

Mayor's Commission on Homelessness Meeting
3rd floor conference room, Phoenix Building
Wednesday, November 7, 2012
3:00 to 5:00 pm

DRAFT Minutes

Commission Members Present:

Steve Kay (Chair), Debra Hensley (Co-chair), Melody Flowers, James "Ike" Lawrence, Darlene Thomas, Kathy Witt, Catherine DeFlorio, Claudia Blaylock, Linda Carroll, Jessica Gies, Kate Savage, Janis Durham, Joe Shuman, Harry Richart, Bill Embry, Janice James, Kyle Whalen, Doug Pape, and Don Ralph.

LFUCG Staff (members) present:

Shaye Rabold, Office of the Mayor
Leah Boggs, Legislative Aide to Steve Kay

Guests:

Connie Milligan, Billie Mallory, Ike Lawrence, and Sandra Zupan.

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 pm by Steve Kay, Chair of the Commission.

Agenda

The agenda was sounded and there were no changes.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Minutes

The minutes from the last meeting were approved as submitted.

Work Group Preliminary Reports

Survey – Don Ralph reported that the work group has prepared the survey as a structured interview and have asked questions that are not usually asked. They are conducting the survey at the New Life Day Center, Catholic Action Center/ Community Inn, Phoenix Park, the Salvation Army, the Hope Center, Bluegrass Domestic Violence, and MASH. They should have the data by the end of next week and their next steps are to determine how to analyze the data.

Shelter/Housing – Kyle Whalen reported that the work group believes that the focus should be on the lack of affordable housing, and housing certain populations such as youth, the mentally ill, and women and children. The Commission should not focus on building more emergency shelters.

Prevention – Debra Hensley reported that a significant portion of foster children aging out of the system become homeless due to a lack of structure and support. They may also have some untreated mental illness. The work group believes that this is an important area of prevention on which the Commission should focus by providing housing and advocating for legislative change to the foster care system.

The work group also believes there is a need for medical respite care for people being discharged from the hospital that need assistance in recuperating.

Kate Savage discussed mental illness and the revolving door of homelessness. There is a significant need for mental health advocacy, housing, treatment, and case management. Connie Milligan mentioned the loss of Medicaid or Medicare eligibility if you are in a hospital or jail. She also discussed the Mobile Outreach Team. It appears that there is a need for both assisted outpatient treatment and a mental health court. A mental health court is similar to veterans or drug courts where you have a hearing officer that specializes in the area and a team of persons working with the individual to solve the problem. The Commission should advocate for legislative change in these areas. There is also a definite for additional housing that includes case management.

Another important aspect of prevention is affordable housing. Claudia Blaylock explained that HUD considers you to be cost-burdened if you pay over 30% of your income for housing. In 2005, 18% of renters in Lexington were paying over 50% of their income for housing. In 2011, 24% are paying over 50% and 50% are paying over 30%. Many Lexington households are one paycheck away from homelessness so any emergency (car repair, job loss, medical treatment) can send them over the edge. Housing costs have risen, income hasn't risen, and federal money for subsidies has decreased.

Catherine DeFlorio discussed the barriers to housing for survivors of domestic violence including a security deposit, utility deposit, landlord refusing to let the abuser off the lease, bad credit, and criminal convictions. Some states have passed legislation giving survivors of domestic violence protection in these areas. Advocacy for this legislation could be a recommendation of this Commission. Sheriff Witt suggested partnering with the judiciary to educate them on these issues. The Commission should also encourage stronger relationships with the landlords so that we can educate them regarding these issues.

Resources – Shaye Rabold reported that the work group is working to identify innovative resources not currently being used in Fayette County. One solution is social impact bonds which are a way to leverage private equity into social issues. The private investor invests in a government program that it believes will be successful. If the program is successful, the investor is paid from the savings generated by the program. Therefore, the private investor is taking the risk on the failure of the program allowing governments to experiment and scale services. They are very recent. The United Kingdom first issued one in 2010 for lowering recidivism in jail. New York and Massachusetts have issued requests for proposals. However, there is a concern that it is not scalable to Lexington.

There are 4 parties to the transaction: the government, the investor, the intermediary, and the bundler. The investors provide quality control. Harry Richart mentioned that there are a lot of investors looking for opportunities. Steve Kay asked to be provided a specific example of what's being done.

The group is also looking at social networking as an engagement tool. It is part of the Bloomberg Challenge proposal and Lexington has made it to the top 20. The Commission believed that bringing more human capital to the table was important.

The Committee also believed that a single point of entry and coordination was useful. It would help with the redundancy in the system and the competition for funds. It might also assist in involving the faith community involved.

Day Services – Doug Pape and Leah Boggs reported that the work group saw a need for a 24 hour facility for the hard to serve and extended hours for a day center including restrooms, laundry, storage, computer, telephone, and mail. They are also investigating the need for 24 hour day care.

Discussion

The Commission discussed that we will always need emergency shelter but it is a stop gap measure and should not be the focus of the Commission. The Commission should focus on the prevention of homeless and re-housing people rapidly. The discussion turned to affordable housing and the need for housing for individuals with no income and those that need case management.

Steve Kay noted that there was a fair amount of consensus regarding the nature of the problem and the needs including prevention, housing, and support services. The Commission is building toward drafting recommendations and then can discuss the priorities. Steve Kay also explained that the information from in the packet is information to use as you see fit. Please let Leah or Shaye know if you have any questions or corrections. Shaye Rabold explained that the recommendations from the 2008 Needs Assessment and the 2010 Ten Year Plan were included because part of the charge of the Commission is to reaffirm, change, or add to these recommendations. All of the previous reports will be referred in the Final Report.

Public Comment

Billie Mallory suggested that it might be helpful to have David Christiansen come and talk about affordable housing. She also announced that November is National Homeless Awareness Month.

Next Steps

The staff will start to integrate reports and formulate recommendations to be reviewed at the next meeting. Debra Hensley inquired if the Commission was missing anything and Shaye Rabold asked if we were headed down a wrong path.

Sandy Zupan said information regarding affordable housing trust funds in other locations would be helpful. Steve Kay mentioned that the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Task Force has made specific recommendations to the Council and the Commission has asked Council to delay acting on those recommendations until the Commission can finish its work. He anticipates that the Commission will recommend some mechanism for affordable housing whether either by adopting or modifying the current recommendation.

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 pm.

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