



City of Auburn, Maine

60 Court Street | Auburn, Maine 04210
www.auburnmaine.gov | 207.333.6601

BOARD/COMMITTEE/WG MEETING MINUTES

Homelessness Committee – Draft Minutes

Tuesday, January 20, 2026 – 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Auburn Resource Center @ 121 Mill Street, ARC Conference Room

Attending Committee Members: Tim Cowan, Bill Lowenstein, David Bilodeau, Rebecca Austin, George Sheats, Dawn Comeau, Angela Blier, Cecilia Natale, Thomas Hibbert

Excused Absence: Jennifer Eugley (voting member)

Attending Ex Officio Members: Jennifer Edwards, Sasha Anastasoff, Tim Cougle, Steve Almquis

Attending Guest Presenters: Amanda Bartlett, Mary Young, Rebecca Patkus,
Martin Szydłowski

Attending Guests: Mayor Jeff Harmon, Erica West, Peggy Walton, Greg Whitney

Meeting Notes:

1. Call to order & Review of Agenda –
 - a. Called to order at 9:31 AM
2. Review and approval of 01/06/26 meeting minutes & excusing any absences
 - a. Angela motioned, Tom seconded, all were in favor to approve minutes;
Motion made by Bill, and seconded by Dave, to approve Jen Eugley's absence at today's meeting as excused.
3. Regular updates on Auburn Resource Center (ARC), Drop in Center (DIC), and Lewiston Warming Center:
 - a. Warming center has now served more 500 unique individuals
 - i. Jen Edwards to send out report sent by David Bilodeau with today's meeting notes for the committee to review.
 - b. DIC – Kitchen coming along well, bus transport with WMTS going well
 - c. Jen Edwards shared updates for ARC:
 - i. March 3rd Career Center will have a hiring event at 121 Mill Street. The Lewiston Auburn Area Recovery Collaborative (LAARC) will hold 2 listening sessions hosted by the DIC.
4. 9:37 AM Peggy and Erica joined the committee meeting as guests



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- i. Committee members began introductions for guests
5. 9:38 AM Committee Member George arrived
 - a. Committee members continued with introductions
6. Mayor Harmon gave update that Maine Housing is no longer the coordinating agency for HMIS. State has contracted with an agency that does this in other states as well, and there will be a meeting on January 27th that the Mayor will update the committee on more details.
7. Home for Good team provided a presentation for the committee with staff from Auburn Housing Authority, Developer's Collaborative, and Spurwink:
 - Background info from Mayor – Prior legislature had made funding available to achieve one of the governor's goals to end homelessness in the state of Maine. Part of that was funding was for supportive housing under Home For Good projects, through an RFP process. The Mayor spoke about finding the right partners to come together to apply – partnered with AHA (building owner/operator), Developers Collaborative (developer), and Spurwink (service provider). City reached out to establish a partnership. City provided the land. The Council approved the transfer of the property for the project. Auburn's application was awarded/funded in the first round of state RFPs. Potential residents will be identified through the Coordinated Entry process.
 - Marty – Provided overview of initial meeting when Glen Holmes reached out to invite him to a meeting with Developer's Collaborative, Greg Payne, Spurwink's CEO and other staff, Auburn city staff, and the Mayor to start discussion on the project. AHA is excited to be involved in the process. They don't have the programs (currently) to help the homeless, and they experience some stress within the organization as they see a need that they can't fill. This opportunity opens up another "slice of the pie" for them to help people.
 - Amanda – The City's leadership on this role was important for the application to be successful in the RFP process. Typically the partnership would be formed and come to the City for approval, but the City taking the leadership in this instance was a catalyst, and she used as a case study for a committee in Augusta looking at this issue. Before coming to Developer's Collaborative, Amanda worked for 10 years with Augusta Housing Authority. In terms of this project, the City donated land located at the intersection of Hampshire and Gamage. They are aiming for 30 units. There will be at least 2 staff supporting residents there 24/7. The team has toured Houston Commons in Portland and asked questions of their team about their program. Using the same architect as Houston Commons. Houston Commons was the third Housing



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First project in Portland, so they were able to learn from the first two buildings in Portland. In terms of timeline, they are currently working towards Planning Board approval. Hope to be under construction late fall of this year with completion by Fall of 2027.

