

FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Administrative Session Minutes  
Tuesday, December 10, 2024

President Boyce  
Commissioner O'Grady  
Commissioner Crawley

*The Franklin County Board of Commissioners convened an Administrative Session, in person and via Zoom conference call, to discuss housing and the regional response to ending homelessness.*

Using hybrid meeting technology, participants were also able to access the Administrative Session via Zoom conferencing by dialing (929) 436-2866, Meeting ID: 978 8790 2896; Passcode: 628826, or by joining at: <https://franklincountyohio.zoom.us/j/97887902896>

Commissioner Boyce convened the meeting at 11:12 a.m.

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Shannon TL Isom, President and CEO, Community Shelter Board; Elizabeth Brown, President and CEO, YWCA of Columbus; and Lauren Wilson, Vice President of Programs, Lutheran Social Services (LSS), joined the commissioners and County Administration in discussing housing and homelessness, while offering a PowerPoint presentation (included herein).

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*Ms. Isom thanked the commissioners for scheduling this session to discuss the resources for ending homelessness, the cost of housing, and the shelter system partners. Ms. Isom added that she hoped that at the end of the presentation, it would reveal a sound system that is ready and coming up with solutions to deal with homelessness to cover gaps and make an impact within 5 years. This partnership was made up of creative, innovative, and forward-thinking organizations.*

*Ms. Isom discussed the money brought into the Community Shelter Board (CSB, the Board) and how the Board spends those dollars. She added that over time, spending has changed. Street-level outreach has increased over the years, and she discussed community partners. Ms. Isom noted that CSB and partners now have 1,400 beds in 9 shelters; 5 of which are emergency shelters. As of last year, CSB added 370 beds and discussed how the commissioners funded the warming centers, added the ability to care for couples and pets, and noted last year the use of 14 hotels.*

*Commissioner Boyce inquired if there were findings in the overview and noted the important data points presented.*

*Commissioner O'Grady noted that 83% of funding is public, and that significance is high, while the private sector is 17%, which will need to increase.*

*Ms. Isom added that this is why they are here today. The Board has a relationship with HUD and can pull down additional dollars, but HUD does not subsidize shelter dollars.*

*Joy Bivens, Deputy County Administrator, noted that in 2025, when discussing prevention, work will be done in correlation and cohesiveness to the extent that it makes sense, while being more intentional in cross-sector collaborations.*

*Ms. Brown discussed how budgets are stretched during hard times, and the best protection is federal dollars, which are streamlined into basic needs, such as food. The federal government does pay attention to basic needs and invest in food but does not fund emergency shelters. Ms. Brown noted that shelter is a basic need in the community. The YWCA served 9,500 individuals in the county last year, which speaks to the community's need. Ms. Brown noted the need to do more within the community.*

*Ms. Isom added the assessment on homelessness and thanked Commissioner Crawley and Administrator Wilson for participating in the steering committee's two-year assessment of the community's readiness. Ms. Isom noted that the assessment was due to the economic growth and changes in the community. Ms. Isom discussed various strengths to build on, such as being a leader in data collection and a premier system of excellence for HUD; this in turn, means money is not sent back to HUD.*

*Deputy County Administrator Bivens noted that the model illustrated that the Community Shelter Board is among the top two in the nation.*

*Ms. Isom discussed the community's affordable housing crisis and trend lines showing that the national median rent average increased less steeply than in Franklin County.*

*Commissioner Boyce inquired why rent in Franklin County was trending higher than the national average.*

*Ms. Isom noted it was due to being the number 1 fastest-growing city, per capita, for 4 quarters in a row, and still feeling the effects of the housing bust, and the increase in population. Ms. Isom noted that infrastructure has been an issue.*

*Commissioner Boyce advised that the county would be embarking on a cost-of-living study, and some of this data would be helpful, and asked County Administration to consider the implications of levies and property taxes. Commissioner Boyce noted this information would prove helpful to know and provide information to justify priorities.*

*Ms. Brown noted that the Building Industry Association of Central Ohio (BIA) had excellent data that studies housing needs through 2050 and discussed that there was not an incentive to create affordable units, while on the development side, there is not an incentive to create affordable units.*

*Commissioner Boyce advised that he uses the BIA to represent the industry and believes the commissioners need an independent agency that informs them and peels back the layers to equip them to make good decisions and choices.*

*Ms. Isom added that when median rent increases faster than the national average, focus strategies have shown that will, in turn, increase homelessness and noted they must do better with single Black households and single men, and the need to care for children.*

*Deputy County Administrator Bivens inquired whether Black mothers still make up 72% of those in the shelter.*

*Ms. Brown noted that 72% of those in the shelter were Black women who headed households, which then becomes a generational component because youth are also in the shelter.*

*Commissioner Boyce noted that almost 70% of households are headed by single Black women, and this issue remains a bigger and deeper conversation, for consideration.*

*Commissioner Crawley inquired whether the percentages of veterans, aging residents, and pregnant women and how pregnant women are counted.*

*Ms. Isom noted that they saw fewer pregnant women in the first quarter, but there were still too many. The percentage of veterans increased every quarter but has stabilized for now.*

*Commissioner Boyce inquired whether pregnant women were prioritized and if veterans were assessed to determine their eligibility for other resources.*

*Ms. Isom advised that pregnant women were prioritized.*

*Commissioner Crawley inquired whether if there were enough resources for veterans.*

