



## Social Services and Public Safety Committee

April 15, 2025

### Summary and Motions

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Chair Jennifer Reynolds called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

Committee Members Vice Mayor Dan Wu, Chuck Ellinger II, Tyler Morton, Shayla Lynch, Denise Gray, Joseph Hale, Amy Beasley, Whitney Elliott Baxter, and Hilary Boone were present. Council Members James Brown, Emma Curtis, Liz Sheehan, and Dave Sevigny were present as non-voting members.

Motion by Baxter to change the order of agenda presentations: 1. Sheriff's Office: Review of Services and Resources, 2. Review of the Sober Living Ordinance, and 3. Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Coalition. Seconded by Morton. Motion passed without dissent.

#### **I. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 25, 2025 COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY**

Motion by Ellinger to approve the February 25, 2025 Committee Summary. Seconded by Baxter. Motion passed without dissent.

#### **II. SHERIFF'S OFFICE: REVIEW OF SERVICES AND RESOURCES**

Kathy Witt, Fayette County Sheriff, provided an overview of the services and resources the Sheriff's office offers to crime victims. She spoke about Amanda's Center, where advocates and others support those who walk in. Victims are supported throughout the process of filing for a protective order, which is renewable every 3 years. Federal funding allows for other initiatives such as ride-share credit for essential appointments such as court appearances, window alarms, and a Ring doorbell. When there is a substantial violation of EPO, the person can be on GPS monitoring if the judge orders. Protective orders can be filed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year in the Fayette County District Courthouse. When EPOs and DVOs are entered, they are enforced across the U.S. Witt said they support anyone who walks in; victims can be of any gender or race. Victims could be in a hospital or at home, afraid to come out, so there are deputized workers to assist them wherever they are. **No action was taken on this item.**

#### **III. REVIEW OF SOBER LIVING ORDINANCE**

Michael Cravens, Managing Attorney in the Department of Law, presented the Sober Living Ordinance. He said regulating this ordinance will require balancing several interests, such as vulnerable populations, recovery residential operators, regulating bad actors, and neighborhood residents. He reviewed the background on state laws [KRS 222.502](#) and [222.504](#). The [Fair Housing Act \(FHA\)](#) and the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) are federal laws that protect persons from discrimination when enacting any ordinance. Those in recovery from substance abuse disorders generally qualify as disabled persons, which prohibits the use of regulations in a way that would discriminate against the disabled. The proposed ordinance requires operators to obtain a Recovery Residence License, proof of certification, and a zoning compliance permit; creates an enforcement scheme that authorizes civil citations and penalties against operators in violation; allows 6 months following passage of the ordinance for operators to get in compliance. The proposed ordinance does not regulate recovery residences differently regarding land use, as this is a residential use and should be treated like other residential uses.

Cravens said the maximum occupancy is eight, which follows the occupancy limit of the zoning ordinance. He said they would act more urgently if there were a threat of harm or a risk to public safety or health, and could trigger immediate closure. Issues are typically complaint-driven and would be routed to the appropriate divisions through 311. In 13-97(b), the word *location* is to avoid listing the address and could mean a Council district or an area of town. Cravens explained that the definition of recovery residence and services provided is taken from state law. State law prohibits permanent services. These are not like a medical facility where there would be a set schedule of services. Cravens explained that obtaining a zoning compliance permit certifies that the use of property is appropriate for the zone and differentiates a recovery residence from a residential home.

The FHA or ADA would not protect from the illegal use of controlled substances. If someone is caught "using", that would be a certification/compliance issue. Cravens said the ordinance addresses protection for residents, as we ensure bad actors cannot exploit the tenant. Cravens said a house is like a foreclosed house, where the tenant(s) would need to find alternative housing if the house is shut down. Kacy Allen Bryant said there is no capacity to rehouse vulnerable people. Still, our recovery program provides rent and will set aside a portion for those who can prove they lost housing. Cravens said this ordinance doesn't regulate the misconduct of tenants and that the house owner is responsible for evicting the tenant. This item will stay in committee for further discussion as the item's sponsors follow up with divisions. **No action was taken on this item.**

#### **IV. DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION COALITION**

Stephanie Theakston - DSVPC Coordinator discussed [It's Time Lexington](#), a city-wide action-oriented initiative to end domestic and sexual violence in our communities. They are expanding partnerships with initiatives that focus on children. She reviewed the program's mission: to create a culture of safety and empowered stakeholders through advocacy, education, collaboration, and service coordination for communities impacted by interpersonal violence. She reviewed the program's goals and spoke about outreach and awareness efforts. She reviewed facts about sexual assault and said Kentucky has a higher rate of sexual assault than the national average. Sexual assault remains the most underreported crime, with 63% of sexual assaults not reported to police. She spoke about the mental health impacts that sexual assault has on survivors, and she reviewed ways to respond. She explained the culture of sexual violence and said it is not just about individuals, individual actions, and individual responses. It's about systems and what we promote and tolerate in our community. When we change our communities to be more inclusive and equitable for people of all gender identities and expressions, races and ethnic backgrounds, ages, faiths, and abilities, we are better able to protect everyone within those communities against the risk of sexual violence. Finally, Theakston highlighted Wake Up Lex, which is a social media initiative that will take place on Friday, April 18. **No action was taken on this item.**

#### **V. ITEMS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE**

No action was taken on this committee item.

The meeting adjourned at 2:51 p.m.