

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Meeting Minutes

June 21, 2012

Amy Pulaski	City of Portland, Planning & Development
Bob Duranleau	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division
Aaron Geyer	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division
Cindy Namer	MaineHousing
Wayne Russell	MaineHousing
Joseph Locke	MaineHousing
Jon Bradley	Preble Street
Cullen Ryan	CHOM
Wendy Harmon	Southern Maine Landlord Association
Patti Robinson	Preble Street
Phil Allen	Preble Street Veteran Housing Services
Therese Johnson	Preble Street Veteran Housing Services – City of Portland
Kathleen Babeu	City of South Portland General Assistance
Carol Hutchins	Bayside Neighborhood Association
Cheryl Poulin	Avesta
Shana Pike	MAPS/Step Up
Elizabeth Szatkowski	The Opportunity Alliance
Lori Martin	The Opportunity Alliance
Tom Ptacek	Homeless Voices for Justice
Dee Clarke	Homeless Voices for Justice
Heather Rhoda	Frannie Peabody Center
Annmarie Rotolo	ADRC-SMAAA
Mary Ellen Welch	Police Department – Community Policing
Tom Natalie	Milestone Foundation

I. Introductions

Bob Duranleau, ESAC Tri-Chair, welcomed everyone and brief introductions were made.

II. May Bed Usage Statistics – Bob Duranleau

Bob reviewed the monthly shelter statistics for May 2012:

	<u>May 2011</u>	<u>May 2012</u>
Adolescents	13 Individuals	15 Individuals
Adults	230 Individuals	263 Individuals
Families	<u>90 Individuals (36 Families)</u>	<u>86 Individuals (34 Families)</u>
Total	333 Individuals	364 Individuals

Bob stated that thus far June has been incredibly busy and numbers are significantly up. The Community overflow has reached capacity and the warming center has been utilized five (5) times so far in June. It is anticipated that the average number of homeless individuals on any given night in Portland will exceed 400 individuals in Portland for the first time since we've been keeping these stats.

Adolescent Shelter

The total adolescent bed nights for May 2011 were 407 while the total bed nights for May 2012 were 453. These figures indicate an increase of 11% between May 2011 and May 2012. Seven (7) individuals stated that they were experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Family Shelters

There was a total of 2651 bed nights used for all Family Shelters in May 2012 as compared to 2781 bed nights in May 2011. This represents a decrease of 5% in Family Shelter bed usage between May 2011 and May 2012.

The Family Shelter placed 6 families for a total of 24 individuals into housing in May.

The Family Shelter received 23 new families (intakes) for a total of 81 individuals in May. Based on self-reporting 12 families for a total of 44 individuals stated they had never been homeless before, of these 6 families for a total of 23 individuals were refugees.

Bob stated that the trend for the past few months is that the number of Primary and Secondary Refugees has dramatically decreased. It is believed that this decrease in Refugees is because of the 60-month lifetime limit on TANF; many families are going to other States (specifically Manchester, NH) that don't have time limits on TANF prior to reaching their TANF lifetime time limit in Maine. Bob added that this has not affected the number of Asylum pending families or families seeking Asylum entering the Family Shelter.

Adult Shelters

Adult Shelter bed nights usage increased by 14% in May 2012 compared to May 2011. Total bed night usage during May 2011 was 7128 while it was 8151 during May 2012.

During the month of May, there were 161 intakes at the Oxford Street Shelter, 119 men and 42 women. An Intake or New Arrival is defined as an individual that has not stayed at the Shelter for a period of three (3) months or longer. Based on self-reporting, 32 individuals stated they had never been homeless before (22 men and 10 women).

Oxford Street Shelter Support Services team placed 47 individuals into permanent housing (37 men and 10 women), with one (1) individual returning to the shelter within 90 days of housing placement.

Florence House Women's Shelter served a total of 46 women during the month of May, including 10 new intakes. Based on self-reporting, 2 of these 10 intakes stated that they were experiencing homelessness for the first time.

The Shelter placed 3 individuals into housing, with 1 woman returning.

First Time Homelessness

For the month of May 85 individuals, or 32% of all new intakes, reported experiencing homelessness for the first time, based on self-reporting.

2-1-1 Maine Housing/Shelter Calls

Amy could not attend the meeting and thus there were no stats to present for the May 2-1-1 Maine Housing/Shelter calls.

