



S3 Housing Connect Meeting Notes

March 11, 2021 Zoom Call

Attendance (33): Kendra Martin, Hamer Carter, John Kirkman, Hannia Benitez, Bob Hughes, John Campbell, Constancita Nieves, Tami Carter, Quiotti Ratliffe, Marcia Johnson, Ruth Price, Kimberly Rau, Max Dolan, Shadonna Headen, Tamara Brogan, Paul Tate, Darla Molina, Crystal Mclver, Sharon Williams, Cindy Hall, Kerry Bashaw, Lesa Price, Sandra Torres, Lisa Bryant, Heather Garrity, Pat Hawes, Gabby Murillo, Pam Glover, Holly Marosites, Chris Kelley

Staff: Rachel Mann, Karen Kennedy, Stan Holt

1. Welcome, Mission Statement, Tamara Brogan, Chair

2. Sandra Torres, El Refugio & Hannia Benitez, El Vinculo Hispano/The Hispanic Liaison

Sandra Torres shared a presentation on El Refugio, an organization that provides language and citizenship classes, family enrichment activities, legal information, and resource connections. Their purpose is to build bridges and create a space for cross-cultural connection. The format of their programs changed in 2020 due to COVID-19, but all of their classes and events have still been very successful. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.elrefugioleeco.org/>.

Hannia Benitez presented on El Vinculo Hispano, a nonprofit organization that has been located in Chatham County for over 25 years. They were founded in 1995, and were one of the first Latinx organizations to form in NC. Their mission is to foster intercultural understanding and empower the Hispanic and Latino communities. They are looking to make sure that the Hispanic community has access to resources. They also focus on advocacy work at the state and local level. There are programs that are available to Lee County residents, and a new location in Lee County will be opening very soon! This location will focus on individualized assistance, facilitating emergency financial assistance, and offering a solidarity fund which is a collaboration with other nonprofits.

Tamara thanked them both for their presentations. Rachel will email out their contact info!

3. ESG-CV Round 2 Funding MOU Update, Hamer Carter

This is an exciting time because there is a lot going on. When the state opened applications back in December for a second round of COVID funding, Stan had the idea to put together a grant application that included multiple organizations. These organizations are H3, OMI, BOLM, and Salvation Army. From this funding, H3 will receive a mobile diagnostic analytic tool and a mobile van that will be outfitted for medical consultations. BOLM will receive funding for staffing for the adverse weather shelter. Salvation Army will receive funding for two fulltime positions for the day center. This gave Chris the support he needed to move forward with the day center. OMI received funds for a new van and renovations to the existing shelter. OMI plans to spread street outreach out into the county. \$202,000 was received for all of those efforts. It's a lot of money and it's a blessing, but much more funding is needed for each organization. MOUs were created for how the agencies would work together, liabilities, and financial information. This past Monday, Salvation Army received district approval for the MOU, and it has been sent to Atlanta for final approval. The other agencies are in the process of reviewing and approving the document. The agencies received an award letter roughly two weeks ago. Funding has been approved, and they are just waiting on a final contract to sign. Dr. Hall with H3 is getting bids for the new

equipment. BOLM is working on employee applications and files. Salvation Army has started posting job ads and is working with BOLM for day center logistics. Cindy Hall said thank you to Hamer! Hamer gave a shout out to the OMI Board of Directors. Karen asked if receiving this funding has impacted donations from other contributors. Hamer said not yet, but they are working to put out a press release so the general public understands that more money is needed to make these initiatives successful. Stan added that this money is specifically COVID-related relief, so it's not likely to have follow-up. It's helpful for agencies to receive capital expense money, but more money is needed for continuation of the efforts.

4. Committee Reports:

Services, Tami Carter- Gabrielle Saunders gave updates on her projects at the last Services meeting. She will have a new office in downtown Sanford. It will tentatively open this summer. She is also still working on the mobile shower, and hoping CCCC will partner to help with this. The next Services meeting is April 6, and a speaker from DSS- Child Protective Services will be presenting. At the May meeting, Adult Protective Services will be speaking.

Housing, Bob Hughes- This committee has focused on the status of Permanent Supportive Housing. The new Habitat for Humanity Director, Kimberly Rau, was present, and Shannon from Sanford Housing Authority gave update on projects. Availability of landlords is the biggest issue all organizations are facing. They also discussed the Master Leasing program and social impact bonds. Bob had a meeting with Cape Fear Collective. They are coming up with innovative ways for financing affordable housing projects! Bob is hoping for a partnership with this agency. Evictions are looming after the moratorium ends. The foreclosure moratorium was extended to June. Tami added that she was speaking with a landlord who has 10 rentals, and has only gotten payments for one of the rentals due to the moratorium. It's hurting landlords too.

Community Outreach and Engagement, Cindy Hall- Cindy is trying to find an eviction expert to come speak to the committee. They heard a presentation about the day center, and a lot of progress is being made! The soft opening date is in April. H3 and their team visited the Prince hotel today. There have been a couple of deaths in the homeless community lately. The medical part of this initiative continues to be so important. Five nurses are a part of H3. Trying to aim to do a fall event at CCCC. Discussed questions and messaging the rest of the meeting- Are people coming to Lee County for homeless services? Not a consensus on the issue; we just need to be aware and notice how many people from other counties are coming to the area. The second topic was that some people are saying that now that Covid funds have been received, agencies don't need more money. As Stan said, this funding is Covid related and it only partially covers costs. It is not reoccurring funding. Donations are needed and appreciated. Hamer added that he will putting out a press release that clarifies this message! Sandra Torres added that it'd be helpful if the eviction expert could talk about tenant rights. Kerry added that he knows fair-housing laws well, and a tenants rights fact sheet has been created that he can share.

5. Closing Remarks and Adjourn

Kendra reminded everyone that the United Way funding application process is open and will be closing soon.

Kendra said that our S3 meetings have had more engagement through Zoom than we might have had if we were meeting in person. We'll have to have a big party when we can meet in person again!

Pam Glover reminded everyone that Lee County has lots of job availability if people want to work. This includes fulltime, permanent employment with benefits. Bob asked if the extended unemployment and stimulus checks are why there are so many open jobs. Pam said yes, and this is also why starting pay is being increased in some companies! Kendra added that this issue was around before the pandemic, but it got worse during the pandemic. John asked if these companies will hire people coming out of prison, Pam said yes, some of these companies are felon-friendly. Incentive programs are being introduced to employers to hire felons, and a lot of companies will hire as long as the felony wasn't violent.

Marcia added that Crystal Mclver is starting a program called Total Package. Crystal added that a lot of people coming from prison have a lot of barriers to overcome.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.