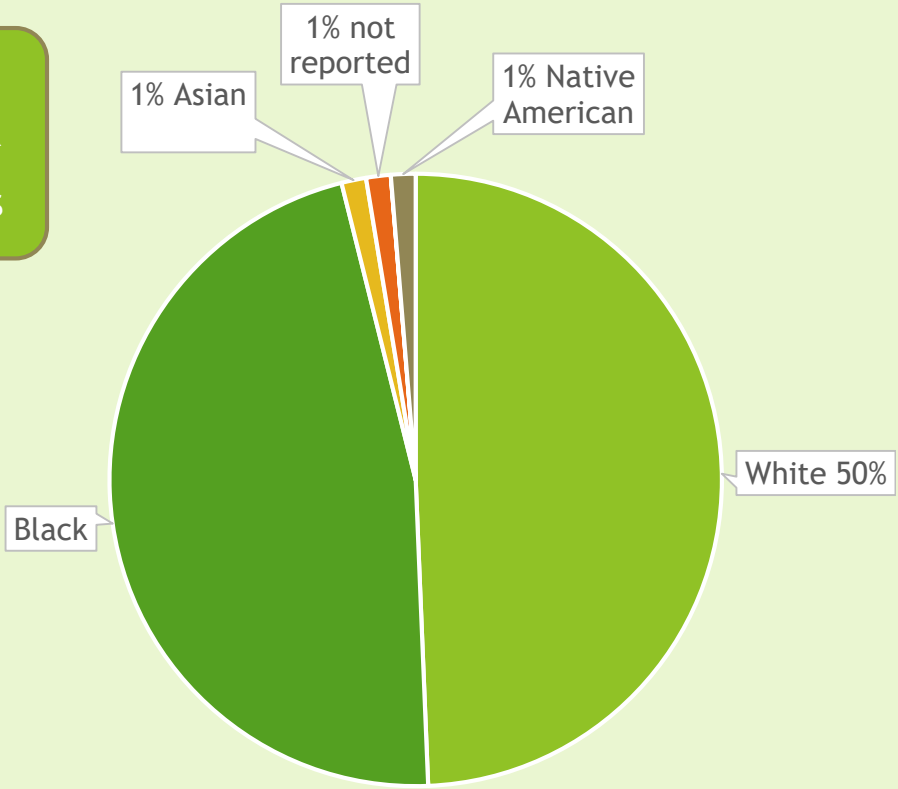
- 1) Neighborhood Oversight Committee was formed in June 2020 and its members include representatives from the following neighborhoods and businesses:
 - Breaker's West
 - Palm Beach Plantation
 - Bella Terra
 - Palm Beach Sheriff's Office
 - South Florida Fair
- 2) County Staff involved in the Neighborhood Committee includes representatives from FDO, County Administration and CSD. Committee is led by Homeless Advisory Board Vice Chair Katrina Long-Robinson.
- 3) Monthly meetings were held in 2020 and in 2021 moved to quarterly at the Neighborhood Committee's suggestion and was based on level of operations and the consistent level of communication.
- 4) Residents of the community alert Palm Beach County staff, Goodwill Industries and PBSO to homeless activity and issues impacting their communities.⁵

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

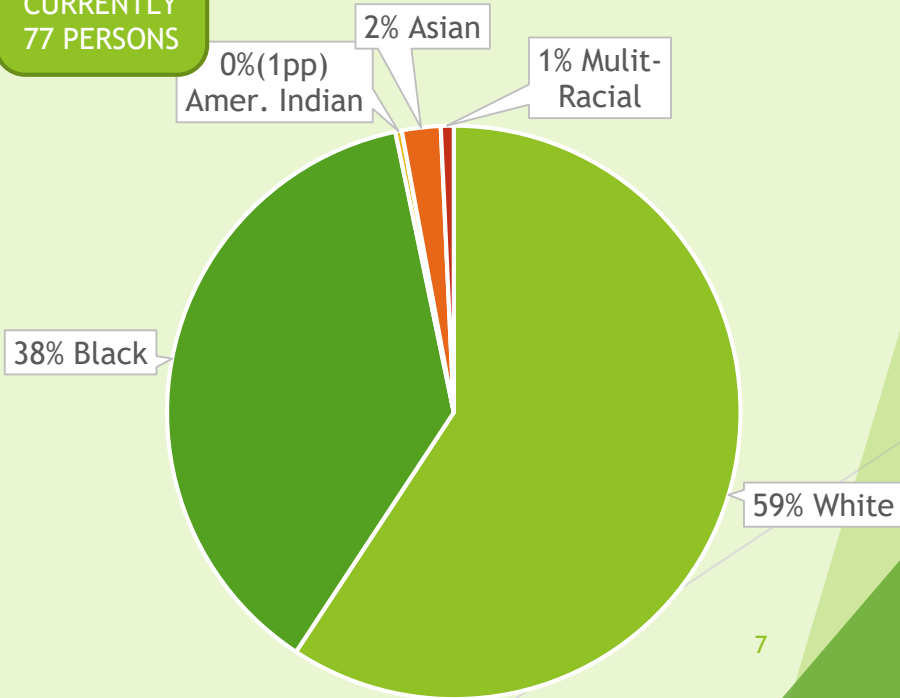
- 1) PBSO, Neighborhood Committee and County partnership to address homeless loitering and trash concerns along Weisman Way.
- 2) Homeless Outreach Team assigned to the Annex Center to prevent loitering in and around the facility.
- 3) Development of an online referral process for PBSO use when a homeless person is engaged afterhours.
- 4) Increased PBSO presence in the 441 and Southern Blvd area.
- 5) PBSO friendly visits program initiated in the Annex Center.
- 6) Businesses and Palm Beach County have lawfully posted no trespassing signs to allow for PBSO involvement.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
352 PERSONS SERVED TO DATE
July 2020 to March 3, 2021

