



Social Services and Public Safety Committee

February 25, 2025

Summary and Motions

Vice-Chair Whitney Elliott Baxter called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Committee Members Vice Mayor Dan Wu, Chuck Ellinger II, Tyler Morton, Shayla Lynch, Denise Gray, Joseph Hale, Amy Beasley, and Hilary Boone were present. Committee Chair Jennifer Reynolds was absent. Council Members Emma Curtis, Liz Sheehan, and Dave Sevigny were present as non-voting members.

I. APPROVAL OF JANUARY 28, 2025 COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Motion by Wu to approve the January 28, 2025 Committee Summary. Seconded by Ellinger. Motion passed without dissent.

II. CASA UPDATE [Wu/Jamison]

Melynda Jamison, Executive Director of CASA, provided an update on the CASA program. CASA provides screened, trained, and qualified community volunteers to advocate for the best interests of children and youth who appear before family court because of abuse or neglect. Unlike lawyers and social workers who must consider the parent's or family's best interests, the CASA volunteer focuses solely on what is best for the child or children. CASA program planning began in Lexington in 1986 and became a standalone nonprofit in 2003. CASA programs operate in Fayette, Bourbon, Woodford, Scott, Jessamine, Garrard, and Lincoln counties.

Jamison spoke about the CASA Volunteer Manager (a paid position), who oversees 30 CASA volunteers. The Volunteer Manager attends the first home visit and all court hearings. She reviewed the 2023 calendar year budget for all 7 counties, which includes fundraising and grants. In 2024, the total budget for Fayette County's program was \$911,470, which served 449 children. It was suggested that the equity issue be considered. Of the Kentucky counties listed, Fayette County had the lowest contribution provided by local government (11%). There will be a funding request during the FY26 budget discussions to increase this percentage. No action was taken on this committee item.

III. HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT RESPONSE AND STREET OUTREACH [Reynolds/Herron]

Jeff Herron, Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention (OHPI) Director, began the presentation with a history of street outreach, which started as a pilot program and focused on outreach as a first-touch service provider. This was initially funded with innovative and sustainable funding. An RFP was issued after the pilot and was funded at \$280,000 with two intensive case management teams. This came about from an increased need for outreach services. Over 500 people were contacted by the Hope Center and street outreach in year 1.

OHPI recommendations include a new position in FY26 for an encampment coordinator, identifying a sustainable funding source for OHPI, modifying Ordinance 103-2014 for more flexibility, moving outreach to 24-hour services, and expanding interim housing options. Addressing the modification of Ordinance 103-2014, Herron explained that only 15% of funds can be dedicated to services. If we remove the restriction in

the Ordinance, we can continue to fund the services. A feasibility study is in progress, and we are looking for an opening to present this to the Council at Work Session in late spring or early summer. No action was taken on this committee item.

IV. COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF CODE ENFORCEMENT [Gray/Gray]

Denise Gray, 6th District Council Member, provided an overview of the Code Enforcement and explained that she has worked on this item for over a year. Town Hall meetings were held throughout Lexington to engage residents on how their interactions with Code Enforcement could be improved and what Code Enforcement policies could be changed. She shared survey results from 711 Lexington residents who responded. Top issues reported: no follow-ups from Code Enforcement, reports missing, sidewalks, overgrowth/trash/cars parked in yards, and interactions with Code Enforcement. She spoke about the improvements to Code Enforcement and Ordinance changes. The Tenant-Landlord Act Ordinance, prohibiting landlord retaliation, comes from state law. Graffiti has been added to the code of ordinances related to nuisances.

When asked if we are acting on the red lines, Gray said she is seeking approval from the committee to move these changes forward to the full Council. When asked if Code Enforcement is ticket/complaint-based, Steele said each officer is assigned an area, which is currently complaint-driven. There is concern with graffiti being included as a nuisance in Section 12-2 and citing someone for potentially being a victim of a crime when graffiti is found on their property. If the homeowner is a victim, Code Enforcement would try to work with them to resolve the issue. The concern is that other things listed as nuisances, such as trash, cars, and weeds, don't involve someone coming onto their property and damaging it. Sanner confirmed the Tenant Landlord Act language is verbatim what state law says. Speaking about the enforceability of this, Sanner said this would be a private civil matter, and the tenant would need to get an attorney.

Motion by Gray to approve an ordinance amending the following sections of chapter 12 of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Code of Ordinances pertaining to section 12-2 (c) related to nuisances to add graffiti as a public nuisance and section 12-5 related to penalties to reduce the time period in which to assess citations. Seconded by Lynch. Motion passed without dissent.

Motion by Gray to approve an ordinance creating section 12-55 (1) of the Code of Ordinances related to the Landlord-Tenant Act to prohibit landlord retaliation for tenant complaints to a governmental agency; an ordinance creating section 12-55 (2) of the Code of Ordinances related to the Landlord-Tenant Act to allow tenant remedies for retaliation; an ordinance creating section 12-55 (3) of the code of ordinances related to the Landlord-Tenant Act for exclusions for retaliation; an ordinance creating section 12-55 (4) of the code of ordinances related to the Landlord-Tenant Act to state landlord liability pursuant to KRS 383.625(2); and an ordinance creating section 12-55 (5) of the code of ordinances related to the Landlord-Tenant Act to specify tenant remedies for retaliation. Seconded by Morton. Motion passed without dissent.

V. ANNUAL REVIEW OF COMMITTEE ITEMS

No action was taken on this committee item.

The meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.