

COMMUNITY VOICES—"You Already Know" About Affordable Housing Needs

On June 24, F.A.I.T.H. (Fighting Against Injustice Toward Harmony) organized an Affordable Housing Drive-in Rally, hosted by the Daytona Beach Drive-in Christian Church. I was there and watched while supporters in 70 vehicles honked their amen, enthusiasm, and agreement as they listened on their F.M. radios to a variety of speakers. The Reverend Wendell Webster spoke the prophetic words of Micah 6:8, saying "You already know what is required but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God."

Reverend Webster continued: "You already know statistics show that people who are renting in Volusia County can ill afford \$635 or more for monthly rent.— You already know that six out of every 10 renters are paying more than 30% of their income in rent.— You already know that 30,000 households pay half of their income in rent."

Yes, I already know, as the Reverend Nancy Griswold reported, a person must earn at least \$16 per hour to afford the average monthly rent of a one-bedroom apartment in Volusia and that the mean income in our county is \$14 per hour. I already know this creates a particularly unjust cost burden for too many of my neighbors to bear. I already know that with an approximate 16,000 shortfall of affordable housing units, Volusia County desperately needs an Affordable Housing Trust Fund because the shortage will only increase with the effects of Covid-19 on our local economy. I already know that to ignore these facts is unjust, unkind, and unethical. I already know that no person can rightly claim to walk humbly with their God while allowing this situation to continue, especially when they have the power to remedy the situation.

As they attested at the rally, Volusia County Council members, Heather Post, Barbara Girtman, and Billie Wheeler already know the injustice that exists with a lack of affordable housing in their districts. Councilpersons Post, Girtman, and Wheeler already know what is required of them by confirming their commitment to call for and find funding for a \$7 million per year Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Unfortunately, they do not have the power to see this through without the support of other Council members.

Thus, I ask: Council member Fred Lowry, you already know what is required of you – what say you to creating a more just community through an Affordable Housing Trust Fund?

Council member Ben Johnson, you already know what is required of you – what say you to preventing homelessness in Volusia through an Affordable Housing Trust Fund?

Council Member Deb Denys, you already know what is required of you – what say you to reducing the cost-burden of housing to tens of thousands in Volusia through an Affordable Housing Trust Fund?

As co-chairs of F.A.I.T.H., Pedro Dash and I ask you, Councilpersons Lowry, Johnson, and Denys, to take seriously the urgent need for affordable housing in Volusia County. We ask you to work with F.A.I.T.H. in how to create an Affordable Housing Trust Fund because you already know what is required of you.

--Rev. Kathy Tew Rickey