

Police working with the Legacy to stem crime

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As a Crescent City motel-turned-transitional home navigates a spike in crime, police are stepping into a larger role in the project.

The Legacy, formerly known as the Coastal Inn and Suites, was purchased by the county last Fall using \$2.4 million in Project Homekey funds. Project Homekey is a state initiative that provides local agencies funds to purchase properties, such as motels, in order to provide interim housing to houseless individuals — thus, the Coastal Inn and Suites became the Legacy.

A surge in crime and overall calls for police service align with the transition of the property.

In 2019, Crescent City Police received 71 calls for service to the property, but that number jumped to 194 in 2020. This year, CCPD has received 96 calls for service, which puts them on pace to reach 264 by year-end.

Mayor Jason Greenough, who was opposed to the project, called the numbers “stark,” at a Monday city council meeting.

“The explosion from 71 to 194, in one year, that’s a lot,” said Greenough.

However, a newfound partnership, which includes weekly meetings between police and Legacy management staff, hopes to stem the tide. Police Chief Richard Griffin said calls for service have been trending downward in recent weeks.

Roy Jackson, housing services manager with the Department of Health and Human Services, said he appreciates the relationship, as he wants his clients to have a safe place to live.

“A lot of our clients that come into the Legacy have challenging behaviors at times, many suffer from addiction and mental illness, they also bring along associated people with them that oftentimes have unhealthy behaviors,” said Jackson. “It is very crucial for us to have a great working relationship with the CCPD.”

Jackson said they have already removed a person from the grounds who was selling drugs and in possession of a gun as a result of the relationship.

Right now, the transitional housing contains 30 units, and is serving about 44 clients, according to Jackson. He said they are in the process of renovating the building, including adding kitchenettes and more accessibility for disabled individuals. After renovations are completed, more rooms will become available to clients.

Griffin said while he was initially frustrated with the project, due to little communication from the operators and the chosen location, the new partnership has been promising.

“It’s gotta happen somewhere, it’s not that I wanted to happen there. That’s not for me to choose. It’s there, so we are going to be dealing with it the best we can...I think it’s been working so far, as far as what we’ve been doing,” said Griffin.

Council member Beau Smith asked whether the sheriff’s office has been assisting CCPD, as the county owns the property.

“There’s been zero communication,” replied Griffin. “And I don’t have a response as to why not, other than it’s in city jurisdiction. That was another one of my frustrations.”

Smith said he recently stopped at the property and counted five or six vehicles in the parking lot without current registration on their license plates. Overall, he is in favor of the project, but said he does not understand why the sheriff’s office is not responsible for assistance.

Mayor Pro Tem Blake Inscore said the city should have anticipated a higher call volume because the building is now long-term housing rather than a motel.

“If you look at the call volume at any motel or hotel here in town versus any apartment complex, obviously there’s a difference when people are staying there for longer periods of time,” said Inscore.

Moving forward, Griffin said he is looking to collaborate with DHHS to provide more mental health training for his officers. Additionally, Jackson said they have discussed hosting community events at the Legacy,

which would help build trust between clients and the police.