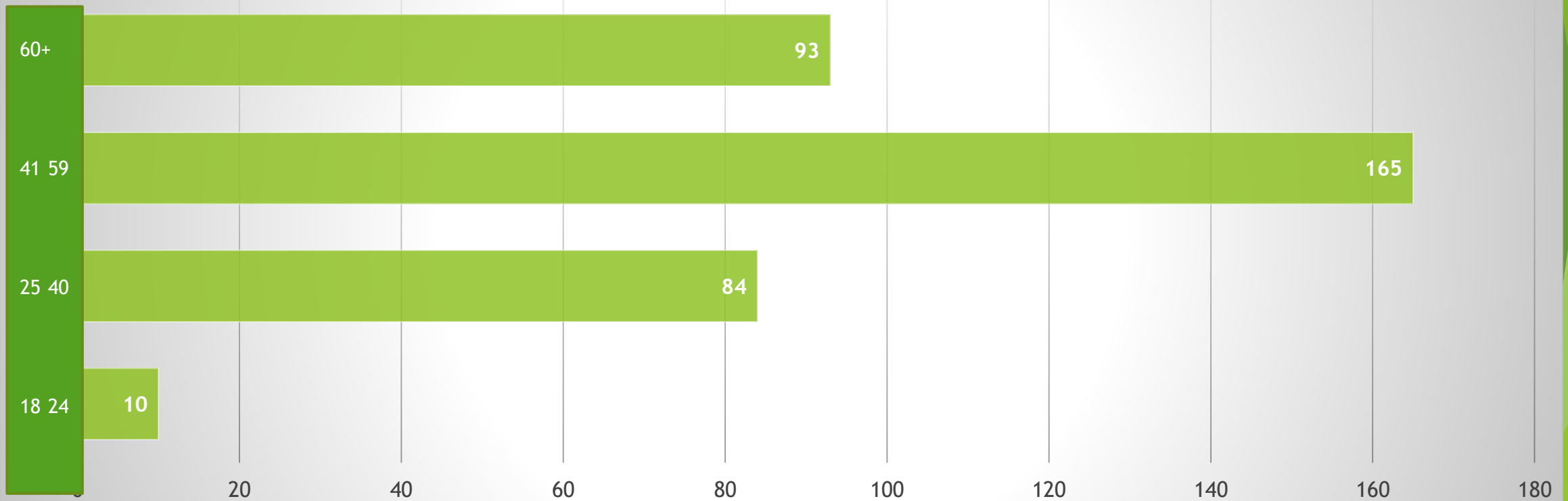
EXITED FROM SHELTER
275 PERSONS



GUESTS IN SHELTER CURRENTLY
77 PERSONS



AGE RANGES OF GUESTS



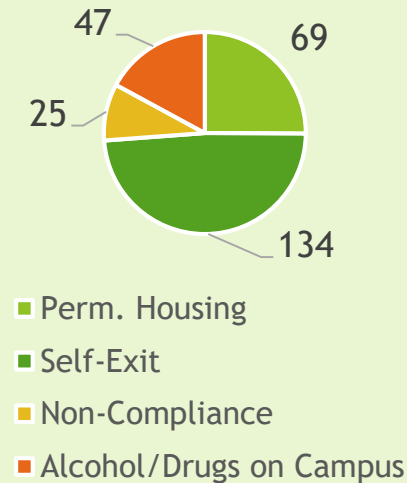
DATA POINTS FROM ANNEX CENTER

- Average stay : 50 days
- PBSO drop-offs: 30
- Number of calls to law enforcement: 17
- Number of emergency medical calls: 32
- Average number of hospital admissions (voluntary or ems): 2 per month

RESULTS AT THE END OF 8 MONTHS

275 Exits

- 1) Entire Encampment of 200 long time and chronic homeless persons placed into Annex over a very short period of time. This was done to prevent COVID spread and mitigate rising concerns of the general public.
- 2) Although a low barrier shelter, substances of any kind are prohibited, and many chronic chose to return to the streets due to their addiction.
- 3) Many were asked to exit due to frequent rule violations including loitering outside of the facility, panhandling, breaking curfew and erecting daytime encampments outside of the facility along Weisman Way.
- 4) The Annex Center opening was a deviation from the way the Homeless System processes the chronically homeless in PBC. Never before has the Continuum of Care processed the number of homeless from an encampment, into hotels for COVID testing and then into a shelter setting.



NEXT STEPS:

- ▶ Rebel Recovery has been engaged to add two peer specialists at the Annex. This will help address the addiction issues presenting in the facility. We have partnered with SEFBHN to provide the funding to support this service.
- ▶ Transportation of persons discharged from the facility will continue via the HOT team to ensure that encampments do not pop up around the facility.
- ▶ Use of the Acuity list, to which all homeless are vetted and placed upon based on their chronicity and need is now standard practice.
- ▶ Plans for the Homeless Resource Center 2 are well underway with completion expected in the first quarter of 2023.
- ▶ PBC Human Services will continue to monitor the progress of the facility on a monthly basis, addressing concerns such as discharges to homelessness, in a timely manner.

Questions and Answers