

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Meeting Minutes January 15, 2015

Attendance:

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
Matt Pryor	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Support Services
Mary Ellen Welch	City of Portland, PPD Community Policing
Sara Fleurant	City of Portland, PPD Community Policing
Tom Ptacek	Preble Street
Ali Lovejoy	Preble Street
Ashley Gorczyca	Preble Street/Homeless Voices for Justice
Jim Devine	Homeless Voices for Justice
John Monahan	Homeless Voices for Justice
Vickey Rand	CHOM
Cullen Ryan	CHOM
Ginny Dill	Shalom House
Norm Maze	Shalom House
Kathleen Babeau	City of South Portland, Social Services
Shana Pike	SteppingStones
Steve Ellis	Frannie Peabody Center
Elizabeth Szatkowski	The Opportunity Alliance
Chris Bicknell	The Opportunity Alliance
Dawn Pickles	The Opportunity Alliance
Jenny Stasio	Family Crisis Services
Barbara Sawyer	Goodwill NNE
Steve Hirshon	Bayside Neighborhood Association

I. Introductions

Aaron welcomed everyone and brief introductions were made. Rob and Aaron took a moment to express their appreciation for former ESAC chair, Bob Duranleau, in his 31 years of service to the City and all the work he did in the community. Elizabeth suggested a letter be sent to Bob, on behalf of ESAC, to thank him for his time and dedication. Jeff seconded this motion. Unanimously approved. Cullen offered to draft the letter.

II. December 2014 Shelter Statistics – Rob Parritt

Rob reviewed the December 2014 shelter statistics ([see statistics](#)). He stated that while the average number of individuals per night had been running lower than 2013 in the last few months, December saw a markedly high increase in bed night usage. Rob applauded the Family Shelter in placing 21 families (64 individuals) into permanent housing in December.

Steve H. inquired about the individuals returning to the shelters and whether they are due to the client's inability to maintain the housing. Rob discussed the issues surrounding the Cumberland Ave. and Wilmont St. apartment building closures and how OSS staff was able to preventatively rehouse 10 out of the 12 individuals impacted. Steve was inquiring more on those who are just considered "hard cases." Maryellen stated the neighborhood policing coordinators could easily contact the shelters to notify them of a client potentially coming back to the shelter when disorderly issues arise.

III. Shelter Matrix Update – Rob Parritt

Jeff discussed the Family Shelter matrix and how they ended the year with more families than they had hoped. The goal of 26 families for December was a hard goal to attain, despite the high housing placements (21). 57% of those housed in December were in Portland. Jeff addressed the issues surrounding housing individuals out of

town: mostly due to the need for coordination in transportation to these other cities/towns to view the unit and then move the family.

Rob discussed the Oxford Street Shelter matrix and how they witnessed a significant increase in bed night usage in December. He also pointed out that only 1/3 of the housing placements were in Portland, with the rest being outside due to the small housing market available in the city.

IV. OSS Long Term Stayers Report Update – Rob Parritt

Rob stated that OSS staff continues to work on clients in the shelter the longest. Recently, housing staff attended the VI-SPDAT training to learn how to target those most vulnerable and how to do more with less. The Vulnerability Index has made a huge impact throughout the state and MaineHousing and OSS are working together well to ensure it is utilized effectively.

V. Transportation Update – Aaron Geyer

Aaron wanted to bring this topic back into focus: Back in November, suggestions were made to have MaineCare and Logisticare representatives come to a meeting to discuss concerns. Ashley stated that HVJ discussed the topic with MaineCare. MaineCare's Operations Coordinator stated that Logisticare is doing exactly what they are supposed to be doing because the federal government is cracking down. There is a meeting next Tuesday at the Florence House Conference Room to go over the Bill "Reinstate MaineCare Bus Passes" being presented by Rep. Bill Stuckey. Elizabeth stated this bill will be addressing more than just the narrow language within MaineCare, and will address ideas on how to save the state money on a whole. Tom asked whether MaineCare expansion and transportation have melded together and created any issues yet. Ashley stated not yet, but it will be worked into the bill. Contact Ashley at Preble Street for more details at agorczyca@preblestreet.org.

VI. Home to Stay Program Update – Aaron Geyer

Aaron announced that Oxford Street and Family Shelter have received Home To Stay funding. The Family Shelter received an increase in funding due to the significant increase in their numbers.