III. ESAC Subcommittee – Update – Housing Resources & Overflow

Bob stated that Josh is on vacation and Rob could not attend the meeting so he gave the update. He stated that the subcommittees did a lot of good work and we will report back next month regarding progress. Bob stated that a solution has to happen soon as we're at record high numbers at Oxford Street and the Community Overflow. Jon stated that the City is working on it and that there is stuff happening but nothing is solidified at this point. Jon and Bob stated that a Preble Stree/City meeting has been scheduled for next week to discuss overflow. Patti asked how many people were sitting in chairs at the warming center. Bob stated that 14 people were in chairs waiting for a bed. Dee stated that as awful as it is to sit in a chair, however she is thankful that the City is doing something and opening its doors.

IV. *Preble Street Veteran Housing Services Program Update –*

Phil stated that they've sought approval to expand its outreach into York County and to Sagadahoc County (Bath). They're working on expanding outreach coverage, changing some staffing roles so that they can cover here as well as the expanding territory. Phil stated that they've consistently been seeing a decrease in veterans in the shelters, but as the seasons have changed veteran numbers in the shelters have started to spike. Unfortunately Jen Thorne's vacant embedded VA position at the Oxford Street Shelter is not being filled. The City is working diligently to advocate for the VA to fill this position; however, the VA has been very adamant that they are not filling it. Bob stated that they've attempted calling the 1-800 number and have been told by people at Togus VA that they shouldn't be calling this number because it's a national number. Bob stated that this was discussed at the CoC meeting. Therese reported that it is taking two (2) to three (3) weeks for the VHS Program to verify VA status, whereas Jen could verify this information in 20 minutes. This causes veterans to remain homeless for an additional two (2) to three (3) weeks. Bob asked ESAC if they would be willing to write a letter to the VA advocating for the embedded position to be filled. Heather Rhoda made a motion to vote and Elizabeth seconded it. A vote was taken and all were in favor of writing a letter from ESAC to the VA advocating for this vital position to be filled. Cullen stated that including our legislators in this advocacy is paramount. It is important to note that ending and preventing veteran homelessness is a HUD priority, and eliminating this type of resource contradicts HUD's goals. Elizabeth asked if this is being communicated to the Portland Homeless Task Force. Jon stated that they're still figuring out big-picture issues. Tom stated that they're a couple months from being able to look at specific issues, as they're still concentrating on the four (4) subgroups. Elizabeth stated that she thought a copy of the letter could go to the Task Force so that they know the impact that the removal of this one position has. Jon and Tom stated that this is a great idea so at the very least they can be informed. Bob stated that he would begin drafting the letter and will forward it to Jon for review. It was also decided that the DHHS Commissioner should be CC'd in the letter. Phil stated that they're working adamantly in the shelters to connect with veterans in the shelters. Annmarie asked when she can start referring people in York County to the program. Phil stated that they are taking York County referrals currently. Cindy asked if the expansion is a part of a partnership or if they're going at it alone. Phil stated that they've met with York County Shelter, which is committed to having a case worker at the shelter a few times a week. They want to make sure the efforts to outreach and set up shop is fruitful. The goal is within the next two (2) weeks to have a clear plan for who is where, for what times, and in what communities. Phil stated that his case management team has been wonderful. Additionally, they have become well versed in the VA system. Jon stated if there are any specific thoughts or ideas to forward them to Phil. Elizabeth asked if we should be including program stats with the monthly shelter stats similar to HPRP.

V. *Task Force to Develop a Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness – Update*

Tom stated that they had a short meeting yesterday to try and set an end date for the Task Force. Some people were really pushing for early October. The next meeting is in the last week in July and the four (4) subcommittees will start reporting back. From there planning will move forward and formulation of what will be presented to the City Council. There was discussion about another opportunity for public comment and discussion. The last public hearing, which was Thursday of last week, was held to get input from the community. Tom stated that many people thought that they would be hearing a report from the Task Force, not simply providing input. Tom stated that the public hearing had a fairly good turnout. They were seeking input on the causes of homelessness. They were hoping to have discussion around the causes that were suggested; however what ended up happening was multiple causes were thrown out. Jon stated that the biggest challenge is time, time to get the work done and finding time to meet. Jon stated that by the beginning of August there is a commitment to have a draft from all of the committees. Tom stated that some of the subcommittees are having difficulties determining how cost plays a role in their planning and goals and what realistic costs for their proposed initiatives are.

VI. *Federal and State Legislation*

Cullen stated that on the State level there isn't much going on. He stated that now is a good time to get legislators to visit shelters and agencies so that they can get a first-hand account of the current homeless climate in Portland.

