



4/1/2022

Ms. Julia Olsen-Boseman
Ms. Deb Hays
Mr. Jonathan Barfield Jr.
Mr. Bill Rivenbark
Mr. Rob Zapple

Dear New Hanover County Board of Commissioners.

Pursuant to the request of the Tri-County Homeless Interagency Council's (Tri-HIC) Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) Board, we wish to express concern about the proposed amendment to Chapter 38 of the New Hanover County Code of Ordinances. As advocates for homeless service providers and persons experiencing homelessness, the CoC is the HUD designated entity encompassing New Hanover, Brunswick and Pender Counties including the City of Wilmington.

We are the strategic partner in the Cape Fear Region working towards reducing, and ultimately eliminating homelessness. We work in collaboration with service partners, local government agencies and other community stakeholders. Our work also includes a commitment to addressing issues that have a direct impact on the homeless residents of our tri-county region.

Our goal is to provide assistance, expertise and cooperation to address a complicated issue that we believe cannot be solved without additional time, evidence-based practices and expanded housing options. We worry that the proposed amendment does not alleviate the problem, but merely shifts the problem to other areas, like city property or even privately owned residential property. The amendment also creates the potential to limit access to vital county resources like the public library or the department of social services on which unsheltered persons rely.

We appreciate that the civil fine was removed from the amendment, as it would have increased barriers and challenges for this vulnerable population. We request a more thoughtful approach that incorporates the new initiatives of the Wilmington Downtown Inc. Social Worker and the P.A.T.H. Program. We also request data on the utilization of the social worker assigned to the downtown library as we see that role as an agent of change for the area.

We request that a vote on this amendment be tabled and invite your participation in a solutions-based summit that would include leaders in homeless services along with representatives of New Hanover County and the City of Wilmington.

Respectfully,

Michele Bennett, Chair, Tri-HIC CoC Board*

Kyle Abrams
Anne Best

Gloria Garton
Brian Fike

Maegan Zielenski
Meg McBride, Secretary

Drew Huver
Leslie Smiley

Dawn Ferrer

*Names listed under the Chair are board members who gave permission to have their names listed in support and does not constitute a list of the full CoC Board