

**COMMUNITIES OF FAITH UNITED FOR HOUSING (CFUH)
STATEMENT TO THE HUMAN SERVICES COUNCIL
ON THE FY 2011 FAIRFAX COUNTY ADVERTISED BUDGET**

March 17, 2010

Communities of Faith United for Housing (CFUH) is a advocacy network of faith communities in the Fairfax/Falls Church community who are committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing within our community with a special focus on providing permanent housing opportunities for those at the lowest levels of income who are either homeless or dangerously close to becoming homeless. Our review of the Advertised Budget focused on programs that would have the most impact on the supply of affordable housing and preventing and ending homelessness.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

CFUH strongly supports fully funding the programs and projects recommended by the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee for FY 2011 to begin implementing the Housing Blueprint strategy for FY 2011 and beyond. The Board indicated its support of these funding priorities at its meeting on January 19, 2010 and reaffirmed this with a vote on January 26, 2010. An investment of \$10 million in County funds is needed in FY 2011 to fund the programs and projects leading to achievement of 3 of the 4 goals in the Housing Blueprints:

- To End Homelessness in 10 years.
- To reduce the waiting lists for affordable housing in 10 years.
- To provide affordable housing options to special needs populations

Mr. Griffin did not include funding for these programs and projects in the Advertised Budget because work on the budget was completed before the Blueprint and the FY 2011 funding priorities were presented to the Board. However, he did recommended that the Board try to include \$7.1 million in the Budget for the Priority 1 (Urgent Funding Needs) programs and projects and suggested that the Board use the \$4 million in excess revenues from the Wedgewood project to fund the Bridging Affordability program and consider other funding options including a plan to issue debt for housing needs to fund the other programs and projects.

Please ask the Board to work with the County Executive to find the funds needed to implement all of the identified programs and projects not just those identified as “Urgent.”

The programs and projects identified in the Housing Blueprint for FY 2011 are the first step in meeting the four goals in the Housing Blueprint over the next 10 years. While the Bridging Affordability Program, which for the first times provides the option of using county funding for rental subsidies, is expected to provide housing for 18 homeless individuals and 30 families and to reduce the waiting list for affordable housing by 364 in FY 2011, major renovation and new construction of affordable housing take longer. Every delay in implementing these projects means that it will take longer to meet the goals in the Housing Blueprint and longer to provide safe, stable, affordable housing for people who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless because they are unable to find housing in our community that they can afford.

The Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness calls for the use of a Housing First approach to achieve its goals; this approach cannot work unless there is an increasing supply of affordable housing of all types. As stated in the *Implementation Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in the Fairfax-Falls*

Church Community, Volume 1: Housing First Approach, “...vulnerable and at-risk homeless individuals and families are more responsive to interventions and social services support after they are in their own housing, rather than while living in temporary/transitional facilities or housing programs...The cost of permanent housing is also less than temporary or transitional housing.” A comparison of costs for providing housing and services in Fairfax County through different methods included in the ***Implementation Plan*** is attached.

These cost savings focus on the benefit of housing people who are homeless; there are also cost savings for the community in housing people who may not need the intensive services required by many of the people who are chronically homeless. For example, if a family with children does not have permanent housing and is forced to move from one place to another during the school year, the County is required to cover the cost of transporting the children so that they are not forced to move from one school to another.

The lack of affordable housing for people and families with low to extremely low income affects the quality of life not only for the individuals and families directly affected but all those in the community who have a relative or friend with disabilities or mental disorders, those with elderly parents who can no longer afford to live in their homes, those with children who can't find a place to live in the community they grew up in, and those who depend on people like child care providers, elder care providers, landscape workers, housecleaners, etc. whose income does not cover the cost of appropriate housing in our community. **Funding the programs and projects recommended by the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee for FY 2011 would be a down payment on providing the affordable housing that is needed to maintain the quality of life in our community for all of its citizens.**

SERVICES FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE AND THOSE AT RISK OF BECOMING HOMELESS

CFUH strongly supports the preservation of the funding level for the Consolidated Community Funding Pool (CCFP) in the Advertised Budget at \$8.97 million, the same level as FY 2010.

Although the demand for the services funded by the CCFP has increased, it is unrealistic to ask for an increase in funding in the current economic environment. Any cuts in this funding would have a severe impact on people who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless.

CFUH also supports continued funding for emergency support of community organizations. The Advertised Budget includes a reserve of \$1,000,000 “for emergency support to community organizations to sustain the organization’s operations and provision of adequate services to the community in need of assistance as a result of economic stress or increased numbers of their clients.” The FY 2010 reserve is now being used to match Federal TANF emergency funding that will leverage up to \$4 million in federal TANF Emergency Funds. Without the reserve the County would not have been able to do this.

CFUH urges the Board to restore:

- 1. funding for CSB programs for emergency services for people who are mentally ill or addicted to drugs and alcohol, and**
- 2. funding cuts for the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness**

Proposed reductions to the Community Service Board's budget would 1) reduce funding for emergency mental health services and put all emergency mental health services in one place, Woodburn Center (#'s 51 & 52 on "Summary of Initiatives in Human Services") and 2) reduce mental health and alcohol and drug staff at the Adult Detention Center (#'s 54 and 56). If these walk-in emergency services are eliminated, as the budget proposes, individuals who are experiencing acute distress and need emergency/crisis intervention and public safety personnel will have to travel to the Woodburn Center in Falls Church. This cut is likely to cause great hardship for these individuals and their families many of whom are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. The 2009 Point-in-Time Count of homeless people in the Fairfax-Falls Church Community found that 60% of homeless singles have serious mental illness, substance abuse problems or both.

The total savings from the proposed reductions is \$414,000. Although this is not an insignificant amount of money, the CSB has identified cuts in these programs as creating unacceptable risks for the community as a whole and for individual consumers of these services.

The Advertised Budget includes a \$20,000 reduction in funding for the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness. OPEH is a small organization and, while the proposed reduction is not large, it would make it more challenging for the office to do their work. This Office provides the leadership needed to implement the Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. Since its inception in March 2009, Dean Klein, its director, has worked with the Paula Sampson, the director of the Department of Housing and Community Development in developing the Housing Blueprint and has managed the shift to Housing Opportunities Support Teams (HOST) to provide flexible and adaptive services needed to help individuals and families obtain or maintain housing. The following quote from United Community Ministries reinforces the value of the HOST program, "The uniqueness of the collaboration that has resulted in the HOST program has not only transformed our community's effectiveness in dramatically improving the lives for literally thousands of families, but it has set a new standard and a new model for how to solve other societal issues."

REVENUE ENHANCEMENTS

CFUH supports approval of a tax rate of \$1.10 per \$100 assessed value.

The Advertised Budget assumes a five-cent Real Estate Tax rate increase from \$1.04 per \$100 of assessed value to \$1.09. CFUH supports increasing the tax rate to whatever level is needed to maintain the average tax bill at the 2010 level. Based on the Advertised Budget, a tax rate of \$1.10 per \$100 assessed value would not increase the average tax bill and would provide an additional \$18.6 million in revenue.

CFUH also support reinstating the local vehicle registration fee (\$33 per vehicle) and adding other fees when the beneficiary of a service can be clearly identified and can afford to pay.