- Marty – Avesta Housing and Preble Street are two of the partners in Portland. Ally from Preble Street and Tessa from Avesta have both been at the Auburn meetings offering support and learnings from their experience in Portland. Marty accounted a zoom meeting where they went through room by room in Houston Commons, discussing the intent of each room.
- Mayor – Housing First is a concept that says in order to be successful in housing people that are homeless in the long term, it is a low barrier threshold. You don't need to have solved everyone's issues before you get them in housing. You get them in housing first, then you work on the issues. Housing First coupled with appropriate services is about 80% successful. Thus more people looking at this coupling will use the term Permanent Supportive Housing – which includes services that people need. It acknowledges that people on the higher range of Coordinated Entry scores (above 14) need to have the services to address the issues that residents living in the housing are facing. Big picture – it is cost effective to do this because the people that are chronic homeless can utilize other resources, whether they are municipal (fire/EMS/police), medical resources (hospitals), community resources (shelters, etc.). Residents will pay 30% of their income (which will vary). Mayor shared a story about an individual at Houston Commons who worked really hard once he was housed to get a job in management at a big box store, and so his 30% was more than other residents' 30 percent.
- Councilor Cowan – we did learn when visiting Houston Commons that only 6 individuals living there over 7 years had to be removed from housing. This is with 30 beds, and 60 individuals coming through.
- Amanda – the #1 reason people leave there is because they pass away
- Marty – the building itself has 2 financial resources. 1. Project-based vouchers, and 2. The 30% from the resident's income. The biggest project expense is for the provision of services. We are not far enough along that Amanda and Marty have been able to put together the Pro Forma.
- Mary – As part of everyone coming together, AHA has pledged 30 project-based vouchers – which means the voucher will stay with the project, not follow the resident. Everyone coming in thus needs to be at or below low income threshold. They put these 30 project-based vouchers in their RFQ. It is important for this to be



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included so residents don't need to worry how they are going to pay their rent, only a portion of their income, allowing them to focus on those services.

- Angela – Spurwink will be the service provider. Houston Commons uses Preble Street as the service provider, and they have been very open and helpful to share learnings and processes with Spurwink. When we are looking at this, we are working with people who are coming in and have experienced chronic homelessness, and have had the most difficulty with housing, regardless of if they are struggling with substance use disorder or mental health challenges. There is opportunity to create more partnerships as well, when individuals in housing are ready to receive additional outside services, and Spurwink can make those connections.
- Clarifying question from Celia – if a resident's income changes, does the rent change? Mary – yes. Individuals must report any changes to income up or down, and their rent is adjusted accordingly. The concept is the 30%. To qualify and be eligible for a voucher, individuals must be at or below 30% AMI to qualify.
- Rebecca – people can access housing without utilizing the services – the services can come when the individual is willing and ready to do the service. This is a distinction in this sort of housing. The staff will be available 24/7 to provide support and make those connections when residents are ready.
- Amanda – Developer's Collaborative owns a 30+ bed recovery center in Portland that operates very similarly to a Housing First model where there is a collaboration between the building owner and the service provider.
- Initially Maine Housing had a plan to release 3 RFQs for Housing First projects. At the time when Maine Housing was looking at project site needs in the state, they thought L-A could use two. When Maine Housing went back to launch the second RFQ, L-A was not on the list, saying data did not support the need for a second project site.
 - Mayor – We haven't done the greatest job in gathering the information. He thinks the needs analysis will get run again before the 3rd RFQ opens. Stressed the importance of better data collection in our area.
 - Feedback from Houston Commons neighbors who had originally opposed the project is that the Houston Commons project has been helpful. In Mayor's conversation with the community, there are some concerns about people being able to get into the housing without getting services.
 - Mary – When you put someone who is homeless into a "normal" apartment, it can be difficult for them to be successful. The difference



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is this property will have the wrap around support to help people be successful in remaining housed. Anticipate fewer calls to the police department because the support is in the building to assist residents when needed. Current model at AHA is that they don't have staff enough to have support for residents in each of their buildings 24/7 a day.

