

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Meeting Minutes

August 20, 2015

David MacLean	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division
Jeff Tardif	City of Portland, Health & Human Services Dept., Social Services Division, Family Shelter
Angela Giordano	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
Ashley Gorczyca	Preble Street/Homeless Voices for Justice
Ali Lovejoy	Preble Street
Tom Ptacek	Preble Street
Donna Yellen	Preble Street
Jim Devine	Homeless Voices for Justice
William Higgins	Homeless Voices for Justice
Anna Irving	Homeless Voices for Justice
John Monahan	Homeless Voices for Justice
Chris Bicknell	The Opportunity Alliance
Elizabeth Damon	The Opportunity Alliance
Dawn Pickles	The Opportunity Alliance
Ginny Dill	Shalom House
Norm Maze	Shalom House
Angela Sequeira	Shalom House
Steve Ellis	Frannie Peabody Center
Branden Parker	Frannie Peabody Center
Kathleen Babeu	City of South Portland, General Assistance
Nicole Evans	United Way of Greater Portland
Don Harden	Catholic Charities Maine
Wendy Harmon	Southern Maine Landlords Association
Carol Kulsza	Veterans' Affairs
Vickey Rand	Community Housing of Maine
Erik Sanborn	Community Member

I. Introductions

Jeff welcomed the group and brief introductions were made. Nicole asked about the increase in first time homeless individuals. Jeff pointed out this is all based on self-reporting, so it may/may not be true and with international intakes, they may not have been homeless prior to entering the United States.

II. July 2015 Bed Usage Statistics – Jeff Tardif

Jeff reviewed the July 2015 statistics ([see statistics](#)), pointing out that numbers were up marginally compared to the previous year.

III. Shelter Matrix – Update – Jeff Tardif and Angela Havlin

Jeff reviewed the Family Shelter matrix. In discussing the housing market and a recent meeting with landlords, it was stated that many landlords don't advertise online more than 24 hours since they have so many offers. This is further proof of the tight housing market in Portland. As a result, the Family Shelter has been moving more families out of Portland and in to other communities.

Angela reviewed the Oxford Street matrix. She explained how they have been able to stay out of using the warming centers for entire nights through bed shifting and turnover for those who go to work early. She discussed the Long Term Stayers initiative and how they are working to house those individuals and the utilization of bus tickets for reunification. Due to the verifying of the destination and living situation, they have seen a low recidivism rate from the reunification pool.

IV. OSS Long Term Stayers Report Update – Angela Havlin

Angela discussed the Long Term Stayers initiative, explaining that it involves many agencies throughout the community and their goal of housing a specific list of Long Term Stayers (LTS). They still have 43 on the list, but a number should be moving in the next week, allowing the group to meet the monthly goal they have set for themselves. She discussed those now shifting into the LTS category. Vickey stated the commitment from the group will be to continue on with the next grouping once the initial individuals are housed.

V. Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program – Aaron Geyer

Jeff reminded the group to keep sending referrals over, as clients can use these funds for security deposits and move-in costs.

All referrals may be sent to:

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

Amber Bowman, (207) 482-5208, ajb@portlandmaine.gov

VI. Homeless Voices for Justice Update

Jim discussed the bus transportation bill and the promotion of the coalition. They met with Preble Street, Amistad, Catholic Charities, Frannie Peabody, Shalom House, and The Opportunity Alliance to move forward in purchasing passes for a pilot program. Once they are purchased, they will be distributed equitably to the agencies and the agencies will determine who will participate in the program. Participants must be able to commit for the full 3 months, participate in the initial (baseline) survey, as well as follow-up surveys to determine the success of the program. It is set to start October 1 and last for 3 months. The findings of the results will be presented to the Health & Human Services Committee of the State Legislature.

Election Day is November 3 and the You Don't Need a Home to Vote campaign will be working on candidate forums and voter registration. Contact Ashley Gorczyca (agorczyca@preblestreet.org) to schedule a voter registration for your clients, which they will be offering until Friday, October 9. Candidates' forums will be organized in Portland, Augusta, and Brunswick for open city/town council seats, as well as the Portland mayoral race.

