

**Mayor's Commission on Homelessness Meeting
Commerce Lexington Conference Room
Wednesday, September 5, 2012
3:00 to 5:00 pm**

Minutes

Commission Members Present:

Steve Kay (Chair), Debra Hensley (Co-chair), Ike Adams, Melody Flowers, Lisa Adkins, Darlene Thomas, Claudia Blaylock, Linda Carroll, Rocky Burke, Ginny Vicini, Jessica Gies, Kathy Witt, Sherry Maddock, Kate Savage, Randy Moler, Joe Shuman, Catherine Deflorio, Laura Babbage, Harry Richart, Bill Embry, Brian Varble, Janice James, and Don Ralph.

LFUCG Staff member(s) present:

Leah Boggs, Legislative Aide to Steve Kay.

Guests:

Billie Mallory, Ike Lawrence, Jim Newmon, Faye Morton, and Josh Nadzam, an intern in the Social Services Department.

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 pm by Steve Kay, Chair of the Commission.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Steve Kay asked for the Commission members and guests who were not present at the last meeting to introduce themselves. The agenda was sounded and there were no changes.

II. Comments on Open Space Meeting and Group Report

The comments were very positive. While there was some concern about inaccuracies in the reports, the reports reflect the essence of the group that was present. They have not been edited and are not a report of the Commission. The Condensed Version of the Reports included in the packet is verbatim text from all reports which has been condensed and categorized. If there is information from the open space that was not captured, please let the Chairs know so that it can be included. For instance, the need for public restrooms downtown was mentioned via email.

Jim Newmon asked if there was input from the homeless regarding their satisfaction with the current shelters. The Commission believed that there was input since there were homeless individuals at the Open Space, there are homeless representatives on the Commission, and the providers are in touch with their population. The Commission discussed the many reasons that people are not in shelter (don't like to be in shelter, wish to drink, don't like someone there, have animals or possession) and agreed that sometimes it is not the lack of available resources but that people aren't ready to accept them.

III. Work Plan Outline

Mr. Kay read through the work plan and explained that #2 (identify present services) and #4 (options for filings gaps, best practices) would be an initial draft by staff and discussed at a subsequent meeting. For #5 (develop recommendations), it may make sense to work in subgroups. He also suggested that the possible recommendations not be discussed in depth until it becomes an actual recommendation. The Commission will conclude its work and issue its report by the middle of January 2013.

Ginny Vicini asked whether the Commission would address immediate and critical issues such as the renovation of Phoenix Park and the relocation/closure of the Community Inn. Steve Kay reframed the question as whether the Commission should focus on immediate issues/needs or the larger, long term, overarching issues/needs. It was proposed that the Commission focus on the larger, long term, overarching issues. The proposal was accepted with no objections.

There was a discussion regarding the need for a current list of resources and a central intake system.

Steve Kay asked for any other comments regarding the work plan and if there were any objections. There were no objections to the adoption of the work plan.

IV. Identify categories

Mr. Kay believes that it would be helpful to find a useful set of categories which would assist the Commission in constructing a way to think about the full range of the problem. Concerns were raised regarding the limitations of categories and who categorizes. It was decided that the Commission is categorizing to determine where people and services, exist, overlap, and have gaps and is a tool that can be modified as needed. As such, there was no objection.

Concerns were raised with the term “in order to become self-sufficient” in the Open Space reports. In some instances the goal is not to become self-sufficient but to enhance the quality of life. All agreed that the phrase would not be used in describing a category.

In addition to the “Open Space” categories, the “Point in Time” categories, and the federal categories, the members suggested other categories including: sheltered; non-sheltered; at risk for homelessness; affordable housing; physical health; discharges from hospitals; discharges from prisons; homeless with animals or possessions; youth kicked out of the house for being pregnant, gay, or other issues; refugees; elderly; and veterans.

V. Identify gaps

Gaps identified include affordable housing, daytime services, medical care, health insurance, transportation, child care, shelter beds needed, kids aging out of foster care, a central resource for information regarding services, a central intake system, overloaded system regarding services, community education and information, mental illness, and financial assistance to prevent homelessness and provide other services. The primary gap identified was the lack of affordable housing which creates a backlog of people who

cannot leave transitional housing therefore freeing up beds for people to leave shelter. The lack of affordable housing is compounded by the lack of financial assistance. The minimum housing wage in Lexington is \$15 an hour of stable income. In determining “affordable housing” it is important to know the income of the homeless and to understand the flow of federal, state, and local dollars.

VI. Additional questions/comments

Family and district court judges are a group which have first hand knowledge of the issues and should be included in the discussion.

Issues regarding the mentally ill will become more prevalent. The structure of programs has changed and does not necessarily meet the needs of the population. The system is overwhelmed. In addressing this issue, information regarding reimbursement for services would be helpful.

VII. Suggested change to agenda format

15 minutes will be set aside at the beginning of the agenda for public comment in addition to the time at the end of the agenda.

VIII. Public Comment

Billie Mallory believes that there should be an immediate plan for the winter since it is approaching and there are issues with Phoenix Park and the Community Inn.

Ike Lawrence believes that landlords can be taught to provide supportive services and fill empty apartments.

The Commission discussed whether it should monitor the status of the Community Inn and decided that it would focus on the long term issues with the understanding that Social Services and other community providers were monitoring the situation.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 pm. The next meeting will be on September 26, 2012 from 3:00 - 5:00 pm in the 3rd floor conference room of the Phoenix Building.