

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Meeting Minutes November 20, 2014

Bob Duranleau	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division
Jeff Tardif	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Family Shelter
Aaron Geyer	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Support Services
Rob Parritt	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Oxford Street Shelter
Kelsey Tanning	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Home To Stay
Mary Ellen Welch	City of Portland, PPD Community Policing
Jim Devine	Homeless Voices for Justice
Jamie Lasden	Preble Street/Homeless Voices for Justice
Vickey Rand	CHOM
Cullen Ryan	CHOM
Ginny Dill	Shalom House
Norm Maze	Shalom House
Steve Ellis	Frannie Peabody Center
Barbara Sawyer	Goodwill of NNE
Shana Pike	SteppingStones
Jenny Stasio	Family Crisis Services
Elizabeth Szatkowski	The Opportunity Alliance
Chris Bicknell	Opportunity Alliance
Kurt Holmgren	Eastpoint Christian Church
Wendy Harmon	Southern Maine Landlord Association
Steve Hirshon	Bayside Neighborhood Association

I. Introductions

Bob welcomed everyone and brief introductions were made.

II. October 2014 Bed Usage Statistics – Bob Duranleau

Bob reviewed the October 2014 statistics ([see statistics](#)). There was a slight drop from 2013 numbers. Joe Kreisler was at its highest for the last 6 months as well were the family. The City's Family Shelter had high housing placement numbers; 20 for October. Adult shelters dropped to just over 9,000 bed nights. However, the number of intakes from those originally from out of country is on the rise at the adult shelters, where this data was barely measurable just two years ago. Page 12 discusses first time homeless, which will be more accurate once data sharing is fully implemented in HMIS across the agencies.

III. Shelter Matrix – Update – Rob Parritt

Rob stated that nightly averages were up. He expressed concerns surrounding the sale of Wilmont Street and Cumberland Avenue apartments and placement evictions. Mary Ellen stated that other properties were also purchased with the intent to turn into high-end and drive out low-income and voucher individuals. Steve H. stated that many middle-class homeowners in the area are worried about these high-end places pricing them out of their own homes. Rob discussed housing placements and how many are moving out of Portland due to the very tight housing market. He also discussed the recent switch in dormitory placements in the Shelter; they are now able to serve more beds and get more individuals out of chairs.

Bob discussed the Family Shelter matrix and the difficulty in housing placements and how they are working to place families out of Portland. Rob pointed out that many landlords are starting to ask questions surrounding the sustainability of renting to GA clients due to news surrounding the policy changes. Rob applauded Jeff and his team of housing 20 families, as it is a great accomplishment in this housing market.

IV. CoC 2014 Grant Application Update – Bob Duranleau

Bob gave an update on the HUD CoC Application. He expressed his frustrations surrounding HUD's lack of response until the 11th hour on whether to include programs not previously awarded funding. Bob went on to discuss the cuts of Bell St., HMIS, Planning Grant, SSOs (Collaborative, Employment Assistance, Job Training), as well as significantly less funding for 22 Park Ave. HUD did offer to send TA through ABT Associates. ABT will be coming in on November 25th to discuss options with those not funded.

V. Home to Stay Program Update – Aaron Geyer

Aaron stated that Home to Stay is continuing on through the end of December. He is hoping to be funded for another year. They had 6 families transition off of STEP and still have 13 remaining STEP and 7 HCV vouchers. The employee working with the employment program is transitioning over to HTS in working with shelter clients in increasing income and other positive changes in their situations.

VI. Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) Program – Aaron Geyer

TBRA helps with short-term rental assistance, including electric, security deposits, etc. Aaron reported that TBRA has been going since March, and has served 63 households for total of \$48,000. He handed out a flier with information and asked individuals to pass the information along. Ginny clarified that there is an application, which Rob stated is very easy to navigate. Individuals must be literally homeless, either in a shelter or otherwise. Bob stated the CMP bill seems to be the biggest hurdle, so this is helping.

All referrals may be sent to:

Aaron Geyer, (207) 482-5131, aeg@portlandmaine.gov

Kelsey Tanning, (207) 482-5208, kt@portlandmaine.gov

VII. Issues with Logisticare Bus Passes – Jamie Lasden/HVJ

Jim discussed Logisticare and a local meeting between HVJ and local service providers. The biggest complaints include: the cut of monthly bus passes, long phone wait times and difficult administration issues. At the next meeting between service providers, Brian Sullivan from DHHS and a representative from Logisticare will be in attendance to discuss these issues. Elizabeth clarified the lack of monthly bus passes due to their interpretation of MaineCare standards. In order to receive a monthly pass, the client must have a MaineCare billable daily appointment (methadone, intensive outpatient treatment, etc.). Logisticare is also following up with treatment providers, rather than taking the word of the case manager. She stated this is being pushed onto the case manager to get this verification, which is not a good use of MaineCare funds. Bob handed out a statement from Logisticare and their reasoning on why many bus passes are not issued.