On the federal level also not much is going on; most everything is going to be postponed until after the elections in November. He stated that there is a group of people going to the National Alliance on Ending Homelessness conference next month in Washington, DC. The group will be meeting with Maine's delegation and advocating for \$2.23 billion in funding for McKinney-Vento; full funding for section 8, including \$75 million for HUD VASH section 8; \$1.35 billion for targeted veteran programs including \$300 million for the SSVF Program and services for HUD VASH. Cullen stated that he's spoken to the VA and advocated for them to network with existing infrastructure for a continuum of services including mental health and substance abuse, rather than solely focusing on service delivery. Additionally, the group will be advocating for \$127 million for the Runaway Homeless Youth Act and funding for the PATH program. Cullen mentioned that they will be suggesting that they not cut all of the infrastructure services in January. The group will also be presenting the latest shelter statistics. Cullen mentioned that this will be the last meeting with Senator Snowe in her current position. The group will be sending a thank you to her and he suggested that ESAC may want to send something thanking her for her leadership over at least the past eight (8) years. A vote was taken and everyone was in favor of thanking Senator Snowe for her dedication for homeless issues during her time as Senator.

VII. *Other Business*

Jon stated that there is a committee formed by the State that is meeting to look at how to save money in General Assistance. The committee is looking at whether or not there are other ways to provide what's needed that has a different format other than General Assistance. Currently the committee is meeting weekly, but in July this will change to bi-weekly meetings. Cindy stated that there are five (5) directives out of the law that they have to address: data exchange, cutting \$500,000 from the GA budget, seeing if MaineHousing can take over administering the program, benefits and services and where are other services and benefits that people aren't linking to, whether or not GA should pay for shelter stays, and SSI/DI Pilot Program. They're trying to set up three to five subgroups to work on these directives. Currently they're in the brainstorming and data collecting phase. Cindy stated that they really want to talk about changing the system and coming up with long-term solutions so this discussion doesn't occur every year.

Cindy stated that Joe Locke and Wayne are here today because the Step Program has done a little re-organization. She stated that more resources are being directed to Portland. Joe, who typically covers the other part of the State, will be positioned down here and will be working specifically in the Oxford Street Shelter, and Wayne will work with all the other shelters. Wayne stated that they have a meeting today at the shelter to figure out logistics. Cindy stated that Barbara Brann has taken over some of Joe's responsibilities so that he can work in Portland a few days a week.

Heather reminded everyone about Frannie Peabody center's four (4) HOPWA grants. If you know of a client who is HIV positive or has AIDS, refer them to Frannie Peabody Center for these programs. Call Heather Rhoda or Steve Ellis at the Frannie Peabody Center's main line 774-6877 for rental assistance referrals. Heather stated that they use MaineHousing's standards for rental assistance: 110% of FMR.

Phil stated that he thinks a guide provided by 2-1-1 Maine including all of the services would be very helpful because a lot of people don't know what services are out there. Jon stated that they used to do this but haven't for a few years. Joe stated that through the Maine CoC Resources

Committee their trying to educate the community on the resources available. Kathleen stated that they have a resource directory on the City of South Portland's General Assistance website which includes a lot of resources in Cumberland County. Heather stated that she wishes the two CoCs could get together and have a services/resource presentation. Bob stated that this will be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Bob thanked Cindy and Doug at MaineHousing for all the work they did on correcting the PIT numbers. The updated PIT was distributed based on the change in the definition of a homeless episode. There was an in-depth discussion regarding the new definition of a homeless episode and the impact it had on the revised PIT numbers for "# of times homeless" and the corresponding chronic homeless subpopulation numbers. Please see the attached revised PIT and the CoC minutes for more information.

Tom asked about the feasibility of getting soup kitchen numbers added to the agenda either monthly or quarterly. He stated that especially during the summer there is a large influx of younger people that aren't showing up on anyone's number except the soup kitchen. Jon stated that the general numbers are available but they won't be broken down into subpopulations, but if it's helpful to include it's something that could be sent over. Elizabeth stated that even just daily or monthly totals would be helpful.

Bob reminded everyone that the 10% reduction in the overall GA maximum is effective July 1st, 2012.

NEXT MEETING:
Thursday, July 19, 2012
8:30 – 10:00 AM
Refugee Services Area
190 Lancaster Street

Please contact Robert Duranleau, Health & Human Services Department, Social Services Division at 775-6315, extension 224; John Shoos, United Way at 874-1000, or Tom Ptacek, Preble Street at 775-0026; if you should have any agenda items for the next meeting.