

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Meeting Minutes

April 16, 2015

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
Kelsey Tinning	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
Angela Havlin	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Oxford Street Shelter
Brian Marchant	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Oxford Street Shelter
Ali Lovejoy	Preble Street
Joanie Klayman	Preble Street
Ashley Gorczyca	Preble Street/Homeless Voices for Justice
Jim Devine	Homeless Voices for Justice
Jeff Vane	Homeless Voices for Justice
John Monahan	Homeless Voices for Justice
William Higgins	Homeless Voices for Justice/Semper Resurgam
Vickey Rand	CHOM
Cullen Ryan	CHOM
Kathleen Babeu	City of South Portland, Social Services
Jenny Stasio	Family Crisis Services
Nicole Evans	United Way of Greater Portland
Steve Ellis	Frannie Peabody Center
Tom Natalie	Milestone
Norm Maze	Shalom House
Ginny Dill	Shalom House
Wendy Harmon	Southern Maine Landlord Association
Chris Bickwell	The Opportunity Alliance

I. Introductions

Jeff welcomed the group and brief introductions were made.

II. March 2015 Bed Usage Statistics – Jeff Tardif

Jeff reviewed the March 2015 statistics ([see statistics](#)). He pointed out that the Family Shelter had lower intakes and higher housing placements, allowing for their numbers to go down. He reminded the group that SteppingStones is closing their family shelter as of Friday, April 24th.

In housing placements, Jeff asked if the two female housing placements at Oxford Street were ones also counted at Florence House. Angela stated most likely not, as most of their female placements are individuals who stay primarily at Oxford Street.

Jeff pointed out that generally the highest night of the month is later or in the middle of the month, but March was the first week of the month. Angela stated that Oxford Street is trending the same for April, as well.

Regarding the new Home To Stay stats, Kelsey verified that those “actively looking” have vouchers and are just looking for housing. Additionally, there are now TBRA stats with March averaging about \$1,100 per household. These statistics will be included in the monthly ESAC report moving forward.

III. Shelter Matrix – Update – Jeff Tardif

Jeff discussed the Family Shelter matrix, where they had lower numbers and barely used overflow.

Thankfully, they have been housing more than intakes, so it has helped and is happy to see the trend. Most of those leaving the shelter are not using subsidies, and while most of the placements are in Portland, they are reaching out to other communities.

Angela reviewed the Oxford Street matrix. The numbers are higher than anticipated, but April has been significantly down so far thanks to weather. The GA warming center was used every night for March, but has only been used two-to-three times in April. Housing placements are up from February 2015, but down from March 2014. This is partially due to the long term stayers initiative. Additionally, Shelter Plus Care was the primary source of vouchers for placements, and bus tickets are only for permanent placements, not to another shelter.

IV. OSS Long Term Stayers Report Update – Angela Havlin

Angela stated that the focus on long term stayers remains the priority at Oxford Street, as those who are there over 180 days are most vulnerable. Those deemed as long term stayers run a large spectrum from 180 bed nights to those with over 1,000 bed nights. Currently, they only have three (3) clients with over 1,000 bed nights, where only a year ago, they had 24.

V. Home to Stay Program Update – Aaron Geyer

Aaron reviewed the Home To Stay statistics, pointing out that many may be duplicated in the housing placement chart, and not in addition to. The City will be absorbing three (3) families with vouchers with the closing of SteppingStones.

Aaron asked for any suggestions on the reporting for these numbers, as it is new for the month of March.

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

Jeff reminded everyone to send referrals to TBRA. Aaron thanked everyone for the outside referrals and stated to keep them coming, as March has been the highest month so far.

All referrals may be sent to:

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

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

VII. Homeless Voices for Justice (HVJ) Update

Jim reported there was a hearing regarding the six (6) General Assistance bills being presented at the State on April 15th. HVJ went to testify against all of the proposals. Additionally, there was the hearing surrounding Bus Passes last week; the work session is today.

The MaineCare expansion bills have been set for May. Additionally, the SNAP bill will be heard April 24.

Jim reminded everyone that with summer solstice coming up, there will be a homeless vigil, where they will be spending the entire day in Postal Park. Watch for more details as they become available.

VIII. Federal and State Legislation – Cullen Ryan

Cullen discussed the previously-mentioned GA bills before the State. He pointed out that HVJ was well represented, providing strong testimony.

