**M E M O R A N D U M**

**To:** Commissioner Barbara Jo Crea

**From:** Rose Bulbach, Coordinator, HTF

**Date:** December 6, 2024

**Subject:** Homeless Trust Fund Task Force Request for Endorsement - Plan to End Homelessness - Funding Priorities

**Copy:** Michelle Gunther, Clerk of the Board

Michael Fiure, County Administrator Tracy Maksel, Director, OCDHS

This memo conveys the Homelessness Trust Fund Task Force’s recommendations to the Ocean County Board of Commissioners, seeking endorsement of the enclosed Plan to End Homelessness and approval of the funding priorities established by the Task Force at its December 5, 2024, meeting.

Should this request meet with your approval, please notify the Clerk of the Board (copied) in preparation for the December 11, 2024 Pre Board meeting.

Please contact me with any questions.

**Background**

The Ocean County Board of Commissioners established the Ocean County Homelessness Trust Fund and the Trust Fund Task Force through authority granted by NJSA 52 27D-287a. et. seq. and NJSA 22a 4-17. Funds generated through this endeavor are regulated and shall be used for:

* The acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of housing projects or units within housing projects that supply permanent affordable housing for homeless persons or families, including those at risk of homelessness;
* Rental assistance vouchers, including tenant and project-based subsidies for affordable housing projects or units within housing projects that provide permanent affordable housing for homeless persons or families, including those at risk of homelessness;
* Supportive services as may be required by homeless individuals or families in order to obtain, maintain (or both) permanent affordable housing; and
* No more than five (5%) of the funds may be used annually by the County for administrative costs related to the administration of the fund.

The Board of Commissioners appointed the Task Force to provide recommendations on targeted funding strategies that address emerging community needs while adhering to legal requirements. Throughout program year 2024, the Task Force operated with integrity and purpose, focusing on the following core measures:

* *Adopted Bylaws.*
* *Established Officers.*
* *Established and convened Open Public Meetings and Workgroup Sessions.*
* *Established a Code Blue Plan and funding recommendation (approved by the Board of Commissioners for the 2024-2025 season).*
* *Effectuated a system wide needs assessment with the assistance of a planning consultant.*
* *Conducted a call for applications from individuals with lived experience with assistance from the planning consultant, to serve on the Task Force.*
* *Made recommendations to the Board of Commissioners for 2025 membership.*
* *Worked collaboratively with key stakeholders to develop a comprehensive community driven planning process resulting in an update to the County’s Plan to End Homelessness.*

**The Plan**

In partnership with Monarch Housing and the Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Coalition—Ocean County’s Continuum of Care—the Task Force has updated the County’s Plan to End Homelessness (attached). This revised plan is being submitted to the Board of Commissioners, via this memo, for endorsement. The plan will be reviewed and updated on a three-year cycle unless the Task Force decides otherwise.

The planning process served as a crucial initial step in shaping the Task Force’s funding recommendations for 2025. To ensure these recommendations are both relevant and reflective of the broader community’s experiences, the process gathered feedback on needs and priorities from individuals with lived experience, organizations within and supporting care systems, and stakeholders involved in developing, delivering, and sustaining programs, housing, and ongoing services for at-risk populations. While the attached plan provides a detailed overview, the public engagement process identified four key priority areas for the Task Force to consider:

* *Rental assistance dedicated to those experiencing homelessness*
* *Support services to assist those at risk or experiencing homelessness*
* *Development of affordable housing*
* *Development of a coordinated prevention system*

**2025-2028 Task Force Priorities**

On December 5, 2024, the Task Force conducted a prioritization session, concluding that each recommendation is essential and serves a vital purpose in guiding its efforts. Affordable housing was identified as both the solution and a preventive measure for maintaining a healthy housing system. In 2025, the Task Force will focus on fostering municipal engagement to gain a clearer understanding of local affordable housing obligation plans across the County and to explore opportunities for strengthening collaborative efforts. Currently, due to the limited allocation capacity of the Trust Fund, the Task Force recommends initiating a competitive contract solicitation in the first quarter of 2025 to secure programming for June, focusing on the following priority areas:

* *Rental assistance dedicated to those experiencing homelessness*
* *Support services to assist those at risk or experiencing homelessness*
* *Development of a coordinated prevention system*