Shana stated that SteppingStones was also awarded HTS funding and has hired two navigators: one in Bangor and Portland, each.

VII. Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program Update – Aaron Geyer

Aaron reported that since March, 2014, TBRA has assisted 78 households. Kelsey distributed a flier during the December meeting; Aaron offered to send it around again. He asked that referrals be sent to himself or Kelsey, as they still to spend by July 1. Jeff pointed out that individuals with STEP, BRAP, or other vouchers may be eligible to use TBRA funds for security deposits. If individuals use Shalom House, they have to repay those funds or lose their voucher, where TBRA does not have to be repaid and should eliminate that one barrier.

All referrals may be sent to:

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

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

VIII. Homeless Voices for Justice Update

Ashley stated there will be a follow-up survey to the 2013 MaineCare survey to see where those individuals are now. They will use these stories to create a story bank.

City Council passed an ordinance to allow NTOs to be given at the Portland Public Library. There is a training session on January 22nd. Please contact Ashley for more information.

Jim announced the annual HVJ Day at the State House will be on February 12, with the bus leaving Portland at 7:30 am. They now have chapters in Brunswick, Lewiston, and Augusta as well, so the bus will be stopping in those cities to pick up more individuals. The day will include a sit-down with Governor LePage, as well as a tour of the Maine State Museum. Mark Eaves will be presenting the group at the legislative session.

IX. Federal and State Legislation – Cullen Ryan

Cullen stated that the Governor released his budget with a lot of changes to drive his policies. \$46M will be used to help end the wait list for the elderly and disabled looking to get assistance, as well as an increase to BRAP. TANF is looking to be eliminated for “noncitizens” and the General Assistance formula looked at a large change. Cullen described the change, and how this would be a cut to all GA programs throughout the state. Kathleen clarified that even though South Portland never hits the 90% reimbursement rate, they would still look 50% of their reimbursements. Cullen pointed out that with this budget, Governor LePage is looking to zero-out all MaineCare reimbursements for methadone. Rob stated this is a hidden proposal, and may not impact as many municipalities as it does Portland.

Cullen went on to discuss the increase in sales tax and decrease in income tax; with the Governor looking to eliminate income tax by 2018. Included in this, is the homestead exemption tax, which only impacts homeowners under the age of 65. Additionally, the Governor is looking to eliminate revenue sharing, cutting revenue sharing to municipalities. This would have a larger impact on the small municipalities. The final proposal addressed was the idea to tax properties owned by nonprofits if their aggregate property value is over \$50,000 in one municipality, exempting them for 50% of the value.

Rob pushed the idea to advocate and talk to legislators on the impact of these proposed changes. Cullen stated this is the time to educate local decision-makers. Go up to Augusta with stories and testimonies, it is only 3 minutes per person. If you are outside of Portland, your representative may not receive as many calls on issues, so your voice may be more powerful. He stated this is not to diminish those in Portland, but reminded everyone to work outside of Portland as well. Cullen stated the Governor’s message has been people are scamming the system and are drug users or illegal immigrants, so we need to ensure the true message on these individuals is heard. Rob suggested having MEJP come speak to these issues at the next ESAC meeting.

Cullen reminded everyone of the Maine Economic Council conference being held on Friday, February 13. It is \$55 per person.

On the Federal level, Senator Collins is now the chair of the T-HUD appropriations committee. Additionally, the National Housing Trust Fund, that was passed in 2008, was finally funded. Mel Watt authorized the proceeds from Freddie/Fannie dividends to create low-income housing. This will impact Maine by starting funding in January 2016 at \$3M a year for those who do not qualify for Section 8 or other vouchers.

X. Other Business

Rob discussed the PIT survey being administered on Wednesday, January 28. The group will be gathering at Oxford Street at 5:30 pm and start at 6pm. First planning group meeting was yesterday and a follow-up meeting will be on January 20 from 10-12 in the Refugee Services Conference Area. He asked for individuals to help and stated that RSVPs are helpful in this process. Please contact him at rlp@portlandmaine.gov

Next Meeting:

Thursday, February 19, 2015

8:30 – 10:00am

REFUGEE SERVICES CONFERENCE AREA

190 Lancaster Street

If you should have any questions, please contact:

Aaron Geyer
Health & Human Services Department
Social Services Division
(207) 482-5131
aeg@portlandmaine.gov

Krista Morris
Health & Human Services Department
Social Services Division
(207) 482-5144
knm@portlandmaine.gov