*Ms. Isom noted that all community members were assessed for their needs but found that some shelter veterans do not want to deal with the veteran system, but work needs to be done, and all veterans should be aligned with available resources. Ms. Isom added that domestic violence victims do not do well in shelters and need to be aligned with resources, and believes they have partners that do well with connecting victims to services; however, improvement needs to be done when a community member says no to receiving resources.*

*Ms. Brown added that YWCA serves families, and Lutheran Social Services (LSS) serves single adults. When they come to the shelter, they are connected to resources and intervention. Ms. Brown noted that childcare is still a major issue, so they have an on-site childcare center with a zero-child waitlist.*

*Lauren Wilson added that Faith Mission has a multi-layered veteran program and does what it can to move veterans out of the general shelter system. Still, she noted the barriers if veterans do not want to engage with the system. Ms. Wilson advised that there was a sound system between Faith Mission and Veteran Affairs.*

*Ms. Isom noted that HUD's definition of a pregnant woman is not family, but when she comes into the shelter, she is in a family state, and CSB can do better than what the federal government requires.*

*Ms. Brown added that many pregnant women already have other children.*

*Deputy County Administrator Bivens added that there is a direct correlation between homelessness and education. Ms. Bivens noted that most in the shelter are still working or going to school but do not make enough money or are in a domestic violence situation.*

*Ms. Brown discussed the readiness for kindergarten, the infant mortality crisis in disproportionately Black infants, and the correlation between housing and working issues.*

*Commissioner Crawley noted that she came to this discussion from an infant mortality perspective, and that when housing and wrap-around services is provided, the outcomes dramatically improve.*

*Ms. Isom added that the number 1 public health medical intervention, would be to get a pregnant mother a home.*

*Kenneth N. Wilson, County Administrator, discussed Star House's role with the community's youth, between the ages of 10 and 18; they can only spend up to 20 hours at Star House because it is not a shelter; he visited and noticed young mothers with children.*

*Ms. Isom added that CSBs youth go up to 24 years of age, and that the youth shelters have a high percentage of Black girls due to being pregnant or having experienced violence in the streets. In contrast, boys tend to couch surf and maneuver more; young men tend to get caught up in the legal system and foster care, and girls are in the shelter system.*

*Commissioner Crawley asked about the numbers for the aging population in the shelter.*

*Ms. Isom noted that the fastest-growing population in the shelter is those 62 years old and over, and 70-76% of those in the shelter are first-time individuals experiencing homelessness.*

*Commissioner Crawley noted the importance of discussing what is seen at the shelter.*

*Ms. Isom discussed the system dashboard, and using the data collected, the average system waitlist and stay has increased significantly. Ms. Isom added that the system was created to handle Columbus 10 years ago, not Columbus today, and noted that they are doing better with partner agency performance and can continue to move areas positively.*

*Ms. Wilson discussed the fragility of shelter funding and expenses and noted that costs are increasing.*

*Commissioner Boyce asked if they had considered regression analysis and noted it would be interesting to see if more dollars prevent more families from returning to the system and added that this is about giving families a chance to have economic stability and mobility.*

*Deputy County Administrator Bivens inquired what expenses meant during this conversation.*

*Commissioner Crawley inquired what the expense was for women with children versus men.*

*Ms. Isom added that the average cost per bed in 2024 was \$21,000 per bed, not per person, and in 2019, it was \$11,000, and getting out of the system is slowing.*

*Ms. Brown discussed that the system helped 9,500 people last year and cost approximately \$30M to operate. It was noted that outcomes are good against the national standard and identify the call to action, however the systems cannot sustain the emergency shelter system as it is today and need a dedicated revenue source.*

*Commissioner Crawley added that this assessment was needed and noted there was pushback, and this conversation was overdue.*

*Commissioner Boyce noted his concern with the cost. He also noted that it is the burden of an elected office to make tough decisions, and these conversations need to continue.*

*Commissioner O'Grady noted the need for this Administrative Session and discussed that he has been critical about where they have been in the past but continues to vote for it every year, and at the end of the day Columbus is well known for stepping up to solve problems and this is the time to step up for this problem. He also noted that he does not believe the same amount of HUD funding will continue to be there and more money from the city and county is not sustainable and they must get creative.*

*Deputy County Administrator Bivens advised that moving forward, she wants to ensure they are intentional in system alignment and less silos and she noted poverty is expensive.*

*Commissioner Crawley agreed that poverty is expensive, and the real numbers are needed to move forward.*

*County Administrator Wilson advised that they pushed for this analysis to be done because it was needed, and the commissioners and County Administration are committed to a solution and to doing better. Mr. Wilson noted that this presentation was eye-opening, but it is what needed to be heard.*

*Commissioner Boyce inquired about how to get there and be good stewards of public funds, noting that money comes from the public and the people they serve.*

*Ms. Isom closed, noting that the Community Shelter Board would need \$16.7M from the commissioners and thanked the commissioners and County Administration for this session to discuss this important issue of ending homelessness.*


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There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 12:55 P.M.

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**(Signature Page Follows)**

These minutes are a general summary of the Commissioners' Administrative Session for Tuesday, December 10, 2024.

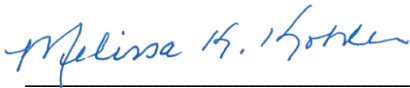
  
1/28/2025  
**KEVIN L. BOYCE, PRESIDENT**

  
1/23/2025  
**JOHN O'GRADY**

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**ERICA C. CRAWLEY**  
**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO**

Submitted by:



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Melissa K. Kohler,  
Deputy Clerk to the Board of Commissioners