Steve Ellis discussed his recent meeting with Carol Snyder and how Logisticare is worried about their auditing. Each trip **must** be verified as a MaineCare billable issue. These unlimited bus passes are not meant to be for groceries and other non-billable services, including AA meetings. Many individuals asked how people are supposed to be able to function in the community if they cannot get around the city. Jamie pointed out that DHHS' move to South Portland will also significantly impact the need for bus passes, as well as the new requirement for certain clients to attend volunteer sites in order to receive state benefits.

Carol Snyder had offered to come to a meeting. Cullen agreed this would be a good idea, since we also need to find a solution to the transportation gap and pushed the group to come up with other possible solutions, and a workaround where MaineCare pays for their trips, and another funding source for the remainder. Elizabeth stated that there is a need for individuals from the State, not just Logisticare, as it is the state making these policies, not just the provider. Steve Ellis agreed that this is a larger issue beyond just Logisticare and that FPC is working with Metro on offering a Medicaid discount on monthly passes. It was suggested that Ed Suslovic is also on their board and to approach him for advocacy with them.

Cullen suggested getting numbers and statistics on this information. Vickey suggested where Logisticare is not covering the entire state, to look at these other communities and see what their barriers are and how they have been working around it. Bob distributed a handout to the group from Carol, addressing questions that have come up recently. The group agreed to have MaineCare and Logisticare representatives attend the next meeting.

VIII. Youth in DHHS Custody Staying at Joe Kreisler – Therese Cahill Low

Assistant Director Grace is looking to attend next month to discuss this topic.

IX. Annual Homeless Memorial Vigil – Preble Street Staff

Jamie notified the group of the Annual Homeless Memorial Vigil. It will be held on Monday, December 22nd at sundown. They will be starting on Preble Street and walking up to Monument Square.

X. Homeless Voices for Justice Update

HVJ has been meeting with Portland Police Department and OSS staff on storage possibilities at the shelters. Jim feels there have been positive discussions surrounding the topic.

XI. Federal and State Legislation – Cullen Ryan

Cullen discussed the recent elections and the discussion between parties on compromise and willingness to work together. On December 11, there will be a vote to pass a continuing resolution on keeping government open, or an omnibus bill which may include HUD funding. Obama is looking to take a stance on immigration reform, which many feel may cause the government to shut down.

Maine has been lucky, in the past, to have four delegates who have taken a stance on homelessness. However, there is uncertainty of Bruce Poliquin's stance. Collins is now the chair of T-HUD, and everyone is looking forward to seeing how this development plays out.

Optimism surrounds funding the 2009 bill of the National Housing Trust Fund. This will fund housing for those considered extremely poor. This is not a subsidy, but rather brick and mortar funds to create more affordable housing in each state. Maine may receive just the state minimum of approximately \$2-3M.

The state legislature swung Republican, picking up the Senate and leaving the House as Democrat. Michael Thibodeau is now the Republican leader. Cullen pointed out that these are moderate times, allowing more to be passed. The Governor is looking to shift focus within DHHS, relieving Guy and Therese of their positions, and naming Sheldon Wheeler as the Acting Director.

Due to recent developments with the state, the City of Portland is being stretched thin, financially. This has caused hiring, travel, and project freezes. Bob clarified that the city is currently looking at an unsustainable loss of over \$8M in a 12-month span.

House and Senate reconvene in about a month. Most of those entering are new and most likely don't know a lot about homelessness and poverty. It is on the community to contact new delegates and show them shelters and facilities. This will give them a different perspective where they can learn more and see the demand v. available resources. Rob pointed out 15-minute conversations are better than nothing and they learn a lot in that short time.

Vickey discussed the District 25 recount. Cathy Manchester (R) won, but is being challenged by Cathy Breen (D). Meanwhile, Speaker Eves went on record stating Medicaid expansion is less likely to appear in any upcoming bills. While he agrees with expansion morally, it was vetoed five times last year, so it does not look promising.

Finally, Maine DHHS lost its attempt to cut 6,000 19-20 year olds from MaineCare. Federal DHHS stated they cannot do this and it was backed by District Court. The State will try to appeal to the U.S.

Supreme Court.

XII. Other Business

HVJ announced its Wish Event on December 16th. The wish is unlimited monthly bus pass. If you would like to help in this issue, please contact Ashley or Jamie at Preble Street: hvj@preblestreet.org

Rob stated that the PIT Survey will be held on January 28, 2015. MaineHousing will be conducting training starting in December. Rob will be coordinating Portland's outreach efforts, so contact him to help. rlp@portlandmaine.gov

Steve Ellis stated World AIDS day is December 1st. There will be a reception with exhibitions at the Salt Exchange (561 Congress Street) from 6-8p.

Rob wanted to remind everyone that he recently received calls surrounding the rumor of a "new requirement" of photo IDs to stay at the shelter. **THIS IS NOT A REQUIREMENT** and he asked that providers let clients know and halt rumors.

**NEXT MEETING:
Thursday, December 18, 2014
8:30 – 10:00 AM**

Refugee Services Area, 190 Lancaster Street

Please contact Robert Duranleau, Health & Human Services Department, Social Services Division at 482-5124 if you should have any agenda items for the next meeting.