- 3 Questions from Bill L.:

- Is there communal dining? Mayor – there is. Think of these as individual apartments, but with a communal kitchen and dining area, so there is voluntary use of the communal kitchen and dining area for those who want the interaction with others in the building.
- Are behavioral health services provided on site, or will folks be assessed then services provided elsewhere?
 - Angela: Staffing will be like B.S. level case management role, and will talk about additional services an individual may want. Individuals are not *required* to have external providers but can be referred when ready by the internal Spurwink staff.
 - Amanda: There will also be rooms in the building for providers to come in and rooms for individuals who may want to participate in telehealth appointments. The physical space will support both.

10:31 George Sheats (voting member) needed to depart the committee meeting at this time.

- Mayor Harmon – The onsite support helps when individuals may need support in the middle of the night. It also helps having support staff at the front, setting boundaries with people who are wanting to come in stay/visit with a resident. If a resident feels uncomfortable asking their guest to leave, or not coming in at all, they can communicate that with the support staff who can ask guests to leave or not come into the building.
- Marty – These are individuals that may be harder on the building. If they deal with it now (in current properties), it often ends up in eviction, as they don't have the staff to address the behavior. With this model, Spurwink staff can support

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behavior change, and can even support in instances where someone may not be paying their rent.

- Mary – “mitigating factors” – how can we mitigate factors, provide support for residents, and keep them housed?
- Rebecca – On Spurwink’s end, service provision elsewhere may be hindered if someone loses insurance, or misses too many appointments. This model addresses those factors.

Question from Sasha – are there ways to build community?

- Mary/Amanda shared that at Houston Commons, there is programming available such as movie nights. Angela: Once the individuals get moved in, staff will get to know the residents and their interests and can plan those things. It may be bingo, etc.. The important thing is there will be the spaces available to allow for this.

Question from Peggy – will pets be allowed?

- Mary: Accommodations can be made for “emotional support animals” with a doctor’s note. Would need to follow all the same rules that would need to be abided by – including any pet policy or service animal policy in the lease.
- Angela – there are residents at Houston Commons that have animals. This team can ask the Houston Commons team what their process is.

Question from Bill – Will the federal funding uncertainty, how will that impact things?

- Amanda – No concerns here, as this project is utilizing state sourced funding.
- Mary – They are monitoring the voucher conversations at the federal level, but AHA has committed the 30 project based vouchers
- Mayor – it is not through the state’s general fund , but through a special revenue account which makes it more secure.

Question 4c on agenda: What assistance this committee can provide ?

- Marty – the committee could identify individuals or institutions throughout the committee who could assist with Additional Anticipated Needs (see list provided with agenda) in order to furnish all the units with items on the list.
- Amanda – Yes, they are looking for all the items to be new.
- Mayor – As these people usually come with nothing, these items will be needs. It would be great if the committee could assist with furnishing the apartments.
- Mayor – There will be a significant challenge with outreach to individuals to get them through the Coordinated Entry process and scored. What strategies and what capabilities do/will we need to get outreach done, so that folks can be identified who may be eligible for the program? When do we start, what resources will we need, what will it



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cost, etc.? Like furnishing the apartments, there will be additional needs around outreach and identifying the people who can benefit.

