



Agenda Report

2725 Judge Fran Jamieson
Way
Viera, FL 32940

Citizen Recommendations

C.1.

3/3/2025

Subject:

Heather Elko - CEER #2025044, #2025048, and #2025058

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Dept/Office:

N/A

Requested Action:

N/A

Summary Explanation and Background:

Heather Elko submitted CEER #2025044, #2025048, and #2025058. All three recommendations are attached.

Clerk to the Board Instructions:

N/A

Horst, Rachel

From: CEER@brevardfl.gov
Sent: Monday, January 27, 2025 12:15 PM
To: Horst, Rachel
Subject: A new CEER Recommendation has been submitted as ID #2025044

Recommendation # 2025044

Dear CEER Administrator,

Speak Up Brevard Recommendation ID #2025044 has been submitted. Please login to the CEER Application to start the recommendation evaluation workflow.

Contact Information:

Group/Organization

Name Heather A Elko
Address 566 Thomas Barbour Dr, Melbourne FL 32935 6929
Phone (321) 427-8564
Email Efeather2@bellsouth.net
Alternate Email

Recommendation Information:

Recommendation ID 2025044
Recommendation Title Summit meetings between Commissioners and City Leaders
Areas Affected Citizen sense of wellbeing
Department Affected
Current problem In recent years the relationship between the County and our cities has deteriorated into becoming adversarial. Issues do come up that would benefit from wise leaders (the leaders themselves, not their staffs) sitting down together. **BACKGROUND EXAMPLES:** 1.The Malabar Scrub melt-down was one, where the issue seemed to be hijacked by hotheads on both sides, when a reasonable joint meeting of multiple Commissioners and City leaders could have been more professional and effective. 2.The funding of lifeguards situation is similar to the Malabar issue. This one resulted in sword-rattling and combative talk. Citizens learned about it in social media and news sources, which resulted in their being concerned and upset at an unknown future.
Recommendation The County should reach out to Cities on issues that require joint cooperation and set up a summit meeting on an as-needed basis, involving the cities that the issue affects. 1.I suggest the actual elected Commissioners and City leaders (not just staff representatives) attend this/these meetings, which would include an agreed-upon agenda, coffee and snacks, and lunch if the meeting is lengthy. a. The drawback of

just having "my people meet with your people" is that staff members do not have decision-making authority and must fear for their jobs if they speak "out of turn." 2. The benefit of such summit meetings is to spend quality time, speak and listen respectfully, break bread, and knit together a more coherent governance for the citizens of Brevard County. a. The costs would be as follows. Leaders' time away from office tasks; space needed for a comfortable meeting; snacks, drinks, and lunch if needed. b. A side benefit is that the leaders will get to know each other on a more personal level and that will result in future communication being easier. c. The summit meetings do not need to be etched in granite. They should be as-needed when issues arise where joint cooperation would be beneficial. 3. Citizens don't care as much as the elected leaders do about when they are in a city jurisdiction or in a county jurisdiction. Citizens just want solutions that affect their quality of life, no matter who is in charge.

Attachments

Summit Meetings between County and Cities.docx

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Summit Meetings of County Commissioners with Elected City leaders for specific purposes

Intro: In recent years the relationship between the County and our cities has deteriorated into becoming adversarial. Issues do come up that would benefit from wise leaders (the leaders themselves, not their staffs) sitting down together.

Proposal: The County should reach out to Cities on issues that require joint cooperation and set up a summit meeting on an as-needed basis, involving the cities that the issue affects.

1. I suggest the actual elected Commissioners and City leaders (not just staff representatives) attend this/these meetings, which would include an agreed-upon agenda, coffee and snacks, and lunch if the meeting is lengthy.
 - a. The drawback of just having "my people meet with your people" is that staff members do not have decision-making authority and must fear for their jobs if they speak "out of turn."
2. The benefit of such summit meetings is to spend quality time, speak and listen respectfully, break bread, and knit together a more coherent governance for the citizens of Brevard County.
 - a. The costs would be as follows. Leaders' time away from office tasks; space needed for a comfortable meeting; snacks, drinks, and lunch if needed.
 - b. A side benefit is that the leaders will get to know each other on a more personal level and that will result in future communication being easier.
 - c. The summit meetings do not need to be etched in granite. They should be as-needed when issues arise where joint cooperation would be beneficial.
3. Citizens don't care as much as the elected leaders do about when they are in a city jurisdiction or in a county jurisdiction. Citizens just want solutions that affect their quality of life, no matter who is in charge.

Background examples:

1. The Malabar Scrub melt-down was one, where the issue seemed to be hijacked by hotheads on both sides, when a reasonable joint meeting of multiple Commissioners and City leaders could have been more professional and effective.
2. The funding of lifeguards situation is another. Similar to the Malabar issue, this one resulted in sword-rattling and combative talk. Citizens learned about it in social media and news sources, which resulted in being concerned and upset at an unknown future.

