

**CLEARWATER HOMELESS INTERVENTION PROJECT, INC.  
QUARTERLY NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 17, 2003**

Those attending the meeting are listed as follows:

Chief Sid Klein, President, CHIP Board of Directors  
Martin Altner, CHIP Neighborhood Representative  
Ed Brant, CHIP Program Director/The Salvation Army  
Carole Ciokiewicz, CHIP Executive Director  
Officer Carl Conyers, Clearwater Police Department  
Sergeant T. J. Donnelly, Clearwater Police Department  
Kathy Jo Ellis, CHIP Neighborhood Representative  
Sergeant Thomas Fisherkeller, Clearwater Police Department  
Mary Lou Guthart, Secretary, CHIP Board of Directors  
Dr. Gilbert Jannelli, CHIP Neighborhood Representative  
Lieutenant George Koder, Clearwater Police Department  
Officer Leonard Merritt, Clearwater Police Department  
Reginald Owens, Economic Development Director, City of Clearwater  
Robert Pack, CHIP Board of Directors  
James Plaia, St. Vincent de Paul Staff Member  
Mildred Plaia, St. Vincent de Paul Staff Member  
Brian Schuh, CHIP Neighborhood Representative  
Ralph Stone, Clearwater Assistant City Manager  
Wayne Wells, Senior Planner, City of Clearwater  
James Tsouris, CHIP Neighborhood Representative

**WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

In accordance with the requirements set by the Community Development Board, the second meeting of CHIP/St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen was called to order by Assistant City Manager Ralph Stone at 6:30 p.m., in the St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen Chapel. Mr. Stone extended a welcome to attendees comprised of city staff and CHIP neighborhood representatives.

Mr. Stone advised that the meeting would cover several issues to include code related items. Additionally, he added that area resident Pat Vaughn, accompanied by Development Services Director Jeff Kronschnabl, recently went on a tour of the CHIP area to address code infractions. Code Enforcement has active cases on all infractions noted. Also, Mr. Kronschnabl will be present at the next meeting scheduled on March 17, 2004 to present additional information.

### ***Parkbrooke Square Apartments***

Mr. Stone presented attendees with an overview of the meeting agenda and proceeded to introduce Mrs. Carole Ciokiewicz who presented the construction update on Parkbrooke Square Apartments, the transitional housing facility currently under construction. Ms. Ciokiewicz advised that Kalemeris Construction is the contractor and they are rapidly making progress. The anticipated completion date is Spring 2004. Additionally, the appropriate construction fence and signage has been placed at the construction site to deter job seekers, and the mobile medical van has been moved temporarily to allow entrance to the site.

### ***Homeless Initiative***

Mr. Reg Owens, Director of Economic Development and chair for the city's Homeless Task Force, was introduced and shared information concerning the Homeless Task Force developing a long-range plan for dealing with homelessness in both Clearwater and north county. Mr. Owens explained that the city's Homeless Task Force was created at the suggestion of City Manager William Horne. The progress made thus far this year includes new regulations at Station Square Park and also the creation of the Police Department's downtown patrol team to specifically provide a police presence in the downtown area. The task force is also exploring temporary as well as long-term options for a police substation on Cleveland Street. This will be linked to the Main Street Program which is working toward revitalization of downtown Clearwater.

As part of the Homeless Task Force initiative, Mr. Owens and committee members have looked at what several other states and cities are doing about homelessness. At the previous U.S. Mayor's Conference, it was decided that cities across the United States shared attempts to collectively proceed with a ten-year plan to address the problems of homelessness. Ten of the largest cities in the country have already prepared a ten-year plan to address the problem areas. Beginning in January 2004, Clearwater's task force will draft a ten-year plan and hopefully complete it within the year. In terms of management's perspective on the homelessness situation; Clearwater city officials strongly support the CHIP program evidenced by the city providing the program with state and federal funds and drawing CHIP into Clearwater's homeless initiative. Additionally, the city strongly supports the Homeless Emergency Project (HEP), operated by Mrs. Barbara Green, which provides more family and transitional housing accommodations than does CHIP at this point. It is felt that between these two controllable projects, Clearwater has taken major steps in the contribution toward a solution to the homeless problem in Pinellas County. It is a goal of the task force to include other communities and the county in efforts to fund an agreeably located north county homeless center. Plans

