



Charlotte City Council
Housing, Safety & Community Committee
Meeting Summary for May 5, 2025

COMMITTEE AGENDA TOPICS

1. Non-Congregate Emergency Shelter
2. Policy Referral: Street Vending

COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Committee Members Present: Victoria Watlington (virtual), Tiawana Brown (CMGC), Reneé Johnson (CMGC)

Committee Members Absent: LaWana Mayfield, Dimple Ajmera

Other Council Members Present: Dante Anderson

Staff Resources: Shawn Heath, City Manager's Office
Julia Martin, City Manager's Office
Charlie Jones, Charlotte Department of Transportation
Christian Wagner, Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department
Jessica Battle, City Attorney's Office

Guests: Anthony Trotman, Mecklenburg County
Kathryn Firmin-Sellers, United Way
Moirá Quinn, Charlotte Center City Partners

Meeting Duration: 4:00 – 5:30 PM

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

City Council member Watlington called the meeting to order and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Non-Congregate Emergency Shelter (NCES)

Shawn Heath explained that the update is for informational purposes and that the topic was previously shared in brief with the Committee and full Council last year. There is no single or simple solution to address the unhoused population; this is just one piece of the puzzle to address a current void in the ecosystem of serving this population. The city and county would be collaborating inter-governmentally on the acquisition and conversion/renovation of an existing building identified by the county to create a 24-hour, non-congregate shelter offering 50–60 private rooms for adults with complex needs who are often the hardest to house. Onsite services will be provided, and some rooms will be reserved for individuals referred directly by street outreach teams. Private sector participation is critical and will play a key role in funding ongoing operations. United Way, in collaboration with the county, city, and local service providers, has issued a national Request for Interest (RFI) to identify qualified, experienced operators. Responses to the RFI will inform a future Request for Proposals (RFP). Operator selection will be a competitive and collaborative process involving both the city and county. At this time, the city has not committed funds to the project, although potential funding sources exist. No new city funding has been allocated to the broader "A Home For All" (AHFA) initiative either.

Anthony Trotman shared that Mecklenburg County fully supports the AHFA initiative led by United Way, and has invested/committed more than \$15 million to support the effort including \$7 million to create a NCES. He shared that the lack of low barrier shelter of this kind is a long-standing problem in our community.

Moirá Quinn shared that a NCES is a vital addition to the range of shelter and housing options needed to address the challenges on our streets, as it supports public safety goals while also helping meet the needs of the chronically homeless.

Kathryn Firmin-Sellers shared that the NECS would be built for and tailored towards the needs of some of our most vulnerable residents. A successful launch of this initiative would be the first of many transformative investments of AHFA. She reminded the Committee that the perspective of those with a lived experience is embedded in all of AHFA's initiatives. There is no single local provider that has the unique skill set and experience in both the health and mental health space as well as operating a shelter. While the RFI was sent out nationally, it does not preclude any local organizations from applying. The operating partner will be selected with the city, county and broad community input including nonprofit service providers with expertise in this space.

Highlights of Committee discussion:

- Emphasized the importance of selecting a qualified and capable operating partner.
- Expressed concern about the possibility of using a provider from outside the community; preference for supporting local providers.
- Support for consideration of establishing a Community Advisory Board.
- Recognized that a NCE fills a critical gap in the current approach to addressing homelessness.
- Expressed appreciation that the city and county are collaborating, acknowledging that addressing homelessness cannot be solved alone.
- Encouraged continued exploration of diverse housing options along the continuum, such as tiny homes.
- Expressed the importance of involving and leveraging community healthcare workers.
- Acknowledged the work of Hearts for the Invisible.

Policy Referral: Street Vending and Peddlers

Shawn Heath shared that the last update to the applicable city code occurred in the mid-1980s, and that stakeholder concerns on this topic have intensified recently. He shared concerns that staff have heard from various stakeholders thus far, including those from a recent petition by the NoDa small business community. He also shared the city's current policy governing street vending.

Julia Martin shared highlights of how the city handles street vending compared to cities across the nation. A vast majority of cities, including peer North Carolina cities, have more stringent city-wide restrictions and have fines higher than Charlotte. From an enforcement perspective, CMPD has shared that the city's current fines are not a strong enough deterrent to achieve safe behavior. She also clarified that operating a food truck, which is governed separately, is different from street vending.

Highlights of Committee discussion:

- Expressed concern about expanding the number of areas where street vending would be restricted and the possibility for strain on police and staff resources for enforcement.
- Opposition expressed to criminalizing vending; people are doing what they must to survive in the city and city policies should not further criminalize poverty.
- Expressed interest in better understanding the permitting process managed by Center City Partners, including information on currently approved vendors and those on the waiting list.
- Noted that when problems arise, they often signal an underlying need—and it's the city's responsibility to respond to those needs.
- Expressed support for exploring ways the city could provide space or support to help small vendors succeed, rather than penalizing or excluding them.
- Expressed concerns about the financial burden of fines on street vendors.
- Noted that the vending ordinance has not been updated since the mid-1980s, despite significant densification of urban areas and little expansion of sidewalk or street space. In these more crowded areas, street vendors have a greater impact (e.g., blocking pedestrian pathways).
- Brick-and-mortar small business owners who have followed required processes to establish storefronts are reporting that unregulated street vending is negatively impacting their businesses.
- Highlighted ADA accessibility as a serious concern, with some sidewalks so obstructed that pedestrians are forced to walk in the street.
- Street vending in some parts of the city has become a broader quality of life and public safety issue.
- The city has increased fines and established areas where other types of activity is not allowed for quality-of-life issues, such as tractor trailer parking, and exploring this for street vending is in line with that previous action.

Next Meeting

Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:30 pm. The next meeting will occur on June 8, 2025.

MEETING MATERIALS

All meeting materials are available online at the [Charlotte Legistar Site](#). City Council Committee meeting videos and transcripts can be viewed on the [City of Charlotte's YouTube channel](#) (May 5, 2025 meeting link: <https://youtu.be/xo06QLiaeh0?t=21744>).
