

Verde Homeless Coalition to build transition housing



This aerial photo shows the current Verde Valley Homeless Coalition's buildings to the right and the new VVHC property to the left. (Courtesy VVHC)

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COTTONWOOD – The Verde Valley Homeless Coalition is building a transition-housing complex and purchasing its current overnight shelter property with a \$1.775 million CARES Act grant.

One million dollars will be used to purchase two properties located at 654 and 660 N. Main St. in Cottonwood, according to Peter Flynn, chairman of the Board of the VVHC, and most of the \$775,000 will be used to build a new building and renovations.

VVHC has been leasing one of the properties for a daytime center and a 20-bed overnight shelter for the homeless and another for a warehouse. They will now own those two structures.

VVHC also purchased a property next door, he said.



The Homeless Coalition had been leasing the building it uses as a shelter but is now buying it. (The Verde Independent file photo/Vyto Starinsas)

There, they plan to build “a new six-bedroom transition housing complex to serve as temporary accommodation for newly employed homeless returning to a productive role in the community,” according to Carol Quasula, VVHC’s president.

Both Quasula and Flynn thanked the Cheneweth family, and their Friendship Missions, for selling the two properties to the VVHC “well below market valuation.”

“I think it’s a wonderful thing for us, for the homeless, and I think it’s a wonderful thing for Cottonwood,” Flynn said.

The new property is to the right of the current homeless facility heading toward Old Town on Main Street, Flynn said.

There’s a four-bedroom manufactured home on the property with sprinklers. Next to that, they will build the new six-bedroom traditional housing complex, Flynn said

When a homeless person gets a job, they can’t get immediate housing. They don’t have the first month’s rent, the damage deposit and they can’t hook up utilities, Flynn pointed out.

This is a place for working homeless to be for three to six months while they save up rent money, he said.

“They pay rent. We give them half the rent back when they move back to permanent housing,” he added. “It will be rent. This is for people that are employed.”

The VVHC is helping them accumulate money so they can make the move, he continued. This is to identify that part of the homeless population who can work, and help them do it.

The VVHC then will help the person move on to permanent housing, just like they help clients identify other services like job searches, health care and behavioral health services.

The Arizona Department of Housing and the Northern Arizona Council of Governments identified the federal CARES Act money and said that the VVHC should apply for it, Flynn said, and they helped them successfully get through the process.

“It’s been a 13-month path,” he said, and the Cottonwood City Council approved it twice, the last time on Feb. 1.

The \$1 million purchase of the property was completed Thursday, he said. The other \$775,000 is for the building, the architecture, and some minor renovations in the existing building.

Ruth Cheneweth built the building that houses the overnight shelter when she realized that Cottonwood needed a food bank and started the nonprofit Friendship Missions.

“Ruth wanted this to go to the homeless,” Flynn said.

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