Maine Human Rights Commission has been meeting at Preble Street and working with HVJ in offering forums- August 27 at 9:30am will be on workers' rights.

Historically, HVJ has held a co-chair position with ESAC. Due to the number of transitions within the City, as well as the loss of their previous representative, HVJ has decided not to put an advocate in Rebecca's place until the situation has stabilized. They look forward to filling this role in the future.

VII. Heroin and Opiate Addiction in Portland – Angela Giordano

Angela discussed the issue of increased heroin and opiate use they are seeing. She doesn't believe HMIS is accurately representing the data, as they have moved from approximately 30% self-reporting to now over 80%. Oxford Street has had issues with near overdoses and restricting people who are using in the shelter. She stated these behaviors are not that of the alcoholics, but those who are IV drug users. The restrictions and usage impacts more than just the shelter: They are using other not stable resources. These individuals are couch surfing and engaging in other behaviors that encourage usage. She openly asked what other shelters are seeing. Ginny asked about the age range, Angela and Brian responded it is now in the 20-30 year olds. Furthermore, 8 years ago, IV drug users were a rarity and it was more alcohol. Now it is commonplace and almost the norm. The other issue is those who come in having never used before and are using soon upon entry. Ginny pointed out that this is a community issue as well, not just homeless. Jim addressed the topic of used needles being everywhere in the streets and suggested more needle drop sites. Angela stated that they have a sharps disposal on-site and explains to clients at meetings and during intake that they are allowed to bring needles in for that reason only. They also encourage clients to partake in the needle exchange. Carol pointed out that those who are using and couch surfing will see an increase in bloodborne diseases (Hep C and HIV). She also stated that many people are refusing to go to OS out of fears for safety. She asked about the suboxone clinic closing at Mercy Recovery. And Mercy Recovery is closing shortly. Vickey stated that the needle exchange has seen a significant increase while the community has seen a large spike in needles being found in Deering Oaks. She reminded the group of the 14 individuals who overdosed (2 fatal) in a 24-

hour period, and how the City is seeing a proliferation of heroin laced with other more potent drugs (fentanyl), at a time when treatment programs are closing. Angela stated OS will be working to dig deeper into the data and work towards trying to help. Steve reminded everyone that it may not be a homeless issue, but it is necessary to bring experts to the table in conjunction with LTS. He suggested maybe a subcommittee of ESAC to bring the experts in to focus on SA individuals who are homeless and/or without insurance. Dave offered to speak to PH and have them come to a meeting and discuss and collaborate. Get someone from Community Policing, as well as the McAuley Residence and PPH.

Carol pointed out that this hit Connecticut about 3 years ago, so you can see it migrating north.

VIII. Federal and State Legislation – Vickey Rand

Federal:

Vickey discussed last month's National Alliance to End Homelessness. Ten individuals from Maine attended the 2015 National Conference on Ending Homelessness 7/15-7/17 in Washington, DC. The conference engaging workshops, including 3 featuring Maine presenters (Jon Bradley/Tom McLaughlin, Joannie Klayman, and Cullen Ryan)! The Capitol Hill visits went very well. The group had face-time with Senators Collins and King, and met with Congresswoman Pingree's and Congressman Poliquin's staff - providing an excellent opportunity to communicate Maine's policy priorities to end homelessness.

Congress is on break for the month of August. There will likely be a flurry of activity this fall, and then no activity the following year due to the Presidential election. The THUD Appropriations Committee in the House and Senate had vastly different proposals. The Senate THUD bill kept fairly adequate funding for many programs but wiped out an entire program, the HOME program. Maine would see a 93% cut in HOME funding if this were to pass as is. The House bill cut many programs and diverts funding for the National Housing Trust Fund into the HOME fund, while still providing a heavy cut to the program. The disparity was designed to blow things up to force the issue of raising the overall budget caps. HUD funds are part of the very small amount of discretionary funding. Two years ago sequestration put a cap on everything in discretionary finding, for both non-defense discretionary funding and defense discretionary funding. With this everything was capped at an artificially low rate. Due to this 500 Section 8 vouchers are lost in Maine unless sequestration is cured. The Senate bill particularly forces the issue of raising the caps to solve that. Senator Collins played a key role in creating the THUD budget very strategically.