for that complex are predominantly being driven by the need for a major inebriate center. Right now the sole inebriate center is Turning Point located in south Pinellas County. This past year, Turning Point was overwhelmed with over 3,500 clients while attempting to stay within the guidelines of an operating budget of less than \$400,000. The need for an inebriate center cultivated the need for a North County complex. This complex could ultimately house family care and satellites of various social service agencies currently located in downtown Clearwater and St. Petersburg. It would afford care for the chronic homeless as well as the homeless individuals who are responsive to a change in lifestyle.

The city's Homeless Task Force will look to partner with the county in the upcoming year to structure such a center. Public Defender Bob Dillinger is the chair for the county task force. Clearwater city officials have taken a stand that an inebriate center will not be located in Clearwater; homeless facilities will not be expanded within the city, and that the time has come to treat this need on a regional basis with regional funds. Mr. Owens advised that consideration will be given to a possible restaurant and gasoline tax following the guidelines of Miami Dade and Broward County. These taxes have raised upwards of \$6-7 million per year. However, since Pinellas is a *home rule* county; there are some legal impediments for Clearwater to develop and impose similar taxes. At best, it will come down to cooperative funding by all of the communities.

Assistant City Manager Ralph Stone concurred with Mr. Owens' comments and speaking for City Manager William Horne emphasized that Mr. Dillinger is quite aware that city officials will not condone the construction of an inebriate facility in or around the Clearwater area and most certainly not in downtown Clearwater. Secondly, when those kinds of facilities are in place, it will allow Clearwater officers to take the hard core homeless off the street and transport them there. According to the Clearwater Police Department's legal advisor Rob Surette and Chief Klein, this cannot be done voluntarily at present as we do not have available shelter locations.

At present, the city is controlling the feeding locations and taking individuals to other facilities to include the hospital, (the cost of which is absorbed by the health care facility). Additionally, Mr. Stone advised that we do not have funding in place and it will take time to sort that problem out. However, Mr. Stone stated that the city does have capital dollars to buy land to build on.

Mr. Owens advised that if the north county center materializes, it will be the city's intention to see if St. Vincent de Paul would be open to moving to that site.

Dr. Jannelli questioned if the city was possibly interested in a 15 to 20 acre track to house the facilities necessary to get the homeless off the streets. Mr. Owens replied that the group would be open to looking at that type of concept and that the major

consideration is the operating cost which poses the largest problem. Dr. Jannelli asked if a regional facility is built in Pasco County, could Hillsborough and Pinellas counties take their homeless there. Mr. Owens replied that on a miniature scale, this is what is planned for a north Pinellas center. It would be a center that would require a built-in voluntary transportation system and also an involuntary system. Recognizing the severity of the homeless situation, Mr. Owens stated that Hillsborough is just about to do what we are attempting.

Mr. Altner asked what the total dollar amount is to-date for police time, hospital time, etc. to justify to the voters the possibility of a tax increase. Mr. Owens advised that this is part of the study that is currently being conducted, and that there are estimated figures available, however, he does not have the figures available at this time. Also the estimates would be from other cities, and not Clearwater.

We do have an estimate of approximately \$1.4 million to run a center. The more successful taxes that cities have used are the luxury taxes that in large are borne by visitors to the community, and not necessarily the residents.

Mr. Owens advised that a conference telephone call was held several weeks ago with some of the individuals involved in the North County Task Force. In January, each community in north Pinellas County will be requested to designate a management individual to serve on the task force so that the cost factor discussion can begin. Solutions to the plight of the homeless will continue to be one of the major issues that Mr. Owens and his task force will continue to address.

