



April 22, 2010

The Honorable Chair
And
Members of the Board of Supervisors
Polk County, Iowa

The Honorable Mayor
And
Members of the City Council
City of Des Moines, Iowa

Re: Joint Board of Supervisors and City Council Meeting
3:00 PM, Monday, April 26, 2010

Homelessness in Des Moines is on the increase. According to a homeless count conducted by the Polk County Housing Continuum in January 2010, 1088 persons were living on the street, in emergency shelters and transitional housing, or places not meant for human habitation. In 2007, the same count was about 1040, so over three years the number of homeless people has increased. Despite the outstanding efforts of 77 public and private organizations, and despite a significant allocation of public and private dollars – about \$15 million is projected for 2010 – the problems of our homeless citizens are not being adequately addressed. We need to do better.

In recent months the City of Des Moines, Polk County, the Greater Des Moines Foundation, and United Way have discussed the issue of homelessness in central Iowa, much of which is evidenced in the City of Des Moines. These discussions have been multi-faceted and engaged community leaders, organizations, planning groups, and advocates in identifying factors and solutions to the growing population of homeless. This discussion has included an analysis of resources and plans related to providing shelter and affordable housing in our community.

In an effort to learn and benefit from other communities who have successfully addressed the issue of homelessness, the City of Des Moines, with the support of United Way of Central Iowa and Polk County, hired a team of experts – Technical Advisory Collaborative, Inc. – to assess our current and future needs and outline strategies proven effective in other communities and most appropriate for

our consideration. One of their recommendations is for the establishment of a board to be responsible for coordinating the community's work towards addressing homelessness.

It is essential that we continue to work together on a long-term strategy to address homelessness, make the best use of the available resources, and ensure that implementation occurs in a manner that is coordinated and effective. Given the many agencies and organizations involved in providing services to the homeless population, coordination and collaboration at the local level is essential to guide our efforts and maximize the use of our collective funding. However, there is no effective mechanism to ensure that such coordination and collaboration will occur on an ongoing basis. Therefore, it is proposed that a Homeless Coordinating Council, comprised of leaders from the organizations that fund local homeless programs, be established.

During the joint meeting on April 26, 2010, the Homeless Coordinating Council will be proposed for consideration by joint action of the Des Moines City Council and the Polk County Board of Supervisors. As proposed, the Homeless Coordinating Council may allow for up to six (6) representatives to be appointed by the Homeless Coordinating Council from organizations that contribute funding to homeless activities. The Homeless Coordinating Council will be supported by a Steering Committee comprised of the Des Moines City Manager, Polk County Manager, United Way Director, the Greater Des Moines Community Foundation, and the Polk County Housing Trust. The Steering Committee will submit recommendations to the Homeless Coordinating Council and direct implementation of strategic work plans. Additionally, the Homeless Coordinating Council may establish an Advisory Committee to advise on the service delivery system for the homeless.

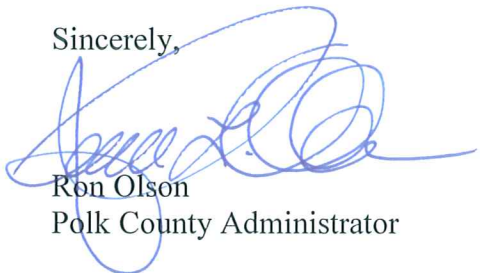
Among the first tasks of the Coordinating Council will be the development of a long-term plan designed to eliminate homelessness, identification of a clear set of policies and objectives designed to guide annual funding allocations, and a review and improvement of the existing service delivery system. In addition, priority will be given to developing housing alternatives for the numerous camps that exist today along our rivers and in isolated areas around the community.

Accompanying this letter for your review are the following:

- The Homeless Action Plan for Des Moines and Polk County
- Key Initiatives from the Plan
- The Resolution for the April 26, 2010 Joint Meeting

If you have any questions, or need additional information, please feel free to contact either of us.

Sincerely,



Ron Olson
Polk County Administrator



Richard A. Clark
City Manager

Attachments (3)