State:

LD 443, An Act to Help Stabilize Homeless Shelters in Maine, was folded into the enacted biennial budget and funded at \$2M. The budget is now public law.

LD 369: Governor LePage did not veto the bill within the 10-day window, as he thought he had more time, so it is scheduled to go into law 90 days after the Legislature adjourned (7/16/15) which would be on October 14th. The Governor has asked the Maine Supreme Court to consider the status of this bill (along with 60+ others). The case was fast-tracked and oral arguments were on 7/31. The Court provided its opinion on 8/6/15, stating that the bills had in fact become law, and that the Governor misinterpreted the Maine Constitution when he thought he had more time to veto the bills.

Additionally, Stavros Mendros and several lawmakers have filed an application for a "people's veto," which would put the issue out to the voters. In order to successfully get on the November ballot more than 61,000 signatures are required. If this occurs before LD 369 is set to become law it would put the General Assistance law on hold until the outcome of the election.

Additionally, there is a push to put broader welfare reform out to the voters for the November 2016 election.

Ashley asked for information on the Fair Housing Act 2577. Vickey stated it passed as an amendment to the House THUD bill, which passed the full House but is not likely to gain any traction.

IX. Other Business

Family Shelter Overflow-

Dave discussed the family shelter overflow changes. During the budget session, the Family Shelter was estimated to be at four (4) rooms per night in a hotel for overflow. As of August 1, the shelter was at 19

rooms. The City Manager sent an email out to staff stating they are to get down to and cap at 4. This will not result in individuals being “kicked out” of the shelter, but it will happen as families move out of the shelter. This has been challenging for Family Shelter staff to mitigate requests for shelter. Since August 1, they have diverted 15 families. This has resulted in pushing back to other municipalities. Those from other countries are being taken in by community members. The warming center was used to shelter one family last night, but that is the one night they can stay. The word needs to get out to communities and areas that Portland is no longer the place to go for shelter.

Dave stated that they are working with community leaders to go back to their communities for resources. The City will be reaching out to all areas of the faith community. There was a meeting last week and TOA mentioned a website in Austria and Germany that allows people to sign up to offer temporary housing to homeless individuals.

Municipality of Responsibility-

The City will be meeting with other municipalities to discuss responsibility and emergency assistance. This will be held on August 31 at the Maine Municipal Association complex in Augusta. DHHS, other municipalities, Pine Tree Legal, HVJ, Maine Equal Justice, and MaineHousing will all help in this effort to push a change at the state level to change its view on emergency assistance. As it currently stands, DHHS does not view homelessness as an emergency from April-October.

Community Support Fund-

Dave discussed the Community Support Fund and that as of September 1, they will be only supplying rent. The City is working with other agencies to provide other services, including food pantries and Care Partners/MedAccess for medical needs. This is specifically for those who meet the criteria for the Community Support Fund.

Norm discussed the community provider group working together to help those who are not eligible for General Assistance, Community Support Fund, or to seek asylum. Since they do not have a list, they are working on a system to have these individuals referred to Norm. He is sending out an open invitation to the community and the group for help.

Nicole asked what is said to these individuals denied all assistance. Dave explained they are given other resources to contact. Dave explained that due to confidentiality, the City can't just give a list of names. Preble Street has offered Bill Burns as a point of contact for these cases. CB offered to also be a PoC and asked for a list of the community leaders. It was asked these numbers be presented each month as well.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, September 17, 2015

8:30 – 10:00am

REFUGEE SERVICES CONFERENCE AREA

190 Lancaster Street

If you should have any questions, please contact:

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