

Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness

Minutes- May 9, 2024 meeting

Attending: Councilor Cowan, Councilor Gerry, Dave Bilodeau, Bonnie Hayes, Marianne Veilleux, Jennifer Edwards, Bill Lowenstein, Sasha Anastasoff, Bruce Noddin

Not Attending: Peter Floyd; George Sheats, Elizabeth Fowler, Leslie Torkelson

Community Members Attending: Dan Campbell, estimated arrival time 6:20 pm

Meeting Location: Auburn Community Senior Center, 48 Pettengill Park

Meeting called to order 6:05

Minutes from 4/11/24 meeting reviewed and approved.

General Meeting Notes:

- Discussion regarding needing a year-round center, not just a warming center overnight in the winter. Important for getting and keeping individuals connected to service providers in order to get housed and maintain engagement with supportive services.
- Funding discussion
 - An interested party looking to open a shelter could apply directly to Maine Housing. Maine Housing funding does not need to come through the city.
 - Shelters are an allowable expense for Maine Recovery Council funds, as long as it fits into the four pillars.
 - Housing committee question: Would Avesta housing like to come to Auburn for affordable housing/transitional housing development? Tedford also has experience in transitional housing.

Re: Committee Charge “e” to Identify a strategy and priority activities to be undertaken:

- How do we bring all components of continuum of care, service provision, & continuum of housing up together? What are the needs?
- Year round “warming” center, with ADA accessibility
- Ad Hoc Committee becomes permanent?
- Transitional Housing, and Re-Entry transitional housing
- Vouchered/subsidized housing (look at project-based vouchers)
- Subsidized senior housing
- Transportation
- Drop-In Center in Auburn

- Involve the continuum of care - case managers, counseling, mental health and substance use disorder treatment, etc.
- Public Awareness/video campaign suggested. “Voices of the Unhoused.” We have the podcast room at Auburn Hall. Could that be utilized?
 - Sasha was involved in a similar video campaign with McKinney Vento liaisons.
 - Journey Magazine was also suggested as a potential opportunity for an awareness strategy. Dave has experience working with Journey Magazine on their campaign promoting the OPTIONS program.

What’s already happening?

- By-name list with coordinated entry assessments and case conferencing
- Preble Street Rapid Rehousing coming to L-A this summer (hiring now)
- Local, regional, and state committees
 - LAASH
 - Sewall Quarterly Convenings on Safe & Affordable Housing
 - Hub 4 outreach meetings led by Julia Kimball/Hub 4 Coordinator
 - Hub 4 case conferencing working off the by-name list
 - Region II Homeless Committee
 - Statewide Homeless Committee

Regarding Establishing a Strategy & Priority Activities to be undertaken:

- Suggestion was made to have a facilitated work session with all groups/individuals working on homelessness, and individuals with lived experience, invited.
 - Who leads this? Is it this group, or do we collaborate with the Hub 4 Coordinator and the newly hired Sewall Housing convener for facilitation and inviting all involved parties?
 - How can we stipend individuals with lived experience to pay them for their expertise and contributions to this session?
 - Do we use the 2009 LAASH plan as a starting document and produce a plan for L-A to move forward together? Committee members did respond positively to this approach. Should explore this option further.

Committee had a brief discussion about Immediate Needs (i.e. priorities for next few months):

- Drop In Center –
 - Identify possible city owned properties that could be utilized
 - Invite Glen Holmes to speak to Committee about research he/his team did regarding facilities to support unhoused and homeless.
- Transportation for unhoused community members to get to appointments and stay connected to support systems. Can we work with community organizations and churches to establish a network for volunteer transportation system?

- Seniors, even those with savings, are struggling to find affordable housing
- Individuals with medical needs especially vulnerable
- Auburn Housing – How many empty units? Are there needs that could be addressed to get these units filled?
- Assessing Department – How many empty rental units? Are there needs that could be addressed to get these units filled?

Discussion:

Dan Campbell shared about a model being used in Biddeford where the unhoused are living in tents on an allowed property with support from a couple. They get fed 3 meals a day and are working with the City of Biddeford to get housed. Dan has visited this site and found it to be clean.

- Is this something the committee/city would like to look at?
- Tim will speak to Mayor Harmon and Manager Crowell about attending a future meeting to discuss possibilities, pros/cons of a centralized tenting space for unhoused.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10.