### ***CHIP Program Report***

Program Director Ed Brant advised that the shelter is at 100% capacity for single individuals. The family room is now open since the family occupying the room has moved to an apartment at Everybody's Tabernacle. Ninety percent (90%) of the shelter residents are employed at this time. Staff continues to work diligently to keep things moving along; several CHIP groups were out on a Saturday to assist with area cleanup. Shelter residents have been striving diligently to become better citizens in the neighborhood.

Chief Klein introduced District II Division Commander Lieutenant George Koder, as well as Sergeant Fisherkeller and his officers who are currently the Police Department's staff assigned to the CHIP shelter substation.

Additionally, Chief Klein advised that a second downtown team of officers has been created and Sergeant T.J. Donnelly, an alumni of the current CHIP team, is in charge of the new team. The two teams will be working closely together; and it is hopeful that once they are operational, the Police Department will have a downtown

base of operation on Cleveland Street. Computer systems will be synchronized so that an accurate tracking history of individuals can be obtained.

Sergeant Fisherkeller discussed several issues that the officers noted in the CHIP neighborhood. There are several houses where the owners and/or residents are permitting the homeless to come on their properties; and this opens the door to giving some of the homeless individuals legitimacy to that area. The issues have been addressed with the appropriate owners. Sergeant Fisherkeller emphasized that as problems arise, to give him a call so that the problem can be addressed in a timely manner.

Brian Schue advised that he is purchasing the property next to Genie of Clearwater and intends to erect a chain link fence across the back to close this area off as a potential meeting place for homeless individuals.

Mr. Altner expressed concern about some of the tensions that exist between the area ethnic groups and would like to see it eased and not escalate with time. Additionally, he commented on broken windshields and other signs of potential gang activity in the area. Mr. Altner requested the continuation of police presence which will keep the problems noted to a minimum.

Dr. Jannelli suggested the removal of the bench at the bus stop to eliminate individuals from congregating at the site. A letter was sent to the PSTA, however, Dr. Jannelli has not received a response. He requested assistance from Sergeant Fisherkeller's team to quell the prostitution and drug activity in this specific area.

Sergeant Fisherkeller addressed the approach used for discouraging a homeless individual from entering/being on private property by advising that every situation is handled on an individual basis, and as such there is not a set standard operating procedure for such an incident. Absent disorderly conduct, officers will request that the individual(s) move on.

Dr. Jannelli commented that the pedestrian signs for foot traffic are totally ineffectual. CHIP clientele continue to walk on private property with total disregard for signage.

Property owners were encouraged to recommend that perspective tenants, new to the area, requesting information on area crime, etc. contact Lieutenant George Koder at (727) 562-4120.

Sergeant T.J. Donnelly was introduced to the group, and he advised that his home base will be west Missouri Avenue and his squad's focal point will center around businesses and quality of life, in an attempt to change the downtown environment to make it less attractive to the chronic homeless.

Sergeant Donnelly alluded to the graffiti and potential ethnic problems and he advised that Officer Billy Farias, who is of Hispanic ancestry and fluent in the Spanish language will assist in resolving any unrest that may occur in the area. Sergeant Donnelly assured the attendees from the CHIP area that the police would be available to resolve problems, and if any are noted to report the problem to the Police Department. Also, Sergeant Donnelly advised that the bus bench problem was addressed with PSTA four years ago, and the transit authority decided not to move the benches. It will be re-addressed once again with the transit authority. Additional information will be forthcoming.

Additionally, Sergeant Donnelly reiterated that commencing on December 29 additional police presence will be visible in the form of the additional downtown team comprised of one sergeant and five officers.

Sergeant Donnelly reminded attendees that there is only so much an officer can do as homeless, in and of itself, is not a crime. For any trespass issues, attendees were requested to contact Sergeant Fisherkeller or Sergeant Donnelly through the Communications Center at 562-4242.

