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LOCAL

Leon County Commission to focus on affordable housing at retreat, first meeting of year



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The Leon County Commission will be meeting for the first time in the new year at their retreat and commission meeting next week – and it seems the biggest topic will be affordable housing.

The board is scheduled to meet Jan. 27 for their annual retreat, which sees them go over their strategic plan, and Jan. 28 for the regular commission meeting.

Affordable housing has been a hot topic following a lengthy meeting in November where the Capital Area Justice Ministry (CAJM) urged the commission to do more on the issue. It has also been on the mind of Leon County Commissioner David O'Keefe who wrote a column on the topic.

While reports and updates on the county's work on affordable housing will be given to the commission at both meetings, it's not yet known how the board will direct staff, if at all.

Commission to hear CAJM report

As part of Tuesday's agenda, and as a result of November's meeting, the board will hear a report based on the CAJM proposal and Leon County's efforts to boost affordable housing.

CAJM, a multi-faith advocacy group, packed the county commission chambers in November. Its members asked staff to bring back an agenda item looking at the possibility of establishing and financing a land acquisition and lease buyback program modeled off one in Pinellas County that incentivizes affordable rental housing developers to set aside more units for low-income families.

While affordable housing has been a main priority for the group, their quest was seemingly reinvigorated following reporting by the Tallahassee Democrat sharing that over 1,000 students within the Leon County School District were homeless. Since then, they made sure to bring up this point at their annual Nehemiah Action Meeting.

According to the agenda item, CAJM is specifically asking the county to reallocate 20% of the county's portion of the infrastructure surtax for a land acquisition and leaseback program but the money has already been promised to fix county roadways, which has led to tension on the dais.

Several commissioners expressed concerns over transferring money from one pool to another.

If you go

The county retreat begins at 9 a.m. on Jan. 27 at Bradley's Pond, 9002 Bradley Road.

The county commission meeting begins at 3 p.m. on Jan. 28 with a public hearing scheduled at 6 p.m. at the Leon County Courthouse, 301 S. Monroe St.

