Tallahassee Democrat.

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Capital Area Justice Ministry not deterred by Blueprint vote

Robert Deyle and Rev. Sylvia Jones Your Turn

May 22, 2024, 5:05 a.m. ET

The 50 members of Capital Area Justice Ministry who attended the May 16 meeting of the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Board were extremely disappointed by the lack of support from members of the City Commission for the proposal to add an Affordable Rental Housing Land Acquisition Project to the list of Blueprint Infrastructure projects.

Rev. Bob Gibbs opened CAJM's remarks at the meeting by invoking Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s call for building the Beloved Community where poverty, hunger and homelessness are not tolerated, and where racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice are replaced by an all-inclusive spirit.

Rev. Gibbs reminded commissioners that over 16,000 families earning very-low and extremely-low-incomes are severely housing cost burdened in Leon County, paying more than half their income for rent, and that this burden falls disproportionately upon people of color. He urged commissioners to open the path to addressing this inequity by voting to add the project for purchasing land for affordable rental housing projects that include units for families with very low and extremely low incomes.

Amending the list requires super-majority votes by members of both the city and county commissions who comprise the IA Board. Five of the seven county commissioners voted yes: Commissioners Carolyn Cummings, Nick Maddox, Rick Minor, David O'Keefe, and Bill Proctor. Only two of the four city commissioner present voted yes: Commissioners Jeremy Matlow and Jack Porter. With

Commissioner Curtis Richardson absent because of a personal matter, yes votes were needed by Mayor John Dailey and Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox. Neither did so.

Rev. Sylvia Jones, co-chair of CAJM's Affordable Housing committee, stated that "We are disappointed but undeterred. We must and will take action to solve this housing crisis for our most vulnerable neighbors. Individual commissioners have suggested other means for generating the need funding. We will continue to work with them."

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"Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. told us we will need a 'critical mass of committed people' to attain the Beloved Community.

If your congregation wishes to join with the 17 congregations of over 3,000 people in Tallahassee and Leon County who comprise CAJM, please reach out to CAJM https://www.capitalareajustice.org/

Robert Deyle is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tallahassee and co-chair of the CAJM Affordable Housing Committee.

Rev. Sylvia Jones is a member of Mt. Zion AME Church and co-chair of the CAJM Affordable Housing Committee.

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