Reg Owens interjected the fact that the city did institute an affidavit program in the downtown area. There were actually over 50 businesses who participated with signatures and appropriate signage authorizing Clearwater police officers to act as their agent and issue trespass warnings as appropriate. This has not been done in the CHIP area, and Mr. Owens advised that he will look into this concept for the area.

Sergeant Donnelly emphasized the importance of maintaining better lighting; good fencing and cutting back of shrubs. If requested, the police department can do an assessment of properties to better direct residents and landlords what can be done to eliminate groups congregating on various properties. Absentee landlords present a problem whereby it is difficult when attempting to cite individuals.

Dr. Jannelli advised that Pasco County has a grant program in place whereby graffiti defendants are assigned to paint buildings as a part of their commitment to community service.

Mr. Stone advised that at the close of fiscal year 2002/2003, federal funding for the neighborhood police team ran out. In the past year, the downtown plan was updated and expanded to include the Gateway area with homelessness being a main priority. Economic Development Director Reg Owens and Chief Klein, in conjunction with the Downtown Development Board, prevailed on the City Commission to figure out a way to continue to fund the downtown patrol team. City

Manager Bill Horne was in agreement with the continuation of the team. Chief Klein followed up with a presentation to the City Commission who approved funding for the current fiscal year with the understanding that dollar amounts for future years will be included in the police department's budget.

Since the update of the Downtown Redevelopment Plan, the city will soon start a program which has been successful in the N. Greenwood area; that is to create a team of all of the operating departments that are active in the neighborhood, (i.e. staff from Police Department, Housing Department, Sanitation, Parks & Recreation and Public Works) who will meet quarterly to develop an action program for the Gateway neighborhood. A problem property of the month will be brought to the table for discussion and resolution.

Mr. Stone advised that on December 16, 2003, the County Commission approved the Redevelopment Plan which expanded the community redevelopment area east of Highland Avenue which now means that the taxes being paid for both city and county in this area revert back to a neighborhood reinvestment fund for a minimum of fifteen (15) years.

Mary Lou Guthart commented about the homeless individuals she finds each morning sleeping in the doorway of the St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen, and added that there is no permanent solution to the problem. The downtown patrol will assist in an attempt to minimize and/or alleviate this situation.

### ***New Issues***

Chief Klein advised that there is a possible opportunity to obtain federal funding for the CHIP neighborhood. He explained that the Department of Homeland Security has been placing money into the anti-terrorism program throughout the country. There are currently three categories of grant funding available from this entity. Only one of those three areas is competitive and it is related to Citizen Corp. This could potentially establish a citizen corps, groups of citizens within neighborhoods that would focus on terrorism/homeland security, thus, creating the potential to go forward with some innovative ideas utilizing federal dollars. Chief Klein added that a similar program was established in the 1980's. That citizens group is still in place today and that neighborhood has been turned around. It is Chief Klein's hope that this concept will generate interest from CHIP area residents and give them the opportunity to form citizen patrols and become actively involved working with Police Department staff to maintain their community. The premise that applies here is that the more visibility you have associated with the police, the less problems you will have as far as transients and vagrants are concerned. Additional information will be forthcoming.

***Former Clearwater Community Hospital Property***

Rezoning for this property was approved by the Community Development Board in November 2003. Ed Brant advised that asbestos abatement is currently being conducted on the property and that a new program has been approved for the property which will soon undergo complete demolition. There will be two phases of construction to establish four new buildings, renovating the southern portion for shelters and a soup kitchen.

The next quarterly meeting is scheduled to be held March 17, 2004 starting at 6:30 p.m., in the St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen Chapel. Flyers will be disseminated to area residents, businesses and city staff well in advance of the meeting date.

To better direct the flyers, it was requested that all attendees note their names and addresses on the sign-in sheets provided.

The meeting concluded at 7:40 p.m.

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/s/ Sid Klein, President  
Clearwater Homeless Intervention Project