Horst, Rachel

From: CEER@brevardfl.gov
Sent: Tuesday, January 28, 2025 9:08 AM
To: Horst, Rachel
Subject: A new CEER Recommendation has been submitted as ID #2025048

Recommendation # 2025048

Dear CEER Administrator,

Speak Up Brevard Recommendation ID #2025048 has been submitted. Please login to the CEER Application to start the recommendation evaluation workflow.

Contact Information:

Group/Organization

Name Heather A Elko
Address 566 Thomas Barbour Dr, Melbourne FL 32935 6828
Phone (321) 427-8564
Email efeather2@bellsouth.net
Alternate Email

Recommendation Information:

Recommendation ID 2025048
Recommendation Title Restore County grants to nonprofits to focus on homeless and at-risk residents
Areas Affected
Department Affected
Current problem Nonprofits that serve basic human needs are buckling under the demands of a burgeoning low-income population. Nonprofit funding as it stands cannot keep up. Homeless people and inadequately sheltered people are a segment of our County population that need more assistance. Nonprofits are capable of providing services but need more funds. Temporary shelter, emergency help with utilities and food, mental health services, transportation to medical care—these are fundamental needs. Unfortunately, nonprofits run out of money on a regular basis and have to deny services to applicants. It is appropriate and necessary to use public funds for this purpose. We are all in this together. Demarcations of city and county borders are not relevant in this current crisis. Our poorest citizens are suffering, and better-off citizens are dismayed at the condition of the poor people here in Brevard.
Recommendation Recommendation: The County should provide grant funding to nonprofits that serve unsheltered and inadequately sheltered residents, and their associated needs. This in effect would be a restoration of grant funding, with a more targeted focus, that had been in place for decades but was halted by commissioners who were in office about

9 years ago. BENEFIT: Enable nonprofits to serve County residents as they are designed to do, but in the current crisis are being overwhelmed. Prevent currently housed, at-risk people from becoming homeless. 1. The County should restore grant funding to nonprofits in a focused way, targeting human services providers. a. In today's housing crisis at the level of basic shelter, grants should be made to agencies that specifically deal with our homeless or inadequately sheltered residents, with their associated needs. 2. Commissioners should review the past grants to nonprofits program that was highly approved by citizens, and fine-tune it for current needs. 3. The County should develop a new program for the crisis we are in. Don't worry about creating a program in perpetuity. The Commissioners can structure this grant program according to near, middle, and/or longer-range needs. 4. Quickly—time is of the essence—determine where the most pressing needs are. Go to street-level nonprofit providers to get feedback. 5. Don't make the grant process too cumbersome. Limit the hurdles and speed up the time frame, so that the nonprofits can immediately provide more assistance. 6. Don't fall back on an excuse that past commissioners used: "We don't want to pick winners and losers" (by awarding grants to some but not all). Those commissioners in effect made everyone losers, even better-off residents who are on the sidelines, watching with alarm the inadequacy of basic shelter and services that are desperately needed. 7. There is precedent for such action. In past times of emergency the County has adjusted budgets and processes as needed. Examples include the housing meltdown when tax revenues dropped and the County cut hours and services, and the pandemic crisis that created administrative and reach-out needs beyond immediate County borders. We now are experiencing a time of emergency.

Attachments

Restore County grants to nonprofits to focus on homeless and at-risk residents.docx

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Restore County grants to nonprofits to focus on homeless and at-risk residents

Current Problem: Nonprofits that serve basic human needs are buckling under the demands of a burgeoning low-income population. Nonprofit funding as it stands cannot keep up. Homeless people and inadequately sheltered people are a segment of our County population that need more assistance. Nonprofits are capable of providing but need more funds. Temporary shelter, emergency help with utilities and food, mental health services, transportation to medical care--these are fundamental needs. Unfortunately, nonprofits run out of money on a regular basis and have to deny services to applicants.

It is appropriate and necessary to use public funds for this purpose. We are all in this together. Demarcations of city and county borders are not relevant in this current crisis. Our poorest citizens are suffering, and better-off citizens are dismayed at the condition of the poor people here in Brevard.

Recommendation: The County should provide grant funding to nonprofits that serve unsheltered and inadequately sheltered residents, and their associated needs. This in effect would be a restoration of grant funding, with a more targeted focus, that had been in place for decades but was halted by commissioners who were in office about 9 years ago.

BENEFIT: Enable nonprofits to serve County residents as they are designed to do, but in the current crisis are being overwhelmed. Prevent currently housed, at-risk people from becoming homeless.

1. The County should restore grant funding to nonprofits in a focused way, targeting human services providers.
 - a. In today's housing crisis at the level of basic shelter, grants should be made to agencies that specifically deal with our homeless or inadequately sheltered residents, with their associated needs.
2. Commissioners should review the past grants to nonprofits program that was highly approved by citizens, and fine-tune it for current needs.
3. The County should develop a new program for the crisis we are in. Don't worry about creating a program in perpetuity. The Commissioners can structure this grant program according to near, middle, and/or longer-range needs.
4. Quickly--time is of the essence--determine where the most pressing needs are. Go to street-level nonprofit providers to get feedback.
5. Don't make the grant process too cumbersome. Limit the hurdles and speed up the time frame, so that the nonprofits can immediately provide more assistance.
6. Don't fall back on an excuse that past commissioners used: "We don't want to pick winners and losers" (by awarding grants to some but not all). Those commissioners in effect made everyone losers, even better-off residents who are on the sidelines, watching with alarm the inadequacy of basic shelter and services that are desperately needed.