10:53 AM Departure of Guests & Guest Presenters: Amanda, Marty, Mary, Peggy, Erica, Rebecca

8. Discuss recommendations from the budget subcommittee/work group
 - a. Came up with the following recommendations: there is existing programming that is happening. Subcommittee recommends those existing activities continue to be funded.
 - i. Request to ask the City Manager what the cost would be for a full year:
 1. Warming center/shelter we are currently supporting at a prorated amount
 2. Funding for transportation from Warming Center to Drop in Center, and back, on Wednesdays and Saturdays
 3. Funding to support a city staff member to assist with coordinated entry assessments
 - ii. Two additional requests – and a comment on senior tax relief program support
 1. Student homelessness prevention programming – the subcommittee recommends including \$50,000 for this in the budget.
 - a. The Mayor pointed out that this program has not been run on the municipal side, but on the school department side. Recommendation could be made for the superintendent to include this in the school budget.

11 AM Committee (voting) Members needing to depart: Angela Blier, Rebecca Austin

2. The Drop in Center submitted a request for \$43,000 to assist with helping to meet the increased demand and to assist with expanding to a third day.
3. Continue senior property tax relief program.
 - a. Because this is in ordinance now, the funding will be



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secured, but this could be added to the existing programs
list the committee supports.

A motion was made by Bill Lowenstein that the Auburn Homelessness Committee send a letter with funding recommendations to 1) City Manager Crowell and 2) Superintendent Dorris.

1. Recommendations for City Manager Crowell:

- a. City of Auburn continue funding for the homelessness programs/activities (listed below) currently supported in FY26, prorated to the cost to support these programs for a full year...
 - i. Warming Center/Shelter
 - ii. Transportation: warming center/shelter to/from Auburn Resource Center
 - iii. Part of employee's salary for assisting with coordinated entry efforts
- b. Fund one additional program:
 - i. Drop-In Center- \$43,000 – The Homelessness Committee recommends fully supporting the Drop-In Center's request.

2. Recommendation for Superintendent Dorris:

- a. Student Homeless Prevention Program- \$50,000 - The program that Sasha Anastasoff has run the last couple of years has had a major decrease in funding. There is substantial return on investment in the ways she could spend the money to help families.

Dave Bilodeau seconded the motion. The motion passed.

9. Point in Time Count

- a. The Drop in Center did not voice any unmet planning needs for next week.
- b. Encampment count team needs –
 - a. Jen Edwards will follow-up with DC Cougle as needed. Tom Hibbert added he and Councilor Cowan have come up with 7 locations. Greg is willing to call Dan Campbell regarding connecting with DC Cougle for input on sites.
- c. Warming kit assembly plans – Julia will pick up items from Drop in Center (Greg) and



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ARC (Jen Edwards and General Assistance) to assemble the kits, and will drop them off once they are assembled to the Drop in Center. Other organizations needing them can pick them up at the Drop in Center.

10. Public Comment - none
11. Adjourn – Bill made a motion to adjourn, Dave seconded. Motion passed and meeting adjourned at 11:21 AM.

Alter L/A

Emergency Warming Center



November vs. December Comparison & Trend Analysis

Monthly Guest Count Overview

Metric	November	December	Change
Nights Open	30	31	+1
Unique Guests	261	395	+134 (+51%)
Total Stays	1,775	3,488	+1,713 (+97%)

Total Unique Guests:

72 Guests from November, never checked back in for December. Total Unique Guests: **467**

Key Signal:

Total stays **nearly doubled**, far outpacing the growth in unique guests.



Average Guests Per Night

Average Guests

- **November:**
 $1,775 \div 30 = 59$ guests/night
- **December:**
 $3,488 \div 31 = 113$ guests/night

→ Increase: +54 guests per night (+90%)

Trend:

The warming center moved from moderate utilization to **sustained high-capacity operations**



Average Length of Stay

Length of Stay

- **November:**
6.8 nights per guest
- **December:**
8.8 nights per guest

→ Increase: +2.0 nights per guest (+29%)

Trend:

Guests stayed longer in December, signaling:

- Colder, more dangerous conditions
- Fewer alternatives
- Increased Comfort Levels



Length of Stay Distribution Shift

Stay Length	November	December	Change
1–9 nights	74%	63%	-11%
10–19 nights	16%	22%	+6%
20–30 nights	10%	15%	+5%

Overall change: Shelter use shifted meaningfully from short-term emergency stays to longer-term stabilization, with extended stays increasing by **11 percentage points (a 42% relative rise)** in just one month.



