

COUNTY HOMELESSNESS TRUST FUNDS: MODEL FREEHOLDERS ORDINANCE

Providing counties with flexible and cost-effective resources to help low-income residents achieve self-sufficiency and create stable homes

_____ County Board of Chosen Freeholders Ordinance

An ordinance establishing a County Homelessness Trust Fund

Whereas, homelessness is a significant problem in _____ County, affecting both families with children and vulnerable adults;

Whereas, the trauma and instability of homelessness will impair the mental and physical health of these children and adults, and will undermine their treatment, education and employment prospects;

Whereas, homelessness will place additional strain on the schools that struggle to keep homeless children enrolled and learning, and the hospitals and emergency rooms that must care for homeless people whose illnesses would never have occurred if they had permanent housing;

Whereas, a large number of homeless families and individuals are not eligible for adequate assistance under the categorically limited federal and state programs currently available;

Whereas, P.L. 2009, chapter 123 permits counties to establish County Homeless Trust Funds;

Whereas, _____ County has approved a Homeless Housing Plan that addresses housing for homeless persons as required by the aforementioned statute;

Whereas, said statute authorizes the collection by participating Counties of a surcharge of three dollars for each document recorded by the County Clerk's office, to be used exclusively for the Trust Fund, which surcharge will be in addition to any other charge allowed by law;

Whereas, establishment of an _____ County Homelessness Trust Fund would leverage scarce federal and state funding and assist in implementing _____ County's Homeless Housing Plan;

Whereas, the _____ County Homelessness Trust Fund supplemented by dedicated staff, volunteers, and resources from the private sector and local, state and federal governments, would help hundreds of families and individuals in _____ County move into permanent housing and thus provide a healthier, more stable living environment;

Whereas, programs focused on ending homelessness can reduce public costs to hospitals, emergency rooms, jails, prisons, psychiatric centers, detox programs, law enforcement and foster care systems; and

Whereas, P.L. 2009, c. 123 requires a participating county to establish a “County Homelessness Trust Fund Task Force” which is defined as the voluntary local committee created to advise the County on the creation of a local homeless housing plan and participate in a local homeless housing program;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of _____ does hereby establish the _____ Homelessness Trust Fund pursuant to P.L. 2009 Chapter 123; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that commencing on _____, ____, 20__ the County Clerk shall collect a surcharge of three dollars for each document recorded, which will be in addition to any other charge allowed by law; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the funds generated by such surcharge so collected shall be deposited in said “Trust Fund” and used exclusively for the following purposes:

1. The _____ County Homelessness Trust Fund is established for the operation of a homeless housing grant program. This program is established in order to provide:
 - a. For the acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of housing projects or units within housing projects that supply permanent affordable housing for homeless persons or families, including those at risk of homelessness;
 - b. Rental assistance vouchers, including tenant and project based subsidies, for affordable housing projects or units within housing projects that provide permanent affordable housing for homeless persons or families, including those at risk of homelessness;
 - c. Supportive services as may be required by homeless individuals or families in order to obtain or maintain, or both, permanent affordable housing; and
 - d. Prevention services for at risk homeless individuals or families so that they can obtain and maintain permanent affordable housing.

2. No more than five percent of the fund may be used annually by the County for administrative costs related to administration of the fund and the grant program established herein, and the remainder only for homeless housing programs as described in this chapter.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that there is hereby established the “_____County Homelessness Trust Fund Task Force” to advise the _____ County government on the creation of a local homeless housing plan and participate in a local homeless housing program.

1. The membership of the “County Homelessness Trust Fund Task Force shall consist of:
 - a. a representative of the county,
 - b. representatives from each of the three municipalities in the county with the largest populations of homeless people,
 - c. a representative(s) of the organization responsible for developing and/or implementing the local ten year plan to end homelessness,
 - d. at least three homeless or formerly homeless persons, and
 - e. three representatives of local private nonprofit organizations with experience in assisting the homeless or providing low-income housing.

The Freeholders will select the three non-profit members of the County Homelessness Trust Fund Task Force from among the following organizations.

Each organization selected will annually select an individual to represent it on the Task Force.

The Freeholders will select the homeless and formerly homeless members of the County Homelessness Trust Fund Task Force from recommendations made by the non-profit members of the task force.

2. The County Homelessness Trust Fund Task Force is hereby authorized to:
 - a. formally organize itself and adopt appropriate bylaws and other procedures intended to facilitate its operation;

- b. establish an annual competitive grant process in order to solicit proposals from non-profit organizations seeking funding designed to accomplish one or more of the purposes described above;
- c. evaluate the proposals received and make recommendations to the Freeholders regarding the specific proposals that should be funded and in what amount;
- d. hold at least one meeting every ___ month(s), which meeting shall be open to the public;
- e. hold at least two public hearings each year: (1) one shall precede the annual request for proposals, and be for the purpose of receiving oral and written testimony and data regarding the current nature and extent of homelessness, the available supply of housing potentially affordable to homeless individuals and families at various income levels, and other data and relevant information required to assess priorities for funding; and the other; (2) the other shall precede by at least one month the regular Task Force meeting at which the annual funding recommendations will be decided, and be for the purpose of receiving comments from the public and interested organizations concerning the grant applications that have been submitted;
- f. prepare an annual report and an annual measurement of the progress of the trust fund; and
- g. undertake any and all additional tasks mandated by the governing statute and regulations.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [County agency or department] shall provide staff and other operational assistance to the Task Force as required to enable it to accomplish the goals and purposes for which the Trust Fund and Task Force have been established.