

Commissioner urges county to find role to help homeless

By NANCY MCCLEARY NMCCLEARY@SANFORDHERALD.COM May 5, 2021 Updated May 5, 2021

Commissioner Bill Carver made an impassioned pitch Monday for the county to help the community in dealing with homelessness.

“I’d like to find a role for county government to encourage and supplement this effort,” Carver said.

His presentation focused on the efforts of S3 Housing Connect, a coalition of agencies that help the homeless find shelter and become productive residents of the community.

Among the members of the coalition are Outreach Mission Inc., Bread of Life Ministries, Family Promise of Lee County, Haven, H3 — Dr. Hall’s street medicine initiative, Brick Capital Community Development Inc., The Salvation Army, Johnston-Lee-Harnett Community Action Inc. and Daymark Recovery.

The most important role of S3, Carver said, “is leveraging and coordinating private-public resources” to help the homeless.

That segment of the population includes those with issues such as substance abuse, veterans and those who find themselves out of a home.

“There’s a misconception that there’s an effort made by S3 and groups like them to simply make it easy on people stay in a homeless status.

“That couldn’t be further from the truth,” Carver said.

The community needs about 1,044 units to help people find affordable housing, which is defined as no more than 30% of the annual income, Carver said.

One consideration is how much money is needed to put down on housing and where is the housing found, Carver said.

He suggested a “pragmatic reality check: “The greater the severity of an individual or family’s situation, the greater the community cost when unhoused,” Carver said.

“Multiple resources that are not coordinated result in an inefficient duplication of services and segments of the population that are not being served.”

Carver asked that the county consider supporting S3’s mission, pointing out that counties across North Carolina find ways to support similar efforts.

By supporting the homeless by some means, Carver said, it can make for a stronger, better community.

“We’re not sustaining irresponsible behavior. What this organization and people contributing to it are trying to do is improve the lot of people who are in it (homelessness). Ultimately, making a contributing citizen out of somebody who’s been struggling is an advantage to us.”