

Council lends support to homeless shelter project

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After years of trying, a nonprofit organization has the opportunity to establish a community homeless shelter with the help of the city, county and several financial institutions.

At Tuesday's Sanford City Council meeting, council voted to support a portion of a matching grant to go towards the shelter.

Laura Spivey, vice president of Outreach Mission Inc.(OMI), said they've been working on how to pay for a new and larger a shelter for several years and believes a current grant may make their dream a reality. To make it happen the group would need \$2.1 million to build a larger community shelter, which would house men, women and families.

Spivey said they recently applied for a \$900,000 grant, through the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA). To get that amount, they need to get 30% of committed funds from other sources, which is about \$630,000.

At the March 1 meeting, city council voted to commit to funds to make OMI eligible. Spivey hopes they can get an even split between the city and county, which would be \$315,000 each, or whatever they could come up with from other political or civic organizations to make up the commitment.

Spivey said they are in the process of filing for a \$500,000 Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta grant to help with construction. She said they also have Fidelity Bank, a local sponsor bank, committed to a \$100,000 grant.

She said there is a need for a new shelter because the current shelter homes OMI owns are getting old and a grant of this amount doesn't come around often.

"Outreach Mission has been trying to find grants to fund this for years," she said. "We want to consolidate the two shelters we have. They are two old homes and they are taking a beating."

The new shelter would have 30 beds for single men and 30 beds for single women. There would four to six rooms for families, with two sets of bunk beds a regular bed and a shower.

"It would be for families who have no place to live," she said "They'd have a place to live until they can back on their feet. With our two current shelters the families have to split. Some of them don't want to do that and sleep in their car."

She added they have private donors waiting to give, but that depends on whether the city and county back the initial grant monetarily.

She said homelessness is not set up by geography, but it's everywhere.

"We have homeless folks in the city limits and out in the county," she said. "It's not just a city issue. There's not a lot of low-income housing in this county. it's a problem, but we do the best we can." She hopes that all will agree and make a commitment so they can get started, which would be early next year.

The Lee County Board of Commissioners is scheduled to meet on Monday and if there is one person on the board in favor of a new shelter it's Commissioner Bill Carver.

"It's my hope that we approve it," he said. "It makes a lot of sense."

He said having a location where the homeless in the city and county can receive assistance in one location like a new homeless shelter then trying to track them down all over the county to try and help them.

Spivey said if the county gives them the nod on funding the committed portion of the project with the city it's a done deal.

"We've been working on this for about four years to get this done and we're excited to be so close," she said.

Councilman Samuel Gaskins, who voted in favor of the matching grant, believes in what they are trying to do.

"It's a great climate to proceed at this time," he said during Tuesday's meeting. "This will set Sanford way ahead of others when it comes to taking care of the homeless."

In other board action, the city council approved the rezoning of 12 adjoining tracts of land comprised of 284 acres from Residential Single-family (R-20) Residential Restricted (RR) and Heavy Industrial with a Conditional Use Permit to (HI-CU) to Midtown Village South Conditional Zoning District. The new rezoned district would allow for the development of a residential community with townhomes and single-family homes.

A rezoning application by Triangle Land Partners LLC to rezone 30 acres of land bisected by Tramway Road with the address of 1100 Tramway Road from Residential Single Family (R-20) and Light Industrial (LI) to West Street Townhomes Conditional Zoning District. The new zoning district would allow the construction of a residential townhome community.