The Governor proposed to cut \$6M from the HOME Fund, the resource that goes to the Maine State Housing Authority to help create affordable housing. This is used to help the Circuit Breaker program, lead paint abatement, first time homebuyers, shelters, and affordable housing. One Representative is recommending that \$3M of this cut be shifted into rental assistance vouchers. There are mixed views on this, as it takes money away from building permanent housing solutions, and while many individuals have vouchers, fewer landlords accept them. Cullen discussed the possible dilemmas surrounding this, including funding BRAP, and the length of assistance. Jeff T. posed the issue with the “working poor” who have too high of income for a voucher, but too low to be able to rent in the current market. Cullen addressed the low income tax credit and the market forcing rental prices to go down, making those apartments available for S8 vouchers.

Housing Trust Fund should move approximately \$3M into Maine to help with permanent housing solutions. The President’s budget looks to cure the effects from sequestration, restoring the lost Section 8 vouchers, and McKinney-Vento at \$2.8B to help with S+C. Sen. Collins, now chair of T-HUD, gave opening remarks about homelessness (specifically youth and veterans), sequestration, and Section 8. Cullen asked ESAC to approve

a drafted letter to be sent to her, thanking her for making this point.

Aaron motioned, Tom, seconded, unanimously approved to send a drafted letter on the behalf of ESAC, thanking Senator Collins on her focus to restore previously-lost services.

Sen. King has also been a loud voice on fixing sequestration. He sent a “Dear Colleague” letter calling on others to increase funding for housing assistance and Section 8. Cullen asked ESAC to approve a drafted letter to be sent to him, as well.

Aaron motioned, Tom, seconded, unanimously approved to send a drafted letter on the behalf of ESAC, thanking Senator King on his push to increase funding.

IX. Closure of SteppingStones’ Family Shelter

Aaron read a statement to ESAC from Shana Pike at SteppingStones. April 24 is the shelter closure date and they have been working with area providers on ensuring the families currently there have a place to go. All 12 families will be using Home To Stay vouchers, and the HTS staff has been working diligently with them. The City will be taking on the remaining families, as the entire agency is dissolving. Additionally, all four (4) transitional housing clients have been awarded Section 8 and are now looking for housing.

X. City Shelter Overflow

Jeff addressed the topic of the City’s closure of overflow sites as of June 1. The Family Shelter won’t be using any more area hotels; once they are full, they are full. For Oxford Street, this means no more overflow at Preble Street (75 beds), but the GA warming center will remain open. This capacity will change, but they should still be able to provide services. This will also push Oxford Street clients to utilize other resources. Jim expressed his frustration with this, citing issues surrounding sending people away once full.

Many individuals asked for the dates and times the Health & Human Services portion of the budget will be discussed. The finance committee will be open to the public on the following date for the Health & Human Services portion:

Thursday, April 23rd, 2:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Additionally, there was a newsflash on the City’s website highlighting other times the City is holding Community Conversations:

Tuesday, April 28 at 6:30 PM in the Deering High School Cafeteria

Wednesday, April 29 at 4:30 PM in the State of Maine Room at City Hall

[Click here](#) to read the newsflash and sign up for future messages.

Alli pointed out that this is an important time for ESAC and expressed her full confidence in the shelter staff to minimize the impact on clients.

Cullen motioned, Jeff V. seconded, 6 abstentions (City employees), otherwise approved, for ESAC to oppose this and approach the Acting City Manager and City Council to change their budget process and provide these emergency services. Chris suggested an area agency take a lead on this. Joanie agreed this would most likely be Preble Street. Chris also mentioned they talk to the area hospitals, as they will be hit.

Wendy discussed her conversations with Dawn and finance committee meetings she has attended: Visa Holders without work authorization or SSNs will be cut off on July1, and will only be given food vouchers to area food pantries and bus tickets for reunification to other communities or family members. Jeff T. stated this has also impacted the Family Shelter, where he can’t house visa families because landlords are fearful of not receiving payment. Vickey stated the PSHHS committee meetings may also be a good way to find out more information surrounding this and the lawsuit.

XI. Other Business

None at this time.

Next Meeting:
Thursday, May 21, 2015
8:30 – 10:00am
REFUGEE SERVICES CONFERENCE AREA
190 Lancaster Street

If you should have any questions, please contact:

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