

**MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE GUILFORD COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
(FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER STEERING COMMITTEE)**

Greensboro, North Carolina
April 20, 2017

The Family Justice Center Steering Committee appointed by the Board of Commissioners, met in a duly noticed meeting on April 20, 2017 at 4:00PM in the J. Harry Weatherly Conference Room of the Old County Courthouse, 301 West Market Street, Greensboro, NC.

PRESENT: Committee Chair, Commissioner Kay Cashion; Commissioners Hank Henning and Carlvena Foster (in at 4:19PM).

ABSENT: Commissioner Alan Perdue.

ALSO PRESENT: Deputy County Manager Clarence Grier; Robin Keller, Clerk to Board; Family Justice Center Director Catherine Johnson, Social Services Director Heather Skeens and DSS Program Manager Sharon Barlow; and members of the media.

I. WELCOME/CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Kay Cashion called the meeting to order at 4:15PM. Cashion reviewed the purpose of the meeting to receive an update as to the progress of the Greensboro FJC and to discuss the programs potential growth needs and risks.

II. UPDATE ON FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

Family Justice Center Director Catherine Johnson provided an overview as to how far the center has come since its opening and where the needs are. Johnson reported that they have served over Ten Thousand clients since the center's opening, averaging 25 people per day. Johnson reviewed current staffing levels; community engagement programs; expansion of elder justice needs; potential expansion of onsite medical programs; legal incubator pilot program with Elon Law school which is scheduled to open in May. She noted that Guilford County has seen an 40% reduction in homicides related to Domestic violence since the opening of the FJC.

Cashion questioned if staffing levels were adequate to handle the volume.

Johnson shared that at times the staffing levels have been fragile and that they are dependent on volunteer hours to maintain service delivery is covered. She noted that they are expanding an additional waiting area into the building's basement area.

Cashion questioned if the department would be seeking additional funds for increased staffing in the next Fiscal Year's budget.

Johnson shared that she would be seeking additional part-time salaries to help accommodate the volume and need for ongoing community outreach programs.

Foster questioned if the majority of clients served are from Greensboro.

Johnson stated that 79% of clients served are from Greensboro with 2% from High Point. Johnson noted that there are some co-located services in High Point, but that the High Point program has seen a decline in client traffic since they moved.

Foster questioned available resources.

Johnson stated that staffing is at capacity. Johnson reviewed the status of the Elder Abuse program. She noted that in reassessing existing programs and partnerships they have identified needs in emergency housing for victims of elder abuse. She noted that elder abuse services are available for individuals 65 and older.

Cashion questioned fraud abuse reports.

Skeens shared that Social Services Ageing and Adult Division has noted a 16% increase in all areas of elder abuse reports. She attributed the rise in reporting to active community education and engagement.

Cashion thanked the media for providing ongoing updates on the Family Justice Center. Cashion reviewed with the committee the initial FJC proposal which included future consideration of a High Point expansion.

Cashion shared caution that prior to any expansion that the current center should be stable and able to support additional services.

Johnson stated that if the County decides to move forward with expansion that an additional position would need to be secured to help with startup of a program. She noted that once the program was ready to begin a full High Point staff would need to be secured.

Foster noted that it would be reasonable to have at least one position in place designated to help with the preliminary responsibilities of opening a second site location.

The committee discussed the business model and staffing needs to develop the program and staffing needs once the program would be open.

Henning spoke in support of a succession plan model to ensure stability and longevity of the department.

Foster noted that High Point City Council has appointed a liaison to follow the progress of a possible expansion and are in support of the program coming to High Point.

The committee discussed partnership responsibilities.

Johnson shared that she has reviewed some existing county spaces and noted that there is space in the High Point Courthouse that could accommodate an FJC, but that it would require significant renovations including additional restrooms and a new entrance to the courthouse.

The committee discussed scheduling the next meeting in High Point for the purpose of walking through the site.

Henning asked if the committee was ready to consider site selection or if more consideration of current capacity, staffing and funding needed to be reviewed first.

Cashion urged the committee members to begin reviewing sites in order to help determine needs.

The committee agreed to hold a site visit to the High Point Courthouse May 5 at 10:00 am.

Skeens noted potential client concerns with hosing a center at the courthouse and perceived negative connotations of doing so.

Johnson reiterated that if the County decided to move forward with a High Point expansion that three additional full time positions would be needed in High Point and one additional position would be needed in Greensboro.

Cashion questioned potential time lines if one position was approved to begin planning.

Johnson recommended one immediate full time position and the remaining positions to be brought on board 6-9 months prior to any site opening.

The board discussed the readiness of the community partners.

There being no further business, the committee adjourned at 5:00PM

Katie S. Cashion
Committee Chair

Robin B. Keller
Clerk to Board