Guest Gender

Male: 251 (63%)

Female: 145 (37%)

Chronically Homeless

Yes: 239 (60%)

No: 123 (31%)

N/A: 34 (9%)

Average Guest Age

Guest Count: 396

21 or Under: 15 (4%)

22-30: 51 (13%)

31-40: 117 (29%)

41-50: 114 (29%)

51-60: 56 (14%)

61-70: 16 (4%)

Over 71: 6 (2%)

Unknown: 21 (5%)

Average Age: 42

Largest Age Group: 31-50 (58%)

Our Emergency Warming Center has become a place of last resort for an 83-year-old woman who was dropped off using a cane, with confusion around her medications, and nowhere else to go.

She was dropped off at our warming center—a space designed for short-term protection from the cold, not long-term care or medical support. While we are grateful we could offer warmth, safety, and dignity in that moment, situations like this highlight a deeply troubling reality in our community.

Our staff did what they always do: they showed kindness, patience, and respect. They made sure she was warm, seated safely, and not alone. But emergency warming centers are not equipped to meet the complex needs of elderly individuals who require ongoing care, mobility support, or medical oversight.

Fortunately, due to the attention and efforts of our staff, she has now been admitted to the hospital with pneumonia and will be getting the care she needs. Without proper care and continued exposure to winter elements, these situations can become life-threatening.

With over 100 guests coming through our doors daily, our team still had the experience and expertise to identify and address a situation that would break the most hardened of hearts.

She is not an addict.

She did not choose homelessness.

And she is not lazy or taking advantage of the system.

Identifying Race

Guest Count: 396

White: 281 (71%)

African American: 25 (6%)

White/African American: 10 (2%)

Native American: 5 (1%)

White/Native American: 5 (1%)

Hispanic: 3 (1%)

White/Hispanic: 3 (1%)

African American/Native American: 1

American Indian: 1 /Asian: 1 /Filipino: 1

Haitian: 1 /Lebanese: 1 /Mexican/German: 1

Portuguese: 1 /Puerto Rican: 1

White/Cherokee: 1

Undisclosed: 54 (14%)



Active Support Services

A photograph of a two-story building with a light-colored exterior and white trim. The entrance has a covered porch with a set of double doors. The ground in front is covered in snow. The sky is a uniform blue.

Emergency Warming Center is actively connecting guests to critical services, including:

- Case Management Referrals
- Housing Navigation & Placement Support
- Medical Services & Health-related Referrals
- Detox & Substance Use Treatment Programs

What the Trends Clearly Show



From November to December, the Warming Center experienced:

- ✓ Rapid escalation in nightly demand
- ✓ Longer guest stays
- ✓ A growing core population relying on consistent shelter
- ✓ A shift from “emergency use” toward stabilization under extreme conditions
- ✓ Nearly doubled operational capacity in one month

Summary Statement:

Between November and December, the Alter L/A Emergency Warming Center experienced a sharp escalation in demand. Average nightly occupancy increased by 90%, total shelter nights nearly doubled, and guests stayed longer. The data shows a clear transition from short-term emergency use to sustained reliance, underscoring the center's critical role as a life-saving stabilization resource during the coldest months of the year.

COMMUNITY HIRING EVENT



Job Seekers! Meet local employers looking to fill vacant positions in several different industries. Bring your resume and a can-do attitude.



Auburn Resource Center
121 Mill St. Auburn



10 a.m.–noon



Tuesday, March 3, 2026



Larry Delhagen
larry.delhagen@maine.gov
207-816-2789
TTY users call Maine Relay 711



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