7. **There is precedent for such action. In past times of emergency the County has adjusted budgets and processes as needed. Examples include the housing meltdown when tax revenues dropped and the County cut hours and services, and the pandemic crisis that created administrative and reach-out needs beyond immediate County borders. We now are experiencing a time of emergency.**

Horst, Rachel

From: CEER@brevardfl.gov
Sent: Wednesday, January 29, 2025 12:08 PM
To: Horst, Rachel
Subject: A new CEER Recommendation has been submitted as ID #2025058

Recommendation # 2025058

Dear CEER Administrator,

Speak Up Brevard Recommendation ID #2025058 has been submitted. Please login to the CEER Application to start the recommendation evaluation workflow.

Contact Information:

Group/Organization

Name Heather A Elko
Address 566 THOMAS BARBOUR DR, MELBOURNE FL 32935 6828
Phone (321) 427-8564
Email efeather2@bellsouth.net
Alternate Email

Recommendation Information:

Recommendation ID 2025058
Recommendation Title Acknowledge Speaker Contributions Made at Commission Meetings
Areas Affected
Department Affected
Current problem 1. Speakers sign up to convey to the Commissioners something they consider important, but the 3 minutes of speaking end without even a nod or acknowledgment. A speaker leaves wondering what impact, if any, their words have had. 2. Admittedly it is a busy few hours and the need to move on is understandable. However, a follow-up from the Commission would be nice, even something like "thank you for taking the time to speak to us." 3. I have not observed any Commissioner taking notes or any staff member recording speaker's words. 4. Yes, there is a video record. I doubt the Commissioners have time to go back and review what the speakers said. 5. As for the home audience, the person's name and self-introduction fly by, and viewers see an anonymous presenter nervously cramming their words into three minutes.
Recommendation 1. Devise a way to give speakers at the Commission meetings some kind of feedback that shows you have heard them. a. Have a staff member take notes of who spoke and what they said, the topic or concern. b. Have the staff member provide you with a list of the speakers and what they said, and any other information you ask to have. 2. Follow up by sending the individual an email or have a staff member send them an

email referring specifically to the topic they brought up if you found it of interest or value. 3. Send the speaker an email at least thanking them for taking the time to address the Commission, even if you did not find the topic of interest. 4. Background: a. I have spoken a few times, and have not received any indication that anyone was paying particular attention. I see passive faces above me, and then I walk back to my seat in silence. Speaking before that towering dais is unnerving, and it takes a lot for a citizen to brave it. b. I have sent multiple emails over many years, often addressed to Commissioners across the board because my topic is of countywide interest, not just my District. I receive a robo-response from my district and nothing to indicate anyone actually read my email. c. On two occasions I have received a response that says my District Commissioner has referred my question to a Department Head. That is the end of the story, and I suspect my email went in the trash. Even a courtesy email would be something. Department heads could be given a form letter if nothing else. 5. Benefits of adopting my proposal: Potential increase of County productivity because residents do have valid and valuable information to share. Also, citizen goodwill is worth something.

Attachments

Acknowledge Speaker Contributions Made at Commission Meetings.docx

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Acknowledge Speaker Contributions Made at Commission Meetings

Current concern:

1. Speakers sign up to convey to the Commissioners something they consider important, but the 3 minutes of speaking end without even a nod or acknowledgment. A speaker leaves wondering what impact, if any, their words have had.
2. Admittedly it is a busy few hours and the need to move on is understandable. However, a follow-up from the Commission would be nice, even something like "thank you for taking the time to speak to us."
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5. As for the home audience, the person's name and self-introduction fly by, and viewers see an anonymous presenter nervously cramming their words into three minutes.

Recommendation:

1. Devise a way to give speakers at the Commission meetings some kind of feedback that shows you have heard them.
 - a. Have a staff member take notes of who spoke and what they said, the topic or concern.
 - b. Have the staff member provide you with a list of the speakers and what they said, and any other information you ask to have.
2. Follow up by sending the individual an email or have a staff member send them an email referring specifically to the topic they brought up if you found it of interest or value.
3. Send the speaker an email at least thanking them for taking the time to address the Commission, even if you did not find the topic of interest.
4. Background:
 - a. I have spoken a few times, and have not received any indication that anyone was paying particular attention. I see passive faces above me, and then I walk back to my seat in silence. Speaking before that towering dais is unnerving, and it takes a lot for a citizen to brave it.
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5. Benefits of adopting my proposal: Potential increase of County productivity because residents do have valid and valuable information to share. Also, citizen goodwill is worth something.