

03-10-2021 Town Council Meeting Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #7: Update from Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness

Council Question:

What was the nature of the increased calls received on the Housing Helpline during COVID-19?

Partnership to End Homelessness Staff Response:

We've heard from colleagues in NC and nationwide that all communities are seeing these types of increases in people seeking homelessness prevention – financial assistance to help with rent and utilities. We've heard from callers who have lost income during COVID due to job loss, layoff, reduced hours plus those that have been ill and had downtime due to sickness and hospitalization.

Council Question:

What accounts for the recorded decrease in homelessness over the past year?

Partnership to End Homelessness Staff Response:

Orange County is using a [Housing First](#)¹ orientation to all homeless services, and to the homeless service system. This approach is resulting in decreases in the number of people experiencing homelessness, although we still have work to do. 2020 saw an 8% decrease since 2010 but these numbers are relatively flat, especially compared to the nationwide and statewide decreases. We have had gaps in our homeless service system but are glad to be filling them and making progress towards the work to end homelessness. As more gaps are filled, we expect to see more decreases, as other communities have experienced. In previous economic downturns, homelessness has been a lagging indicator – not increasing immediately when we see an economic downturn, but rather increasing in years afterwards.

Town of Chapel Hill funding for the Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) program, combined with funding from the Town of Carrboro, Town of Hillsborough, and Orange County, and the streamlined access for EHA and other homelessness prevention funding have also led to decreases in the number of people experiencing homelessness. We are working with our colleagues to continue using Housing First and streamlined access to homelessness prevention services via EHA to address predicted future needs. Since most people who are evicted also start to experience homelessness, we will continue eviction prevention to stave off increases in homelessness.

¹ https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/90RtCxD2JjTjqD5i6__oJ?domain=hudexchange.info/